

GRACE AND THE ENEMIES OF THE BELIEVER

GRACE AND THE ENEMIES OF THE BELIEVER

***BY
GARLAND SHINN***

© 2017 G. H. SHINN

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	i
Chapter One – What is Grace?.....	1
Chapter Two – How does Law Relate to Christian Living?.....	9
Chapter Three – What is Sin, and Why is it Important?.....	19
Chapter Four – How Does God’s Grace Enable the Christian to Live the Christian Life?.....	31
Chapter Five – What is the Flesh?.....	43
Chapter Six – What are the Works of the Flesh as Listed in Galatians 5:19-21?.....	49
Chapter Seven – How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh? – Part 1.....	67
Chapter Eight – How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh? – Part 2.....	75
Chapter Nine – How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh? – Part 3.....	83
Chapter Ten – Who is the Devil, (Satan)?.....	87
Chapter Eleven – How does Satan Attack the Believer?.....	97
Chapter Twelve – What are the Attacks of Satan?.....	103
Chapter Thirteen – How does the Christian Defend Himself against Satanic Attack?.....	113
Chapter Fourteen – How do Prayer, Supplication and a Sound Mind Relate to the Attacks of Satan?.....	121
Chapter Fifteen – What is the World System?.....	125
Chapter Sixteen – What is the Christian’s Relationship to the World System?.....	135
Chapter Seventeen – What are the Temptations of the World System?.....	139
Chapter Eighteen – How Does a Christian Defend Himself against the Attacks of the World System?...	143
Conclusion.....	145
Appendix	

Preface

As a teenager I happened upon a television program by Richard DeHaan. During the short program he briefly presented the three enemies of the believer: the flesh, the devil, and the world, and encouraged further study of the topic. I don't know if DeHaan returned to the topic, though I suspect he did. In any case, I heard no more about the three enemies of the believer until my third year in seminary where, as part of the course Christian Life, Dr. Charles Hauser renewed my interest when he addressed the three spiritual enemies of the believer.

With other interested students, I had the happy providence during academic year 1971 to have as a classmate Warren Rushton who was finishing a master of theology thesis on the three enemies of the believer. He laid the basis for my further study of the three enemies as taught in Scripture. Much of the work presented here began with, and is a result of, reading and assimilating his thesis. To him I am most grateful.

Despite refinements that may be made to this work, I have found the truths presented here to be truly life transforming and have experienced consistent spiritual victory with their use.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to those students who, through their questions and interactions in classes over the last 40 or so years, forced me to refine my presentation, and re-word it to make it, I hope, biblically more accurate. Through their participation over the years I have learned much more than I have taught.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Introduction

If you are a Christian who is frustrated because of your inability to live the Christian life as you think you should, this work may be just what you need. Perhaps you are a Christian who has experienced the “roller coaster” brand of spirituality. You know what I mean: the up-one-day, down another variety of Christian living. It’s not that you don’t know that you should not sin. It’s not even that you don’t know what your temptations to sin are. It is how to deal with those temptations that eludes you.

The Bible does provide a process for living a life that pleases God. It teaches a method of Christian living and victory that is based on the following three factors: 1) understanding the grace of God that is available for daily living, 2) recognizing the spiritual enemies of the believer, and 3) applying the biblical teaching about how to overcome those three enemies by means of grace principles presented in the New Testament.

Examine for a moment Titus 2:11-12:

For the saving grace of God has appeared for all men,¹² instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the current age...

According to this passage, God’s grace is related to men in two distinct ways. First, God’s grace *brings salvation*. “The saving grace of God...has appeared for all men.” Many translations have “has appeared *to* all men,” which should be translated “has appeared *for* all men.” The grace appears, not in the sense that every man knows about it, but the sense that this grace for salvation is available for all. All mankind is eligible to apply the grace of God for salvation.

God’s gracious provision for the salvation of men is irrefutable. Ephesians 2:8 expresses this same truth when Paul states, “For grace you have been saved, through faith...” In such passages, the word grace emphasizes the “free gift” provision by God for salvation. In other words, men are not required to work for salvation, but the gift of salvation is available, if one but believes it, which is the meaning of “through faith.”

Titus 2:11-12, however, presents second application of grace as distinct from the grace provided for all men. God’s grace also teaches “us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the current age.” The “us” of verse 12 is not the “all men” of verse 11. Paul is limiting this application of grace to people who are already Christians, who have already believed for salvation.

Therefore we have two distinct applications of the word *grace* in this passage, which we will call “saving grace” and “living grace.” It is important to note that “living grace” is for those who are “in the present age.” It did not relate to people in other ages, who lived according to various revealed truths to please God. But grace as a basis for daily living is for this age alone.¹

¹ As stated, the “us” and “we” of verse 12 do not refer to the same group as the “all men” of verse 11. Paul is distinguishing between all humanity in verse 11, and New Testament believers in verse 12. Verse 12 is limited to

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

This simple distinction in the use of the word *grace* is, unfortunately, lost on many Bible teachers and students alike. While grace for salvation is widely acclaimed, as it should be, grace for living the Christian life is largely ignored. The distinct way in which the apostle Paul uses the word *grace* when referring to “living grace” is many times confused with the “saving grace” for all men. But as one studies the New Testament, it is vital that each time the word *grace* occurs the student ask himself, “Which application of grace is this? Is it ‘saving grace,’ or is it ‘living grace?’”²

The purpose for *Grace and the Enemies of the Believer* is to present the New Testament apostolic teaching about the use of the word *grace* as it relates to the Christian life, especially to the three enemies of the believer, the flesh, the devil, and the world system. As a result of this aim, several other doctrinal truths must be considered, such as salvation, the gospel, the nature of sin and unrighteousness, etc.

Method of Interpretation

The author supposes that the Bible is written to be a communication from God to man. In other words, it was written to be understood using normal communicative methods. Such writings will find their content understood by a simple, straightforward, non-allegorical, non-spiritualizing of their text. Such methods have no legitimate use in approaching the Bible, for the simple reason that such methods result in various meanings depending on the bias of the interpreter.³

Thus, the normal communicative approach is to interpret using a contextual approach. The context of any given sentence, paragraph, or section of a book of the Bible must be examined. In somewhat over-simplified terms, the context of a statement or sentence consists of the following:

1. The immediate literary context consists of the material directly before and after the text under question. But the careful interpreter must not stop there, for there is the danger of missing the over-all argument of the writer.

2. The broader literary context consists of the rest of the larger writing, or book of the Bible, being considered. At the very least the interpreter of Scripture must have done a synthesis of the book of the Bible from which he takes specific statements. This is true when dealing with any categorical doctrine, including the Christian life.

3. The authorial context consists of all the writings of a particular author, when known. Such context must be examined for the way in which a particular author uses his vocabulary, gram-

Christians who live during the current age, and cannot be applied to believers prior to the establishment of this age. That the word “age” does not refer to all time is evident by the fact that the author speaks of the “present age.” Such a designation would be foolish if there were not other ages besides the present one that are distinguished from it. Believers living under the Old Testament system, during whatever age they may have lived, cannot be included in the “us” of verse 12. See Chapter Two – *How does Law Relate to Christian Living?* for a further discussion of this idea.

² Or is it perhaps, even a different category of grace use that is not included under these two headings? Yes, such do occur, but have been largely ignored.

³ This is not to say that those who claim a normal, non-spiritualizing approach to interpretation do not sometimes fall into the activity of interpreting according to their bias. It is necessary for each student to keep reminding himself that God’s word should not be subject to human capriciousness in interpretation.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

mar, and literary style to gain his point. Such a study must also contrast other authors of the Bible to determine similarities and differences of style and vocabulary. This is not to say that the writers of Scripture will contradict one another doctrinally. But different human authors often use different wording when dealing with the same or similar topics, and these differences must be understood.

4. The grammatical context consists of the language of the original text, in the case of the Bible Hebrew (or in a few passages Aramaic) and Koine Attic Greek.⁴ This includes the idioms and figures of speech common to that language and culture. No adequate interpretation of Scripture can dare ignore the language realities of the time in which it was written. The old saw, “it was lost in translation” is as certainly as true of the Bible as of any other ancient literature. It is absolute folly to suppose that an adequate understanding of the biblical truth can be had without constant reference to the original languages in which it was written.

5. The historical context takes into consideration the historical background of both the author and the original readers, who, it is presumed, could have generally understood the meaning of the text presented to them.

Associated with the historical context is the geopolitical context. The entire Bible was written against a background of the various nations and political movements of the ancient world. By the time the New Testament was written, the Roman Empire controlled the Mediterranean basin, and had brought the Greek speaking culture along with it. Many of the passages of Scripture strongly reflect that background, and cannot be adequately understood without at least a basic level of understanding of the political and governmental pressures under which the human authors worked.

6. The cultural context, which in a sense is a sub-category of the historical context, consists of all the various cultural elements that affect the meaning of a text as it would have been understood by the original readers.⁵

Granted that the above list is considerably over-simplified, but it does lay the groundwork for a correct understanding of any literary document, whether it be the Bible or any other work. There are no “special rules” for interpreting the Bible that are in anyway outside the norm for interpreting other documents.

The Method of Bible Study

The method the author used in preparing this work is generally referred to as the inductive method. The inductive approach to a doctrinal study of Scripture requires that the student examine *all* the individual cases where the particular topic is being discussed. While he may not use all the instances where the topic is found in Scripture in his study, he is honor-bound to perform a complete induction and considering every appearance of that topic before drawing conclusions.

⁴ For this reason, the author includes word studies from the original language of the New Testament to help the reader understand the original author’s intent.

⁵ The key to normal interpretation is for the present day interpreter to place himself, as far as he can, into the contextual shoes of the original recipients. He must not be guilty of bringing into the text the meaning of words, phrases, etc., from modern times that the original readers would not have understood.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

While there is no guarantee against the fallibility of the human student, the inductive method consistently applied does somewhat insulate the student from the worst mistakes of interpretation. The present writer has attempted to employ the inductive method as well and as consistently as he knows how. He encourages the reader to do likewise, insofar as he is able.

The spiritual value of the Bible cannot be determined simply from using correct study methods. They *are required*, but they are preliminary to the work of the Holy Spirit. He, and He alone, will enlighten⁶ the mind of the Bible student.

It is the hope and expectation of this writer that those who read and study this work, and examine its conclusions in light of their own inductive study, will indeed find victory in the Christian life.

⁶ No enlightenment can come if the student is lazy and does not do the work. Simple reading the text alone will not accomplish the spiritual insight that can be found in Scripture. If the student has not done his academic homework, no matter how onerous he finds it, the Holy Spirit will not enlighten him. One of Paul's favorite sayings is, after all, "I will not have you to be ignorant, brethren." (Yes, I know enlightenment is not exactly what he's discussing in those contexts.)

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter One

What is Grace?

The Meaning of the Word Grace

Like most words, the word *grace* carries both general and specific meanings. This is generally true with words in all languages. For example, consider the use of the English word *horse*. It has a normal, every day meaning of a large animal with four legs. However, it has also derived meanings. The author remembers watching a college football game in which the commentator said of a particular running back, “He’s a horse.” In that context the strength and power of the animal was extended by metaphor to complement the running back.

However, the word horse can also have the connotation of a wooden or metal structure which is used in construction. It originally was known as a saw horse, but sometimes it is simply referred to as a horse. The similarity here is the fact that the structure has four legs like a horse. Furthermore, they are generally not vertical legs like a table, but attached at an angle. And the device is strong enough to hold heavy work. There is a strong resemblance to the animal.

Now, the word Greek word for grace⁷ is closely related to the idea of gift, even in those passages where it means something other than God’s grace. It has to do with process of giving something to someone freely, and without any expectation of return. But the word does not mean “gift” per se. Rather, it relates to the nature of the provision of the gift. This is, indeed, the root meaning of the word. It is so closely related, in fact, that the Greek word translated grace, is also translated “thanks.” It’s but a short leap from the provision of a gift to thankfulness for receiving the gift. But in neither case does the word grace mean the gift itself.

The most common popular definition applied to the word grace among Christians is “unmerited favor.” While there is some truth in such a description, the idea that grace is simply unmerited favor is inadequate. While it is true that God’s grace includes lack of merit, other elements are equally important and should not be ignored. Also, as previous stated, grace goes beyond the simple gift idea, and must not be oversimplified by defining God’s grace as either unmerited favor, or a gift of God. It includes the idea of God’s graciousness, His desire to provide the free gift. It also seems to imply in several passages the inability of the human recipient of grace to provide for himself what God has provided. This is true of both “saving grace” as well as “living grace.”

As the result of extensive contextual studies in passages where the grace of God is presented, the author has developed the following definition:

⁷ The Greek word is *charis*, and is the root of the word “thanksgiving” (*eucharistia*), as well as the word for “grace gift” (*charisma*).

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The grace of God is that favorable attitude of God by which, apart from any human self-effort, and despite merited condemnation, He provides for the object of His grace all that He requires of that object.

Each element of the above definition can be expanded and explained.

Grace is that favorable attitude of God.... God looks with favor on those to whom He extends His grace. However, the favorable attitude of God is not always applicable to every human being. The broadest expression of God's grace is in relationship to salvation. But even a simple inquiry of the word in an English concordance shows that there are many other ways in which God's grace is applied. Sometimes God's favorable attitude is applied to single individuals, such as Noah or Paul. Other times it extends to a particular family or group. In the provision of Christ's death, God's favorable attitude is extended to the entire human race, though not to fallen spirit beings.

Apart from self-effort... The idea of "unmerited" in the traditional definition of grace means simply that no self-effort on the part of the individual or group who receives the grace is taken into account by God. Grace is not based on a debt owed by God, or a wage earned by a human being. God's grace cannot be earned, and He is under no obligation to bestow it.

Despite merited condemnation.... Indeed, it is the condition of the individual who receives God's gracious provision that he deserves nothing of the kind, but actually merits condemnation. Often, traditional definitions of grace do not emphasize this point enough, if at all. While not to be confused with grace, God's mercy is necessary for the gracious provision to be available. If God does not withhold that which is actually deserved (mercy), He would not be in a position to extend that which was not deserved (grace).

He provides for the object of His grace all that He requires of that object.... God's favorable attitude extends a provision of various kinds to the object or objects of His grace. To speak of grace without the gracious provision upon an object is to limit the idea to the attitude of God with no resulting act. But God's gracious attitude produces activity on His part, which activity is directed toward the object of part or all of mankind, depending on how God determined to apply it. That activity consists in providing for the object or objects of His grace whatever is necessary in order to please Him in whatever area He places a requirement on the human being. As we shall see, this is applied both the salvation and to daily living.

God's gracious provision is complete. He supplies the totality of ability to meet that which He requires. Anything less would not be grace. Likewise, grace cannot be mixed with requirement, else it ceases to be grace. Either God is totally gracious in a specific situation, or else He is not gracious at all, and He alone makes the decision as how to apply His grace.

As related to Christian living, consider this: God never requires anything of a believer that He does not provide the ability to perform. So if God requires a believer to not sin, He provides the ability to not sin. If God requires a believer to overcome a specific enemy to keep from sinning, He provides a means of overcoming that enemy. If God requires a believer to minister in a particular way, He provides the means to so minister. Such is the nature of the grace life.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

A Salvation Related Definition of Grace

Ephesians 2:5

...even when we were dead in trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

Romans 3:24

...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...

Titus 3:7

...in order that, having been justified by the (previously mentioned) grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of life eternal..

Sometimes it is helpful to define a word from a particular perspective. Hence, we provide the following definition of grace from the point of view of salvation from sin:

Saving grace is that provision of God whereby He provides to unbelieving man all that is required for the salvation of the individual when that individual rightly deserves condemnation.

Let us examine the need for saving grace. Because unbelieving man is “dead in trespasses and sins” he can only be saved by the gracious provision of God. The purpose for the statement in Ephesians 2:5 is to indicate the utter hopelessness of mankind to save itself. Each individual is dead, meaning that he, under his own power and through his own effort, cannot save himself. God’s gracious provision begins with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Paul says in Romans 3:24 that Christians are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” he is referring to the provision of redemption that is supplied by God’s grace. The word redemption means, in its simplest sense, deliverance, that is, deliverance from the consequences of sins and trespasses.⁸ The application of this deliverance is experienced by faith in the gospel of salvation.

Indeed, the importance of the gospel for salvation cannot be overstated in God’s gracious program for mankind’s deliverance. However, even among Christians there is confusion as to what the gospel is and what it is supposed to do.⁹ Paul says in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes....” Paul indicates that the gospel (good message) of Christ is the power of God. By “power” Paul means that the gospel is able, by itself, and without addition or modification, to supply all the necessary information that makes salvation possible.

What, then, is the gospel of salvation? Note 1 Corinthians 15:1-6:

⁸ See the Chapter Three, where the differences between these three words, as well as others, are identified. See also Ephesians 1:7 where Paul defines redemption as forgiveness of trespasses (mistranslated sins in the AV and the NKJV). Colossians 1:14, however, also defines redemption as the forgiveness of sins.

⁹ Much of this confusion is the result of not identifying the various “gospels” presented in the New Testament. See the author’s work, *The Use of the Word Gospel in the New Testament* for further study on this topic.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Now, I make known to you, brothers, the gospel, which I presented to you, which also you received, in which you also stand,² through which you are saved, since you hold fast to the word which I presented to you, unless you believed without a purpose.³ For I imparted to you, with the first things, the thing which I also received, that Christ died on behalf of our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.⁶ After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, of whom the majority remain until now, but some also fell asleep.

The Gospel, Part One

First Paul says, “For I imparted to you, with *the* first things, *the* thing which I also received, that Christ died on behalf of our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried,…” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4a). Acts of sin earn a wage that consists of physical death (Romans 6:23). Therefore, God requires death for sins. Because of this requirement, the Lord Jesus Christ became obedient unto death and provided Himself as a sacrifice for mankind’s sins. He acted as man’s substitute by dying for sins so that individuals are not required to do so. Christ’s death on the cross is God’s *gracious provision* that paid the penalty for the sins of mankind. *Nothing more is required to pay for those sins, otherwise, grace is not grace.*

Paul then provides two proofs for the death of Christ. First, Christ’s death is *according to the Scriptures*. One can read in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John of the historical facts of Christ’s death. The second proof of Christ’s death is that *Christ was buried*. When the Romans soldiers were satisfied that the Lord was dead, they allowed His body to be removed from the cross and placed in a tomb. Since only dead people need to be buried, Christ’s burial is the testimony of His contemporaries that He truly died on the cross. And they should know! Those who determined that Christ was indeed dead were Roman soldiers, men who dealt in death, and had seen many dead bodies.

While some have supposed that Christ did not actually die on the cross, but only swooned or fainted, the testimony of Christ’s contemporaries is especially valuable. Then antagonistic soldiers believed He died, and so did His friends, who believed He died, so they buried Him!

The Gospel, Part Two

The second part of the gospel is that Christ rose from the dead.

There are again two proofs. Paul once more gives the proof, *according to the Scriptures*. In the four gospels mentioned above, we read repeatedly of the proof of the bodily resurrection of Christ. For example, we read in Luke 24:38 and 39 that Christ, speaking to the disciples after the resurrection, said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (NKJV). Shortly after that, the Lord Jesus ate fish and honey in their presence.

The second proof is simply that Christ was seen. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 Paul describes the various times Christ was seen by credible witnesses:

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

...and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, of whom the majority remain until now, but also some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that, He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ And last of all, He appeared also to me, as one untimely born.

In its simplest form, the gospel consists of the fact that Christ died for our sins, and that He rose from the dead. This is the minimum which must be understood and believed for a non-Christian to become a Christian.

While it is within human experience for one person to die for another, even as a substitute, the resurrection from the dead is another matter. In order to be a Christian, a person must believe that at least one impossible event from a human viewpoint took place. Christ actually, *bodily rose from the grave*.

It is significant that God's provision for salvation includes a fact that is, humanly speaking, impossible. People simply do not rise from the dead, and using normal human logic one would never believe that such a thing could take place. Indeed, it is the fact of the resurrection that makes the cross of Christ foolishness to the human mind. But God requires that the individual believe the impossible to be saved. Faith, or belief, is the means by which God applies the gospel so that the individual can enter into the salvation found in Christ.

A Christian Life Definition of Grace

Acts 20:32

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.) (NKJV)

2 Peter 3:18

...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.(NKJV)

1 Peter 5:10

But the God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, He Himself will, after you suffer for a little while, prepare, establish, strengthen, and firmly ground you.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not be lord over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

God does require the Christian to do good works. He also requires that a believer not sin, and to live a holy life. But recognizing that because of the state of sin in which man has fallen, God has provided through His grace all that is required to do good works, to not sin, to live that holy life.

Each of the above passages uses the word grace in the sense of living grace. Living grace may be defined as that provision of God by which He furnishes the ability to live the Christian

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

life according to His revealed requirements apart from the human efforts of the individual believer.

Acts 20:32 indicates that the word of grace is able to build up believers. The phrase “word of grace” is best understood as meaning the *communication* of grace, as communication is one of the many meanings for “word.” True communication only occurs when the writer or speaker is understood by the reader or listener. When the grace of God is communicated, the believer is built up spiritually. The idea of “building up” is a metaphor that uses the construction process to express the general idea of spiritual growth toward maturity. God is constructing Christians as though they are a building.

The Bible commands the believer to “grow in grace and knowledge” (2 Peter 3:18).¹⁰ The Christian grows in grace by learning to apply the various grace truths found in the New Testament.¹¹ As the believer studies the Word using careful interpretive methodology,¹² he learns the various grace techniques that have been provided by God. When these techniques are applied they, and they alone, produce spiritual growth.

It is no accident that Peter refers to God as “the God of all grace” when he states that God will “prepare, establish, strengthen, and firmly ground you” (1 Peter 5:10). Each of the four verbs that Peter uses indicate an element of spiritual growth.

The word “prepare”¹³ actually means to furnish a believer with what he needs in the Christian life. Through the correct understanding and application of Scripture, God graciously provides, all the “tools” or “furnishings” that the believer needs to live the life He requires.

¹⁰ It is common to eschew knowledge for experience in modern Christian circles. Many have substituted their experience for the teaching of the Word of God. Such things as music, entertainment and personal religious experience of various kinds have been substituted for the authority of God’s Word. But the Bible consistently speaks of exchanging ignorance for understanding, and this can only be accomplished by a regular study of Scripture. Spiritual fads come and go, but personal Bible study must be constant in order to gain knowledge in spiritual things and to grow thereby.

¹¹ Peter was quite aware of Paul’s teaching about grace as stated in 2 Peter 3:15, 16. It was from Paul that Peter learned grace truths for daily living.

¹² Sadly, many believers do not know how to study the Word of God. Slipshod methodology produces slipshod understanding. See the author’s work “How to Study and Interpret the Bible” for a simple process of personal Bible study.

¹³ The Greek verb here is *katartizo*, which means to prepare for a particular function (not *perfect*, as some versions have it). The word was used of mending nets, and is used of spiritual restoration in Galatians 6:1.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The word “establish” means to fix, make fast, to set.¹⁴ The believer is thus made firm and stable in his Christian relationships.

The strengthening of the believer is the providing of spiritual ability to stand against adversity.

Being grounded is the translation of a Greek word dealing with the laying of a foundation. The grounded Christian is stable in his spiritual condition. Such, then, is the activity of the gracious God in bringing believers to a place of spiritual maturity.

The problem of sin in the life of the Christian is also related to grace. Romans 6:14 indicates that overcoming sin is directly related to being not *under law*, but *under grace*. The idea of being “under” a principle such as grace means that the believer is using that particular principle for success. When a person is under the dominion of sin he is also practicing *as though* he is under law (he is not, actually). The *under law* condition has been removed, and believers today are *under grace*. Unfortunately, the process of living a grace oriented life is problematical for many believers. An understanding of the grace that God has provided for victory is the first step in practicing the *under grace* lifestyle provided by God.¹⁵

¹⁴ Of the fourteen times the verb establish is used in the New Testament, ten deal with the establishment of the believer in various aspects of the Christian life. The following ten verses should be studied in their contexts: Romans 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3; James 5:8; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:12; Revelation 3:2. In addition, the related adjective *artios*, also translated perfect, occurs in 2 Timothy 3:17, where the sufficiency of Scripture for Christian living is expressed. In that same verse, another related verb, *exartizo* is found, which is translated “thoroughly furnished.” Vine says this word means, “to fit out, to prepare perfectly, to complete for a special purpose (*ex*, “out,” used intensively, and *artios*, “joined,” *artos*, “a joint”), [it] is used of... being ‘[completely furnished,] by means of the Scriptures, for spiritual service....’ Scripture, and only Scripture, provides that which allows the Christian to succeed spiritually. There is no other source for Christian truth.

¹⁵ See Chapters Two and Seven for detailed discussions of this topic, including a thorough discussion of not being under law, but under grace, as expressed in Romans 6:14.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Two

How does Law Relate to Christian Living?

The Difference between Law and Grace

The distinction between law and grace is made clearly in John 1:16, 17.

¹⁶ And from His fullness we have all received, even grace instead of grace, ¹⁷ because the law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth came to be through Jesus Christ.

To say, as some have, that the law of Moses was an act of God's grace is incorrect. Yes, the law was from God, and it was given through Moses. But it was law, not grace, and no *provision* was made by God for keeping the law apart from the penalty associated with it. Herein is the *definition* of Mosaic law as a spiritual system. It is a system of requirements with penalty attached, but with no power provided to keep the requirements. Herein is one of the main distinction between law and grace. The law of God given through Moses has no provision for accomplishment, while grace which came to be through Jesus Christ, as we shall see, does have such a provision.

Grace and truth, as distinguished from the Law given through Moses, came through Jesus Christ. The verb translated "came" in many versions is actually from *ginomai*, meaning *came to be*. Christ is elevated above Moses in this passage; He is stated to be the *source* of grace and truth, whereas the law *was given* (by God) through Moses, who was not the source of the law, but the agent of God.

Now, it is important to realize that these sentences in the first chapter of John do not speak of the source of *saving grace*. Rather, this is a statement about the source of the grace that God provides for daily living. Just as the law was a daily living guide under the Mosaic program, so grace does the same job for the current Christian life program. While saving grace also comes directly from God, it is not the subject of this particular statement in John's Gospel.

Again, the contrast between the law through Moses and the grace from Christ is vital. Just as law was never meant to be a source or means of the individual's justification, the grace from Christ in John 1:16, 17 is not meant to be for the individual's justification.¹⁶ The Mosaic law was God's means of sanctification at that time, but individual justification was not a legal process. Faith, apart from law, produced justification throughout the Old Testament period as it does today. Therefore, the statement, "the law was given through Moses" is contrasted with the statement "grace and truth came to be through Christ" as a distinction between proposed means of

¹⁶ The law of Moses was not intended to bring an individual into a justified relationship with God. During no time in history has anyone ever been justified by law or works of law. Indeed, justification is, and always has been, by faith, not by works of law (Romans 4). John's readers would have understood this truth, being justified believers themselves. The contrast in John 1:16 and 17 is evident. Just as Old Testament Israel was to live according to law, so today, Christians are to live their lives according to grace.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

sanctification, not means of justification. One must not confuse the two uses of grace. Saving grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9) is an application of grace distinct from living grace.

Indeed, the primary focus of the New Testament writings is *Christian conduct based on grace methods for sanctification*.¹⁷ True holiness can only be attained by following the complete teaching of the New Testament epistles. Note 1 Peter 1:13-16:

¹³ Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind, while being sober, hope completely in the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As children of obedience, not being conformed to the former lusts in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but, just as the one who called you is holy, you also be holy in all conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, Be holy because I am holy.¹⁸

God desires that each believer live an exemplary Christian life. As obedient children, Christians are not to live according to the former strong desires (lusts) consistent with unbelieving mankind, but are to live a holy life.

The word “holy” is related to the words “sanctification” and “sanctify.” All three words, along with the word “saint,” refer to the idea of separation.¹⁹ In the Peter passage, that separation is from a previous lifestyle to a new lifestyle. He refers to Leviticus 44, the context of which concerns eating. God limits the diet of Israel, not for health reasons, but to so that Israel can be holy, separate from the nations around them. They could not eat those things that the nations ate, for they were to be separate from them. This was, in part, the Old Testament means of keeping Israel free from the influences of the world system. However, because of the perversity of the human nature, this physical separation process was unsuccessful. Israel repeatedly violated it in one way or another, and became entangled with the Gentile nations of the world, even to the point of worshipping their false gods.

But Peter recognized that such a diet was not true holiness, only a visual representation of the fact. He recognized that the way in which one lived reflected true holiness. The question arises, then, how can one maintain holiness. The answer is found in a comprehensive study of the New Testament documents on the subject.²⁰

¹⁷ The writer makes this bald-faced statement fully realizing that many will disagree. So be it. A consistent study through the New Testament epistles will find that it is so.

¹⁸ This is a reference to Leviticus 19:2.

¹⁹ Holy, an adjective, is *hagios*; sanctification, a noun, is *hagiosmos*; sanctify, a verb, is *hagiazō*; saint is also *hagios*, a substantival use of the adjective, meaning “holy one.”

²⁰ The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the physical separation concept taught in the Law is not adequate. Law tends to inflate, as a law book becomes thicker and thicker in order to control more and more. By the time of Paul’s writing, commandments of men have been added to the requirements of the law. In Colossians 2:20-23 he states, “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations -- ²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” ²² which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

One may appear to be spiritually successful, but the simple act of obedience to law is not sufficient. The problem of the flesh remains. Until one deals with the source of the problem, the symptoms will continually re-occur.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The only truly successful Christian life is the grace life. For the sincere believer, the mere appearance of the avoidance of wrongdoing is not sufficient. The inner control of the Holy Spirit is necessary for the Christian to be successful in overcoming the sin problem. Avoidance of the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19-21) can only be accomplished in a God honoring way by walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Likewise, overcoming Satanic attacks in areas such as lying and stealing (Ephesians 4:25-28) can only be consistently accomplished by applying the grace provision of the “whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10-17). Indeed the New Testament teaches that only apart from the taint of legal constraint can the Christian please God in any area of life.

It is a sad fact that many believers mix law and grace. In a sincere effort to please God, they place themselves in the untenable position of being legalistic in their approach. Only the strongest distinction between law and grace provides the basis for meeting God’s requirements for Christian living.

The Bible teaches that the Christian is not *under* any quality of law. Paul writes in Galatians 5:16-18:

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will in no way fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these things oppose one another, so that you may not perform whatever things you desire. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

A closer look at the phrase “you are not under law” in the original Greek shows that the word “law” does not have the word “the” before it as some translations have it. According to Greek syntax the quality of law is being emphasized rather than a specific law or set of laws. Paul is not saying that a believer is not under the Mosaic code; he is saying that the believer is under *no* legal code at all.²¹

It is the unfortunate tendency of the natural mind to attempt to place one’s self under law as a means of living the Christian life. Rather than rely on the Spirit’s ministry,²² the individual tends toward self-effort in fulfilling God’s requirements. As a result, the struggle to do the right thing continues. Sometimes the individual may even appear to be winning the struggle. He may be successful in overcoming the “big ones” such as avoiding sexual immorality, drunkenness, and the like. However, the struggle continues until grace remedies are applied.²³

²¹ Please note that the phrase “not under law” does not mean that the Christian has no set of requirements to live godly. The phrase has a technical meaning that will be developed as we study the ideas of law and grace. Simply stated, “not under law” means that the believer does not use law to maintain the requirement to live godly. There are requirements under grace; indeed, there are many more moral requirements under grace than under the Mosaic law. But the *means* of keeping the requirements are different under grace than under law, as we present in this work.

²² The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not general but specific. How to invoke His ministry in the life of the believer cannot be done by wishful thinking, or by hoping He will minister, or even by yielding to His ministry. We will discuss His control over the problem of sin in detail in following chapters.

²³ At the core of grace living is the truth that the believer can and must give up the struggle to live right. When Spirit control is practiced, the believer can relax and enjoy his life without fear of the constant threat of committing sin acts.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

For this reason Paul writes in Romans 6:14, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*” Again, the believer is not under any quality or principle of law, but is under a quality or principle of grace. In Romans chapters 6-8 Paul explains in detail the method for overcoming sin in the life of the believer. Romans 6 teaches the application of grace methods. Romans 7 describes the believer who attempts to live under law principles. And Romans 8 presents the successful condition of the maturing believer who applies grace principles to the sin problem.

Paul makes it clear that the law is “weak through the flesh” (Romans 8:3). This means that the law appeals to the flesh to control itself. Such an attempt is tantamount to giving over the running of the jail to the inmates. It smacks of the self-righteous, indignant cry, “Control yourself!” The righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us (not by us) when a person walks according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh (Romans 8:4).

The term “under law,” as used by Paul, means to attempt to use *legal methods* applied by *self-effort* in order to please God by not committing sins. “Under grace,” therefore, carries the idea of using grace provision in order to bring pleasure to God by applying His methods to the problem of sin. However, a danger does occur when grace is confused with license.

The Charge of Antinomianism

A common charge against those who teach the doctrine of grace is that they are teaching antinomianism (from the Greek *anti*, against, and *nomos*, law). Antinomianism is the idea that since Christians are under grace they have no requirements to live right. The accusation has been made that those who reject the application of the ten commandments and other Old Testament laws and teach grace principles believe and teach that Christians may do anything they desire. Such an accusation is false, and made in ignorance of what it means not to be under law, but under grace.

The phrase “under law” means, in its context, to use law as a system of pleasing God. It does not mean, simply, to have requirements. Likewise, the phrase “under grace” means, in its context, to use grace principles as the system of pleasing God. There are requirements under both law and grace. The difference is between *the methods of meeting those requirements*.

Law, whether Old Testament Mosaic requirements, or requirements indicated by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, or requirements made up today by well-meaning, but ignorant, church leaders, carry no ability or provision to perform them. They carry penalty, to be sure, but that penalty is an external rather than internal force. Penalty’s basic motivation is fear, and fear is a basic element of law principle. Paul calls the ten commandments “*the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones*” (2 Corinthians 3:7). All forensic law²⁴ carries with it fear of punishment as its prime motivating factor. In the Mosaic system, when someone violated the law, someone or something had to die, either the person who committed the act, or a substitute in the form of a sacrificial animal.

²⁴ By “forensic law” we mean law that has punishment for violation attached. There are different kinds of laws given in Scripture, but it is forensic law that Paul is dealing with in 2 Corinthians 3:7. Also, according to Romans 4:15, it is forensic law that he is presenting in this context, for it is forensic law that produces wrath.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Grace, on the other hand, has many (though not all) of the same requirements as the Mosaic Law. The major difference is that under grace an internal provision is made to meet the requirement. The law was “weak through the flesh.” That is, the law provided no provision other than external punishment for overcoming the flesh. But grace is based on the provision of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which was not true for the Old Testament believer.

Biblical Christians are under *no kind of law today*. Grace requirements are requirements with provisions to perform them. Under the program of grace, God requires nothing of an individual unless He supplies the ability to perform the requirement. When a believer reverts to the Old Testament legal system, or, for that matter, the legal system taught in the Gospels which looks forward to the earthly kingdom, he is forsaking grace for law. He is truly “fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:1-4).

The Function of Law

Law has no power to enable Christian living. Law only promises punishment for wrongdoing. James 2:10 says “*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*” It is the nature of law to condemn the transgressor, to pronounce guilt. Guilt is the result of failure, and guilt requires punishment under law. In the Old Testament, when one committed adultery the punishment was death. Likewise, if a child cursed his father and mother, the penalty was death. There was no distinction between “levels” of wrongdoing. For this reason in 2 Corinthians 3:7 Paul calls the Ten Commandments a “*ministry of death.*”

Here then we have the basic distinction between law and grace. Law says “do this or die.” Grace says, “do this, and here is the ability.” Law is a ministry of fear and death. Grace is a ministry of the Spirit and life.

The Abolishment of Law

It is often taught that the New Testament quotes the Old Testament law to reinforce the morality that is required for the believer today. While this has the appearance of spirituality, it is actually a misunderstanding of the purpose for such quotations. Paul says that Christ has “*abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances*” (Ephesians 2:15). Law, which was *never* intended as a spiritual basis for Christian living, has been abolished for the Christian. But does this mean that requirement, per se, has been abolished?

The answer is an emphatic “no.” The abolition of law, a formal set of requirements with penalty for failure, is not the same thing as the abolition of requirements. The same moral requirements exist today under grace that existed under the Mosaic law, and then some.²⁵ Remember, law is not simply a set of requirements. It is a set of requirements with penalty attached.²⁶ Paul quotes some of those requirements, not to place the believer under law, which has been

²⁵ Indeed, many more moral requirements exist under grace than were considered under law. A careful study of the Bible will show that the moral requirements were limited under the Mosaic system, while under the system of grace, over 50 works of the flesh are presented. For instance, Paul lists drunkenness as a work of the flesh, while Moses essentially ignored the problem. Even though drunkenness was frowned upon in the Old Testament, it was never forbidden, and no penalty (such as a sacrifice) was given for it. The Hebrew word “drunk” or “drunken” (*shakar*) is found some 19 times in the Old Testament, but only 3 times in the Pentateuch (Genesis 9:21; 43:34, and Deuteronomy 32:42), and never in the context of legal requirement.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

abolished, but to show that grace requirements are in general agreement with law requirements. However, the law requirements are no longer in force. If they were, once an individual violated one of them, he should be put to death, or at the very least bring an actual, physical sacrifice. Thus, when in Ephesians 6:2-3, Paul quotes the “commandment with promise” from the law of Moses, he is not putting Christian children under law. If he were, the penalty of death would be imposed on those children who did not honor their father and mother. He is simply saying that the law had the same requirements as grace in this area.

The grace Christian must finally put to rest any idea of applying law today to meet God’s requirements. The ten commandments, for instance, are not to be applied to Christians living in the present age. These commandments are not simply expressions of God’s high moral character, as some teach. While they are certainly consistent with His high moral character, they are actually an expression of a legal means to meet the requirements as stated in them. One must not apply the law of Moses without applying the attached penalty. To do so is to misunderstand the very nature of the commandments themselves. For with those commandments no provision for success is supplied, only *condemnation for failure*. An individual under legal constraint is required to meet those requirements by self-effort apart from grace, and he is guilty of the entire law if he fails in one point.

Yes, from *time to time* God did express His grace during the time that the Mosaic code was in effect. But in no sense is any grace provided *within the code itself*. Within the Mosaic law, condemnation is the result of failure, and without gracious provision, failure at some point is guaranteed.

Give heed to the following words of Peter in Acts 15:7-11:

7 And after there was much argument, Peter, having arisen, said to them, Men, brothers, you understand that God, by my mouth in former days, chose for the Gentiles to hear the word of the gospel and to believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, testified for them by giving to them the Holy Spirit, just as also He did to us, ⁹ and He made not one distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Therefore, why do you now test God by laying a yoke upon the necks of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been strong enough to bear? ¹¹ But through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we believe we are saved in the same manner as those people are.

This quote is taken from Peter’s address to the “Jerusalem Counsel” which was the result of accusations being made against Paul and Barnabas. The issue before the counsel was the attempt by some to put “a yoke of bondage on the neck of the disciples.” The yoke of bondage consisted of keeping the Mosaic requirements, which “neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.”

The Judiaizers, who desired Gentiles Christians to become Jews and keep the Mosaic code, were making accusation that Paul and Barnabas had forsaken the Word of God. But Peter, dear Peter, comes to their defense, and because of the great authority which he commanded, put an end to the dispute (Acts 15:12).

²⁶ The implication of penalty is the mechanism to apply the penalty. In a nation, such as Israel, forensic punishable laws possible, penalty could be carried out. In the body of Christ, no such mechanism exists.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

He begins by reminding them that He was the first one to give the gospel to Gentiles, a truth that they could not deny, and which established his right of authority on the matter before them. Then he says something truly stupendous, “*So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*” The key here is the idea that God does not distinguish between Jews and Gentiles any longer. Such a distinction is clearly made in the Old Testament. By so saying, Peter, once and for all, indicates that the legal system is passed away, because under the legal system Jews were not to associate with Gentiles for any reason. Note that Peter says that God was purifying their hearts. The issue is not simply salvation, but sanctification.

Peter then condemns the Judiaizers with the words, “*Now therefore, why do you²⁷ test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*” The Old Testament legal system was unbearable in the sense that it did not provide the individual with the ability to keep it. Under it, Israel failed miserably. That system of laws is out-moded and not to be applied to the Gentile converts of Paul and Barnabas.

Finally Peter states, “*But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.*” The word grace here refers to living grace, not to saving grace. Note the future tense of the phrase “*we shall be saved, even as they.*” This salvation is the on-going salvation from the power of sin in the life of the believer, not initial salvation, which had already been applied both to Peter and his Jewish companions, as well as to the Gentile converts. Peter is making a clear case for grace as opposed to law for living for the Christian believer.²⁸

The “Laundry List” Approach to Christian Living

It is sometimes urged that a list of things that a Christian should avoid be included in a “code of conduct” of some kind. And many, if not most, Christian institutions have such a list.²⁹ After all, they insist, one cannot obey the spirit of the law unless he has the letter of the law to consult.³⁰ It appears to be the desire of the human mind to have a “law book” available to guarantee Christian conduct.

²⁷ The “you” refers to those Jewish persecutors of Paul who desired that Gentiles, once saved, must then go through the Jewish rights, including circumcision, and become practitioners of the Mosaic code.

²⁸ The response of the Jerusalem believers to the problem of legalism is, by necessity, part of the historical transition from the law program to the grace program. The transitional elements of the Acts have been largely ignored by modern theologians, but they are, in fact, the key to the book. To them, salvation was never identified with initial salvation, a concept that Paul taught, but to salvation from sinful acts as in the Hebrew Scriptures.

²⁹ We do not mean a list of procedures, or some such, so as to get a particular job accomplished. Rather, we are referring to the list of moral do’s and do not’s so often provided by institutions to their members to bring about spiritual conformity. The author well remembers his experience in Bible Institute with such an approach. The threat of dismissal hung heavy over the head of the student body if anyone should slip into one of the “big sins” that were forbidden. Fear was the motivating factor at that institute. Unfortunately today, not only Bible Colleges promote such a practice; even many local churches have produced such a moral laundry list.

³⁰ An individual representing a “Christian” accrediting agency actually uttered these words to the author in an attempt to impose such a list on the college where he was a professor.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Such thinking is certainly contrary to the grace teaching of Scripture. The Bible teaches that rather than attend to the requirement, the believer should attend to the grace provision. When one is consulting the “law book” one is not paying attention to the solution. Both Romans 6 and Colossians 3 teach that the believer should place his attention on God rather than the legal requirement. One cannot put to death “*the members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry,*” unless he has previously set his mind on things above (Colossians 3:2). The believer is to present himself to God the Father as alive from the dead (Romans 6:13). As a result of this presentation, the believer is said not to be under law, but under grace, where the Holy Spirit provides the effort (Romans 6:14).³¹

One cannot have it both ways. One either lives according to law, which is to say by self-effort, or one lives according to grace. If one is walking by the Spirit rather than by his own effort, grace abilities are being provided to overcome all the spiritual enemies of the believer. The Christian does not need to check the law book to make sure that he is pleasing God.

When the works of the flesh are listed by Paul, as in Galatians 5:19-21, they are not provided as a legal document that the believer should sign,³² and therefore agree to keep. The various lists of requirements in the Bible are provided not as a method of overcoming the enemy, but of recognizing the nature of the temptation. They are provided, at least in part, so that the believer will not confuse the unrighteousness that comes out of the flesh with that which has its sources in Satan or the world. They are truly *works of the flesh* and not of another enemy. And the flesh, like the other enemies, can only be consistently controlled by grace principles.

The basic fallacy of the “laundry list” approach is simple. It lists a few of the “big sins” and implies that if we do not perform these “nasty nine” or “dirty dozen” we must be spiritual. The danger in this approach is obvious. It does not take into account the real nature of the problem as stated above.³³ When the sin principle is not under the control of the Spirit, it will find a way to express itself, *no matter how strong the legalistic effort to suppress it.*

In addition, in the Galatians 5:19-21 passage, seventeen works of the flesh are mentioned. And the final statement of verse 21 indicates that there are many more. In fact Scripture names more than 50 different works of the flesh. Add to this the various Satanic attacks and the problem of the world system, and it can be seen that listing a few “big ones” is clearly inadequate. It tends to a false view of spirituality, and a false confidence, even pride, that one is being successful spiritually through legalistic self-effort.

The principles of grace living seem foreign to many believers. It is sad but true that many Christians have never even heard of living by grace rather than according to legal standards. Sin has a terrible hold over them, and not understanding the problem itself, they cannot understand

³¹ See Chapter Eight – “How Does the Believer Apply Grace Principles to Overcome the Flesh?”

³² One method the legalist loves to use to promote his legalism is the act of signing on to the code of conduct. This is essentially making a pledge to keep the rules. However, if a believer is not walking by the Spirit, such keeping of the rules is but a spiritual sham, designed to give the appearance of success. And if a believer is walking by the Spirit, he doesn’t need the rulebook in the first place!

³³ See Chapter Three – “What is Sin and Why is it Important?”

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

the solution. It is vital, then, that the believer understand the concept of sin, as provided by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament writings.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Notes

Chapter Three

What is Sin, and Why is it Important?

Just What is Sin, Anyway?

Many people (most?) think that every bad thing a person does is a sin. They believe that every bad thought, deed, and mistake is an act of sin. Often this view results in feelings of guilt such that some sincere Christians, attempting to please God, spend much time confessing sins. This is probably the result of the misinterpretation of 1 John 5:17 which is translated in the common versions to say, “All unrighteousness is sin.”

Compounding the problem is the fact that sin is commonly defined as “missing the mark.” Even some well-known theologians have taken this as the definition, which is derived from the fact that the Greek word *hamartia* (sin), *at one time* actually did carry the idea of an archer missing his target. However, by New Testament times this use had dropped out even in the secular world, and no New Testament reader would have understood “missing the mark” as the meaning of the Greek word commonly translated sin.

The New Testament uses the word sin in three distinct ways: 1) acts of sin, 2) the principle of indwelling sin, and 3) sin guilt. This work will only deal in detail with sin acts and the principle of indwelling sin. Sin guilt, while of great importance, is beyond the scope of this presentation.

The Nature of the Problem

As mentioned above in connection with 1 John 5:17, one of the major problems in dealing with this Bible doctrine is the problem of English translation. If one compares various versions of the English Bible one sees that the word normally translated *unrighteousness* is sometimes translated *sin*, or even *trespass*. Sometimes the word normally translated *trespass* is translated *sin*, as is the word for *transgression*. To the student of the English Bible such a variety of translations is confusing at best.

The apostolic authors of the New Testament never confused these important doctrinal words. A thorough examination of the Greek text of the New Testament shows a totally consistent use of the terms relating to wrong-doing. Such should not surprise the believer who holds that the Bible is the Word of God and is intended to communicate absolute spiritual truth in a specific and accurate way.

The student must attempt to discern a consistent use of these words in Scripture. He must examine many sources, lexicons, and word studies of others.³⁴ He must study thoroughly each

³⁴ The author is particularly grateful to R. C. Trench whose original *Synonyms of the Greek New Testament* is especially helpful in a study of this kind. However, the student must not limit himself to authors with which he agrees. Such an approach does not take into consideration that no author is perfectly reliable, and even the mistakes that some make can be valuable when one is forced to clearly express his disagreement.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

passage in which these words occur in the original languages, and he must observe in each place a complete consideration of the historical, cultural and linguistic context of the passage. With this methodology, understanding will grow and spiritual maturity will result.

Unrighteousness

Unrighteousness is that which is considered wrong from the divine point of view, because it does not conform to *what is right* as compared to God's attitudes and actions which arise from His nature, whether in thought, word, or deed. Sins and trespasses are *kinds of unrighteousness*, but they are not the only kinds. Examine the following passages:

John 7:18

He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...

Romans 1:29

...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers...

Romans 6:18

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Romans 9:14

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Peter 2:12-13

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, ¹³and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 5:17

All unrighteousness is sin...

Obviously, the New Testament has much to say about unrighteousness. While we will not examine each of the above passages in detail, we can discern some general truths from them. The following material presents many concepts which the author has learned through years of study and reading. The concerned student will not take his word for these ideas, though the author believes them to be accurate. Be diligent to study the words and roots for yourself, and see if you come to the same conclusions.

Unrighteousness (Greek, *adikia*) is the opposite of righteousness, which in turn is related to a Greek root word (*dike*) meaning *right, just*. The word *righteous* (Greek, *dikaios*) was originally a word which meant to conform to that which is considered right, generally in the area of culturally acceptable standards.

The word *right* (*dike*) originally meant *manner* or *tendency*. Gradually it became the designation for the “rightness” established by custom or usage. “Right” then was whatever was established by normal custom. Like many of the important doctrinal concepts in the New Testament, when the writers used words derived from this root, a higher concept than merely custom or usage came into play.

Such is true of the word *righteous* (*dikaios*), which means that which is conformable to the right, or which pertains to the right.

Originally, like *dike*, *right*, *dikaios*, *righteous*, was a word whose meaning was culturally determined. The distinction between the secular Greek usage of the word and the biblical usage arises from the different standards by which one determines the idea of righteousness, or justice. In the Greek speaking world, usage and custom formed the basis of right. The Bible says the standard of right is God, expressed by His actions arising out of His righteous character.

Unrighteousness is Broader than Sin

Romans 1:29 could be translated “All *kinds* of unrighteousness: sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness...” and so on. *Unrighteousness* seems to be the heading of which the following words are kinds. It becomes evident that the word unrighteousness is a very broad term.

Consistent with this broadness is Romans 6:13, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin...” Here Paul clearly distinguishes the words unrighteousness and sin. When one presents his members (the physical body) as instruments of unrighteousness, it is “to sin.”³⁵ First comes the presentation then comes the sin.

³⁵ The words translated “to sin” are not a verb, but the noun sin in the dative case (τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ). Perhaps a better translation would be “unto sin.” The metaphorical statement is that a person should not present his physical body as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. For a thorough discussion of Romans 6:13, see Chapter 8, where the

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Unrighteousness and Sin Share Characteristics

But 1 John 5:17, *All unrighteousness is sin...* has caused much confusion. Many English translations help cause this confusion because they seem to equate *unrighteousness* and *sin*. However, in the original language this is not the case.

The Greek construction is *anarthrous*, that is, it omits the article “the” before *both* of the words *unrighteousness* and *sin*.³⁶ Consequently, one cannot say that every act of unrighteousness is an act of sin. Such an interpretation would require an *articular* (with the article) construction. The anarthrous construction indicates that the two words share characteristics. The passage is teaching that both are wrong, though the narrower term, sin, has specific meaning and application in the immediate context. In other words, 1 John 5:17 is teaching that unrighteousness and sin are similar because they share characteristics, not that they are identical.³⁷

The similarity between the terms becomes clear when we understand that these two words share certain things in common. For instance, since there are characteristics common to both unrighteousness and sin the Bible speaks of unrighteousness bringing guilt and penalty (Romans 1:28). Also like sin, unrighteousness requires cleansing (1 John 1:7, 9).

All unrighteous acts, including sin, cause the perpetrator to be considered dirty by God, and therefore in need of cleansing. This is not the ceremonial cleansing of the Old Testament Mosaic code which was but a symbol. Today, God actually cleanses the believer. This is not something the Christian experiences, but an act of God outside the Christian’s consciousness. The only way to know that He cleanses believers is because of the revelation of Scripture.³⁸

Why cleanse the believer? The reason is not given in 1 John,³⁹ but the purpose of cleansing seems clear when one compares some Old and New Testament passages. The various acts of washing in the Old Testament prepared the priest for entering into the presence of God in the temple. Note in this regard Exodus 30:18-20:

sentence is analyzed in detail.

³⁶ While in English this may not seem important, it is vital in making the distinctions the authors of the New Testament writings wished to make. Generally speaking, the lack of the word “the” emphasizes quality, while the inclusion of the article indicates specific identity. In order to identify two nouns the article must be found before both words. In Greek the phrase “all unrighteousness is sin” does not mean “all the unrighteousness is the sin.” That is, it does not mean that every act of unrighteousness is an act of sin.

³⁷ As we shall see, earlier in his epistle, John DID equate sin with another word. See below for further discussion.

³⁸ Just how God cleanses the believer we are not told. It is enough that Christians are considered “cleaned up” from God’s perspective.

³⁹ Some have concluded that cleansing is necessary for fellowship, but this cannot be proven from 1 John 1:7, where having fellowship and being cleansed are in two coordinate clauses. If one is walking in the light, the believer has fellowship and is also cleansed.

Part of the confusion is the mistaken idea that having fellowship is the same thing as being spiritual, and that cleansing somehow relates to that same state. However, having fellowship in the context of 1 John 1 is the direct result of walking in the light. Fellowship is best understood as sharing (which is the actual meaning of the word fellowship) the life and character of God as the Christian goes through life. Cleansing, on the other hand, qualifies the Christian to enter into God’s presence.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

“You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, ¹⁹for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. ²⁰When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die.” (NKJV)

God requires the priest to be clean to enter His presence. Today, all believers are priests, and need cleansing. For this reason, and since the believer cannot cleanse himself, God cleanses him. This on-going process of cleansing is not limited to times of confession, however. For instance, the Lord also “sanctifies and cleanses” the believer by the word, that is, by the understanding and application of the truth of Scripture (Ephesians 5:26). Furthermore, the death of Christ itself as applied to the believer is for the purpose of cleansing (Titus 2:13-14). Cleansing, then, is the act of God by which the believer is made eligible to enter into His presence not only on a daily basis as he lives the Christian life, but at that future time when the Lord returns for to take the believer into His presence. It is a sobering fact that God sees the “uncleansed” believer as being ineligible to enter His presence, either spiritually or physically. Such cleansing is by God’s grace, and cannot be performed by the individual believer. God sees to it that believers are cleansed so that they may approach Him both spiritually in the present, and physically in the future.

Specific Terms - Aspects of Unrighteousness

Trespass

One word that is often confused with sin is *trespass*.⁴⁰ The word is sometimes translated *offense*. It means a personal violation of God’s standard of righteousness, either by mistake or on purpose. Consequently, trespass causes irreconcilable differences between the perpetrator and the one offended.

In the papyri⁴¹ the word *trespass* is used of a man who mistakenly overstays the time he had intended to spend in his “vegetable garden.”⁴² Trench refers to its use by Philo where a man who reached a particular level of godliness and virtue fell back into a prior state.⁴³

⁴⁰ The Greek word is *paraptoma* which is derived from *para*, alongside, and *pipto*, to fall. It can have both moral and non-moral connotations. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) it was used of an act that resulted in a ruined relationship between God and Israel (Ezekiel 15:8; 22:4).

⁴¹ The papyri are documents written on papyrus, an ancient writing material made from a reed that grows along rivers and streams. “The papyri” as used in word studies refers mainly to secular documents that were produced in ancient times. The vocabulary of these documents when written in Greek overlaps greatly the New Testament vocabulary. Often, the New Testament writers used secular terms, but often raised their meaning to conform to the doctrines God wanted presented. Thus the word “righteous” (and many others) means in secular Greek a somewhat different thing than it does in the New Testament Scriptures.

⁴² Moulton, James Hope, and George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, “παράπτωμα”. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids. page 489.

⁴³ Trench, R. C. *Synonyms of the Greek New Testament*. Baker Book House, [reprinted by Hendrickson Publishers] 1989. page 260.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

In the New Testament it means to fall away because of being at fault, either through willful activity or by mistake. In several contexts it indicates that which disrupts personal relations. Hebrews 6:6 refers to falling away from God. In Romans 11:11 Paul uses it of Israel's rejection of Christ. And it is trespass which requires reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Trespass is, therefore, either an intentional or unintentional unrighteous act that severs personal relationships, causes an offense, and so produces the need for reconciliation. As such, it can include sin in some contexts and exclude sin in others.

It is vital to our discussion that we not confuse the two words. Paul clearly distinguishes between them in Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Again we must have recourse to Greek grammar. Both words are articular (have the article *the*) in this passage. Therefore Paul is specifically identifying each one and distinguishing between them. It is important not to confuse the fact that these are two different words for wrong-doing.

For further study, see also the following passages where the word trespass is found: Matt. 6:14;15; 18:35. Romans 4:25; 5:16, 16, 17,18,20; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 1:7; 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13; James. 5:16.

Sin

When a Christian thinks of wrong-doing, his mind often thinks in terms of the word sin. The tendency is to be less than careful with the word, but the Bible writers used it very carefully.

Sin (Greek, *hamartia*) is a willful violation of a known righteous requirement of God. Technically, sin is acting as if the requirement does not exist.

1 John 3:4, states, "*The sin is the lawlessness.*"⁴⁴ This is the divine definition of an act of sin. It is an act of lawlessness. But what does the word lawlessness mean? To be lawless means to act as if there were no law.⁴⁵ The word "law" does not mean in these contexts the Mosaic code, or man-made laws. Rather, it refers to God's moral righteous requirements which He identifies in

⁴⁴ Note in our translation that both sin and lawlessness carry the article "the" before them. Two articular nouns joined by the copula "is" are being identified. Paul is therefore defining the word "sin" by the word "lawlessness." It is unfortunate that the KJV (as well as some other translations) has translated lawlessness "transgression of the law." There is a separate Greek word for transgression of law, and it is not found in this passage at all.

⁴⁵ The KJV and others translate 1 John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law." This is unfortunate, as the word transgression (Greek-*parabasis*) is a technical word referring to something altogether different. It refers to a violation of a forensic law under which the individual is operating. The Christian is under no spiritual forensic law (a law with penalty attached) today, as Israelites were under the Mosaic code.

The word lawlessness (*anomia*) means to have a disregard for any restraints, acting as if the restraints do not exist, although they do. "...*Anomia* is never...the condition of living without law, but always the condition or deed of one who acts contrary to law..." (Trench, page 228). Israelites sinned under forensic law, while Christians today sin by willfully violating known non-forensic law. A sin act is defined by John as lawlessness, that is, acting as if the requirement does not exist when the individual knows it does. Sin is a particularly pernicious type of unrighteousness for this reason.

The word *anomia*, which occurs some fifteen times in the New Testament, is sometimes translated "iniquity." However, "lawlessness" is the superior translation.

See Matt. 7:23; Romans 4:7; 2 Corinthians 6:14 (where the word is translated "unrighteousness" in the KJV); 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Titus 2:14 (a very important verse in the doctrine of salvation); 1 John 3:4.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

the New Testament Scriptures. When a person sins, he ignores God's requirements, and substitutes man-made or self-made requirements, or, perhaps he substitutes no requirements at all. But the point is, he is ignoring God's requirements, and acting as though they did not exist.

In Homeric Greek⁴⁶ sin (*hamartia*) is sometimes referred to "missing the mark" in a non-moral sense. However, the biblical meaning carries with it different parameters as defined by statements in Scripture. In the Bible, sin does not mean *to miss the mark*, which is too broad a statement, and is the meaning of a different word (*astocheo*). As we shall see, the Bible uses the word *hamartia* to mean something that is *willful* and *deliberate*. An archer taking aim and missing the mark by accident is not the same use that the word *hamartia* had by New Testament times. Furthermore, the New Testament writers are not using *hamartia* even in the secular sense of their day. Because of this, they carefully define its limits and meaning in their writings. Take, for instance how Paul uses the word in Romans.

There is a kind, or quality, of sin without law (Romans 2:12; 5:13), but it could not be designated lawlessness (*anomia*), and is therefore not applicable to the New Testament believer. "Thus the Gentiles, not having a law...might be charged with sin; but they, sinning without law...could not be charged with *anomia*."⁴⁷ Therefore, when there is no law of any kind, sin acts cannot be imputed. In the current household of the church, since we *do* have a kind of law (though we are not *under* any kind of law as to penalty or method) it is possible for a person to sin in the sense of *anomia* today (1 John 3:4).

The Hebrew word normally translated sin is *chata*, which is used for both natural and moral actions. It includes the idea of mistaken activity. If the activity was within a realm of morality, the nature of the action is indicated by the context, or by some description associated with the act. For example, Leviticus 4:2 indicates sin through ignorance, and therefore unintentional. But other acts describe by the same word can be intentional, and be closely associated with the meaning of the word *hamartia* as it is used in the New Testament. Thus, the Hebrew word *chata* is more closely related in meaning to the Greek word for *trespass* than the one for sin.

In the New Testament *hamartia* is for the first time always associated with guilt and is thus always originates in willful intention. It never refers to mistaken action in general or sinning in ignorance. It never refers to a missing the mark,⁴⁸ or a failure to reach a goal because of weakness or ignorance. Sin is a determined effort to resist the goal. It is an active opposition to the divinely revealed requirement of righteousness.

⁴⁶ See the reference on ἁμαρτία in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), pages 49-50. Even if that meaning of missing the mark had held from Homer's day until the writings of the New Testament (which it didn't), the New Testament writers fill the word with a doctrinal meaning that was distinct from the purely cultural use.

⁴⁷ R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, page 228.

⁴⁸ This is a particularly onerous error. Even theologians who should know better define sin as missing the mark. True, the ancient term did have as one use the idea of an archer missing the target. But, again we state, by the New Testament times this meaning was no longer extant. And even if it were, the New Testament writers did not mean by the word *hamartia* that an individual was trying to hit a target, and just missed. They mean that he was ignoring the target altogether, acting as if the target didn't exist, when in fact he knew that it did.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Mistakes Concerning Sin

It is sometimes helpful when discussing a misunderstood idea to distinguish errors that are sometimes perpetuated concerning it. As we have seen previously, the mistaken idea that sin is simply “missing the mark” is common. The danger of this error is that there is some truth to it, in that a person who sins has not “hit the mark of God’s righteousness.” However, the idea of “missing the mark” can be, and sometimes is, misunderstood to mean that a person can be attempting to do right, and simply makes a mistake and misses the mark. *Such an act is not an act of sin*, as a sin is knowing what the mark is, and acting as if it does not exist. Yes, a person who sins “misses the mark” in some general sense, but he does so willfully and knowingly, not like someone who is actually aiming and simply misses.

We will now attempt to clarify the New Testament use of *sin* to identify some other errors.⁴⁹

The first error is the mistaken idea that *every wrong act* is sin. Scripture is clear that sin *must be a willful and knowledgeable act*, and cannot be performed by mistake. An act of sin is a very specific kind of unrighteous behavior, which is what makes it so terrible. Such an understanding is to confuse unrighteousness, which includes mistakes, with sin.

Another mistaken idea is that *unrighteous thoughts* are acts of sin. James 1:15 makes it clear that the lust (strong desire) that comes out of the heart *precedes* the act of sin, and is therefore not the act of sin itself. James states, “Then, when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Note that in the metaphor of the birth process, lust conceives. And as conception precedes birth, so desire, the internal attitude of lust, precedes and gives birth to sin, the physical act. Scripture knows nothing of “mental attitude sins.”⁵⁰

A passage that is erroneously thought to teach “mental attitude sins” is Matthew 5:28, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” However, a careful examination of this passage does not say that a person has sinned in his heart. The injunction is to take action so as not to follow through on the act of adultery, and therefore commit an act of sin. Verse 29 states, “If your right eye *causes you to sin*, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” “Causes you to sin” is a mistranslation of *skandalizo*, to cause to stumble.⁵¹ The eye causes the person to stumble by responding to internal desire, that is lust, and therefore the injunction is to maim oneself rather than to be executed.⁵²

⁴⁹ In seminary classes, the author was told never to do what he is attempting to do in this section. After all, one does not want to seem to be negative, or to be attacking others. But the mistakes concerning sin are pervasive in Christian society today, and unless the mistakes are identified, there might be a tendency to mix truth with error. So the author takes his reputation in hand and provides the somewhat negative comments.

⁵⁰ Even Dr. Ryrie falls into this error in his *Basic Theology* on page 215. He gives Luke 12:13-15 and Matthew 20:20-22 as proof texts for mental attitude sins. However, neither of these passages uses the word sin to describe the spiritual condition of the context. Dr. Ryrie has fallen into the error that all unrighteous attitudes are acts of sin.

⁵¹ The NKJV mistranslation “causes you to sin” has caused much confusion. The correct translation is “causes you to stumble.”

⁵² The *body being cast into hell* does not mean the ultimate judgment of God. Rather it is a way of identifying the death penalty. The word translated “hell” here is *ghenna*, not *hades*. The body did not go into Hades, the place of

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

It's better to be maimed than to die for the act of adultery.⁵³ And that's exactly what would have happened if an Israelite under the Mosaic law committed adultery. And Israel was still living under the Mosaic law at the time of the Lord's statement in Matthew. The penalty was death by stoning.

The act of adultery is what causes the stoning, not the heart attitude of lusting after a woman. If one does not commit adultery, there is no death penalty attached, even if one has the lustful attitude, and in Jesus' phraseology has committed adultery in his heart. Even under the law, the lust must be dealt with in order that the act not be committed, and the penalty assigned. Again we see that the Scriptures do not teach "mental attitude sins."

Associated with the above error is the mistaken idea that a person's unrighteous dreams should be confessed because they are acts of sins.⁵⁴ The author heard a preacher present the idea that if a person's dreams were of a sexual nature that person should confess the dream because he was guilty of sin. Such a view is based on the two errors presented previously. One has no control over his dreams, and a *sin is a willful act* (or violation of a requirement, sometimes by failing to perform it) not a thought. While unrighteous dreams certainly have their origin in the fallen adamic nature, they are not *acts* of sin, and are best forgotten. When a Christian confesses his sins, his acts of unrighteousness, even the forgotten ones, are cleansed (1 John 1:9).⁵⁵

Transgression

For the sake of completeness, and because of the confusion of various Bible translations, we will discuss the biblical use of the word *transgression* (Greek, *parabasis*).

A transgression is violation of a law *under which an individual operates*. Transgression is specifically a *legal term*, and can only occur when a person is *under law*, and the law carries with it a specific stated penalty for violation.

the dead, just the disembodied person. *Gehenna* refers to the Valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem where refuse was burned. Evidently the bodies of executed criminals were burned there as well. At any rate, under the law of Moses, the condemnation for adultery was physical not spiritual, and it was this physical condemnation of which Jesus was speaking. If one tries to say that a person who commits any sin, adultery or anything else, is condemned to eternal damnation, he has slipped into the error of salvation by works.

⁵³ Some have objected to the teaching here being taken literally on the grounds that God would not encourage maiming of the physical body. Such is the humanistic objection to the death penalty also. However, there are only two alternatives under the Old Testament code. Either commit adultery or do not commit adultery. If one violated the law, particularly in one of the capital offenses, that person was put to death. The argument is from the lesser to the greater. It is better to cut off a body part than to be executed. No moral argument against maiming can be made unless the same argument is made against stoning to death, certainly the "greater maiming." And no honest person can claim that God did not require the death penalty for adultery in the Old Testament.

⁵⁴ First John 1:9 teaches that if a Christian sins he should confess those sins. A person cannot confess an act he does not know about. As we have seen, other passages identify sin as an act, not an attitude. If a person is required to confess his unrighteous attitudes, it is difficult to see how a fallen human being could find time to do anything but confess.

⁵⁵ See the following verses for uses of the word sin by the New Testament writers. John 16:8,9; Romans 3:9; 3:20; 5:12,20; 6:1,2; 7:5,7,8,9; 14:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:1; James. 1:15; 4:17; 1 John 1:9; 2:2; 12; 3:4; 5:17.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

There must be something to transgress, before there can be a transgression....
With law came for the first time the possibility of the transgression of law (Romans iv. 15).⁵⁶

In a spatial sense, *parabasis* means to step over a boundary. It was always used with reference to divine or human statutes or ordinances. The word is rare in the New Testament because it is related to being under a forensic requirement like the Law of Moses, and the believer is expressly said not to be under such law (Romans 6:14).

By definition, *parabasis* is an unrighteous act that crosses over a divinely appointed restriction that is legally binding and strictly enforced with penalty. Therefore, the following may be said to be true:

1. There is no transgression without forensic law (Romans 4:15).⁵⁷
2. Sin is only transgression when there is a forensic law being violated (Galatians 3:19).
3. Transgression can occur without sin (1 Timothy. 2:14). This is so because it is possible to violate an *unknown law*. One has transgressed in doing so, but since it is unknown to the transgressor, the person has not sinned. Transgression carries penalty, whether a person knows the law or not. (Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Penalty still attaches.)
4. The believer cannot transgress God's law today because he is not under God's forensic law (Romans 6:14; 8:1). However, all human beings reside under laws of their own political unit. Hence, it is possible for a Christian to transgress the forensic laws of the United States, or of one's home state, city or county, and be required to pay a penalty. Grace living does not relieve a Christian from knowing and obeying the political laws under which he resides.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The seriousness of the sin question cannot be denied. But an accurate definition of the word sin is necessary in order to fully appreciate its distinctiveness.

Not every thought or act of unrighteousness is sin. Sin is a specific kind of unrighteousness that is committed when an individual knows the righteous requirement of God and chooses to ignore that requirement. He is not simply "missing the mark," as though he were taking aim, and just simply missed. He is willfully ignoring the requirement, acting as though the requirement does not exist.

When sin is correctly defined, one can see and understand why it is so bad, and why Christ died for our sins, as opposed to dying for unrighteousness in general. Sin, because of its very nature, earns the wage of death (Romans 6:23), whether that sin is done by a believer or an unbeliever.

⁵⁶ Trench. *Synonyms*, pages 228, 229.

⁵⁷ Forensic law is law with penalty attached. Other kinds of law do not have penalty attached, and cannot therefore be considered in the same category as forensic law. Spiritually speaking, today the believer is not under any forensic law, though Christians do *have* law. But the law which is active today is non-forensic, and no condemnation is attached (Romans 8:1).

⁵⁸ The word transgression occurs in the following passages in the New Testament: Romans 2:23; 4:15; 5:14; Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 2:14.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

However, for the believer there is grace provision to live the Christian life. That provision is clearly and specifically identified in the New Testament.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Notes

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Four

How Does God's Grace Enable the Christian to Live the Christian Life?

The concept of grace for daily living indicates that God provides that which is necessary to please Him. That He has provided the individual Christian with ability to live according to God's righteous requirement is evident in the New Testament writings. Several elements have been given by God to the New Testament saint which are necessary to operate in the sphere of grace.

God Provides Each Believer with a New Nature

2 Peter 1:2-4

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,³ as all the things of His divine power concerning life and godly reverence which have been given to us through the full knowledge of the one who called us through glory and virtue,⁴ through which the great and precious promises have been given to us, in order that through these you may become sharers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:3-4 is an often overlooked passage that presents the grace basis for Christian living. Note that neither of the words grace and peace in vs. 2 can be taken as a simple greeting. They have doctrinal meaning, given that Peter says that such grace and peace are to be “multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” The multiplication of grace and peace to believers goes beyond the simple greeting of grace and peace, and is related by Peter to a full knowledge of both the Father and the Son. The word full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) implies an intimate relationship between the believer and these persons of the Godhead. The personal relationship of the believer with the Father and the Son is basic to understanding and applying both grace and peace in the Christian life.

The most wide-sweeping change that takes place when an unbeliever becomes a believer is the gift of a new human nature. We break into the middle of a sentence in 2 Peter 1:4, “in order that through these you may be sharers of the divine nature.” The word “these” refers back to God's great and precious promises. The result is that a believer becomes a sharer of the divine nature. Peter's statement does not mean that the believer today gets a new nature that is *identical* to God's nature, the actual divine nature. It teaches that Christians become partakers, or sharers, in “a quality of the divine nature.”⁵⁹ In other words, Christians have a new nature that is similar to God's nature in that it shares the same quality. This nature is necessary so that the believer may be able to resist temptation to sin and unrighteousness, which John makes clear in his first epistle.

⁵⁹ Again we note that the word “the” does not occur in the Greek text. This anarthrous construction indicates that it is not the specific divine nature of God of which Christians partake, but a quality of that nature. Christians do not become “little gods.”

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The use of the new nature, however, is not automatic in the life of the believer. As we develop the Christian life concepts in this and other chapters, we will realize that a certain basic knowledge and attitude is required for that nature to have its way. This knowledge and attitude is applicable through other elements provided at the time the believer receives his new nature.

There are several statements in the New Testament which indicate that along with the new nature, the believer has received a new will, and a new mind.⁶⁰

The Christian Has a New Desirous Will

Romans 7:18

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (Romans 7:18)

Much controversy surrounds Romans 7. However, if one realizes that Paul is using himself as a foil for the Christian who has not yet learned to overcome indwelling sin by grace (Romans 6), the problems of the chapter begin to lessen.

Specifically, Paul is presenting the truth that a believer who does not understand the presentation of “under grace” in Romans 6 will struggle with certain aspects of living the Christian life. One of those aspects, and a major one at that, is identifying and performing what the new nature desires.

The statement of Romans 7:18 contrasts the fleshly nature and its pull with the new nature by showing that the believer can will (desire) to do good, though not from the flesh,⁶¹ that is, from the old nature. The flesh contains nothing good. Therefore the act of desire to do good must come from the new nature.⁶²

This is exactly what happens when an unbeliever becomes a believer. He gets a new will which produces a new set of desires. These desires are consistent with the new nature, and contrary to the old nature. That is why, in contrast to the unbeliever, the Christian is able to desire to act in a way that pleases God. “To will is present with me,” Paul says. The word “will” is *thelo*, a word that is contrasted in Scripture with *boulomai*. Both are verbs, and both can be translated “to will,” but they refer to two different aspects of will. Also, each have nouns associated with them. *Thelo* (to will) is associated with *thelema*, the desirous will itself. However, *boulomai* (to will), is associated with *boule*, the plan or counsel of God resulting from His determinative will. It is related to the concept of decision making, both by men as well as by God.⁶³

⁶⁰ According to John, the new nature cannot sin. See the discussion of 1 John 3:9 in the next chapter for a presentation of this important truth.

⁶¹ See Chapter 5, “What is the Flesh?” for a fuller discussion of this word.

⁶² It has long been held that the desire of an individual is an expression from the person’s very nature itself. This view is held in both Christology, where Christ is shown to have two sets of desires, one divine and one human, and in biblical anthropology, where two sets of desire are seen in the New Testament relating to the believer. If, indeed, the Christian has two sets of desirous will, he has two natures. A complete discussion of this truth is beyond the scope of this work, but for the serious student of theology, the author recommends a study of the monothelite (Eutychian) controversy in the early church, one of the few places where historical theology is of specific value.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

But Paul, acting in the guise of an uneducated believer who does not understand grace says, “but how to perform what is good I do not find.” It is not enough to desire to do the right thing. Something is missing, and the believer, desiring to do the right thing, is conflicted and finds himself unable to do so. His act of personal determination is unable to overcome the desires of the old fallen nature.

Paul is certainly presenting an idealized case here. He does not mean that a believer who is legalistic and operating under the old nature can never do the right thing, because he can, and does. What Paul is doing is presenting the internal struggle as the believer goes through time. The new nature always desires to do the right thing in every circumstance (See Chapter Five), but the old nature struggles against that desire.

Galatians 5:17 confirms this struggle, but shows that the believer is not alone, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” The flesh (the old nature) lusts (*epithumia*, has strong desires) against the Holy Spirit, not simply against the new nature. Likewise, the Holy Spirit lusts (has strong desires) against the flesh, so that “you” (the old nature) does not do the things that it desires (*thelo*). Only the Holy Spirit has the ability to control the desires of the fallen nature. We will discuss the process by which the Holy Spirit overcomes the strong desires of the flesh in subsequent sections.

God Provides Each Believer with a Renewed Mind

A wise man once said, “The Christian life is lived between the ears.” Certainly correct thinking is necessary to understand not only intellectually, but spiritually, the truth of the Bible. God has provided the believer with the ability to understand spiritual truth if he will but use it. If, as stated previously, the Bible was intended to be understood in a normal, communicative fashion, then the provision of the renewed mind by God is the way in which that communication from God can be processed and correctly applied.

Several different words are used in the New Testament to describe the mental *activity* of the believer. Four specific statements indicate the nature of the believer’s new mental capacity. These passages teach that the believer is capable of understanding spiritual truth in a way that is foreign to the unbeliever.

1. The Christian’s thinking process is capable of being like Christ’s mind.

⁶³ See Matthew 1:19 where the writer states this distinction in one sentence, “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.” The verb “wanting” is *thelo* and should be translated “desiring.” The verb “was minded” (a terrible translation, going back at least as far as Thayer’s definition) is actually *boulomai*, and should be translated “was determined.” Interestingly, many authorities revert to the old secular uses of both these verbs in their definitions, which causes much biblical confusion. Thayer, for instance, lists the first meaning of the verb *thelo* as “to be resolved or determined, to purpose,” and lists as the second meaning as, “to desire, to wish.” The old Strong’s Lexicon reverses this. In fact, one looks in vain in the New Testament where *thelo* or *thelema* ever refer to determination. In each passage where those words occur the concept of desire works better than the idea of determining. Likewise, Thayer makes the first definition of *boulomai* “to will deliberately (by which I understand Thayer to mean ‘to determine’), have a purpose, be minded,” and the second “of willing as an affection, to desire.” But again, in the New Testament *boulomai/boule* rarely, if ever, refer to anything other than determination.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...

Paul uses the Greek *phroneo*, meaning to think in the sense of relating abstractions to one another; therefore, it means to regard something abstractly. The context of Philippians 2:5 deals with selflessness and humility. The believer is enjoined to have Christ's mind, Christ's mental attitude about humility. God does not make such commands if the ability is not present as the result of His gracious provision. Christians can, indeed, have the same mental attitude that Christ had.

2. Later in Philippians, Paul describes the object of the Christian's mental consideration.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.

The word translated "meditate" is the Greek verb *logizomai*, which means to consider so as to bring to a conclusion, and thus to count something to be true, to reckon or impute. Here is the basic encouragement to positive spiritual thinking in the New Testament. The believer's thought life should be, and can be, based on the positives expressed in the words noble, just, pure, love, of good report, virtue, and praiseworthy.

In addition, the verb "meditate" is a present imperative. It is, then, a command. Here the apostle commands that which is capable under the grace provision of God.

3. The Christian has been given the ability to understand Christ with reference to His characteristic of truth.

1 John 5:20

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

The word translated "understanding" (Greek, *dianoia*) comes from a large family of related words. This family, in a variety of ways, relates the thinking of the individual to his various experiences. The mind is viewed as the organ of experience-based intellect or the executor of experienced-based thought processes which result in understanding one's life events.

John is encouraging the believers in their experiential relationship to Christ in this passage. The Christian not only knows the Son of God in an *intellectual* manner, he can experience through understanding the application of the Son in his daily life. He can understand Christ and how He relates to daily living. Specifically, he can appreciate and apply spiritual truth. Truth in this passage, and others in the New Testament, simply means the ability to see things as they actually are. The Christian has the capability to see spiritual things as they are. When thinking correctly according to the principles of grace, the spiritual Christian is not deceived by the false spiritual concepts around him, especially with reference to who Christ is.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The context, going back to verse 19, deals with the new birth, and the new nature that the believer receives as the result of that new birth.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19)

The believer is “of God.” He has his source in God, but the world operates according to a different set of values. However, the new nature has been endowed with the mental capacity to relate the truth of Christ to Christian experience. The Christian needs not to be influenced by the deceptive world system tactics of the *wicked one*, a reference to the devil.

4. The believer is capable of being *transformed* with reference to spiritual service by the agency of the renewed mind.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The context of this passage deals with Satanic attack.⁶⁴ As we will see, Satan attacks in the area of the Christian’s mentality. Therefore, Paul, when dealing with the Satanic problem of age conformity, includes the truth concerning the believer’s renewed mind.

The word “mind” here is *nous*, which we will examine in Chapter 12 in some detail. At this point we must examine the meaning of the phrase “renewing of your mind.” Some versions translate the word “renewal.” Such a translation almost seems to teach that the way a believer is transformed is by the process of mind renewal that he must himself perform, but that is not the meaning of the phrase in the original. The phrase “the renewing of your mind” does not mean that the individual believer renews his mind, but that he has a mind that is the result of a process of renewing.⁶⁵ This process of renewing was performed by the Holy Spirit at the point of regeneration (Titus 3:5).

Satan desires for the Christian to misuse his priestly living sacrifice. But the believer has a “renewed mind” with which he can be transformed and ward off the attacks of Satan. As we shall see in Chapter 13, the Christian can counter the attacks that Satan wages against the his mentality by correct thinking.

God Provides Each Believer with the Indwelling Holy Spirit

According to the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit indwells the individual believer.

1 Corinthians 6:19

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

⁶⁴ We will discuss this fact in Chapter 13.

⁶⁵ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* correctly identifies the word “mind” as the objective genitive of the word “renewing.” That is to say, the mind was the object of the renewing by the Holy Spirit. The noun “renewing” is *anakainosis*, and is also used in Titus 3:5, where we are told that it is the Holy Spirit who does the renewing.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Paul states that the Holy Spirit is “in you.” He means that the Spirit indwells the believer in a unique manner. The statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19 makes it clear that the abode of the Holy Spirit is the physical body of the individual Christian. The use of the word “temple”⁶⁶ in this context indicates that the Spirit is a resident in the human body. The Greek word for temple here refers to the actual building, not to the temple compound in general. In fact, it appears to relate to the concept of the innermost sanctuary of the temple, the holiest place, called the Holy of Holies. No longer does God dwell in a stone temple, but in many temples of physical bodies.

This is the new residence of the Spirit. It began on the day of Pentecost, as was predicted by the Lord Himself in the upper room as recorded in the Gospel of John.⁶⁷ Looking forward to His ascension, the Lord twice indicated that the Holy Spirit was to come after His departure. However, the significance and application of this truth was not revealed until Paul began his ministry. Hence, we look for the truths concerning the ministries that result from the Spirit’s indwelling primarily in Paul’s epistles. However, John also refers not only to the coming of the Holy Spirit, but to His indwelling.

John 14:16, 17

And I will request the Father, and He will give to you another Advocate so that He will abide with you always, ¹⁷ the Spirit of the truth, whom the world is not able to receive because it does not recognize Him nor know Him. But you yourselves know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you.

In the above statement the Lord tells His disciples in the upper room that they will soon enjoy a new relationship with the Holy Spirit. At the time of the speaking, the Holy Spirit was not yet indwelling believers. But the Lord would make a request of the Father, who would then give another Advocate to the disciples, the Holy Spirit. That this is a new ministry is evident in the words “you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” Some have tried to explain away these words so as to deny that a new relationship to the Spirit of God was to begin after the ascension of Christ, but the simple explanation is to take the words at their face value. They are indeed consistent with what Paul says concerning the indwelling of the Spirit. The indwelling of

⁶⁶ Greek = *naos*. It refers to the inner temple, the Holy place and the Holy of Holies. The word for the temple compound is *hieron*. In the physical temple (and earlier the tabernacle), the presence of God was located in the Holy of Holies, as the Holy Spirit now inhabits the temple that consists of the Christians physical body. Truly, the Christian does not need a temple, or sanctuary, because he is a temple.

⁶⁷ The change of residence that took place on the day of Pentecost is not part of the grace ministry for the Christian, but it provides the Trinitarian requirement for that ministry. It is, indeed, the Holy Spirit who fills (controls) the believer as part of His residential indwelling. However, the residential dwelling of the Spirit in the body of the believer is not, in and of itself, the grace provision. It provides the physical setting for that provision, but the actual God-given grace application is the *filling* of the Spirit, as we shall see.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

the Spirit hadn't happened when Jesus spoke, but it was about to.⁶⁸ Later in this same discourse the Lord refers again to the future coming of the Spirit, though for a somewhat different purpose.

John 16:7

But I am speaking the truth to you. It benefits you that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I do go, I will send Him to you.

While John 14:16-17 and John 16:7 are referring to the same event, the coming of the Holy Spirit, they do so from two different perspectives. John 16:7 reinforces the fact of the Holy Spirit's future coming, and was spoken to cause the disciples to realize one reason that made it necessary for the Lord to depart from their presence. He does not mention the indwelling here as He does in John 14, as that would have weakened the argument of the context. But He does present in subsequent verses some of the work the Spirit will do during His residence on earth, namely, to convince⁶⁹ the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. John goes on to describe the convincing ministry in some detail.

However, the coming of the Spirit, which signaled a change of residency, and the indwelling of the Spirit seem to be related. When the Lord Jesus returned to heaven, He sent the Spirit. Christ's change of residency from earth to heaven prompted the Holy Spirit's change of residency from heaven to earth. But unlike the Lord Jesus Christ, who occupied but one specially prepared physical body, the Holy Spirit manifests His presence on earth through indwelling believers, that is, by manifesting His presence in a multitude of human bodies.

Was it necessary that this be so? No, the Spirit could have chosen a different mode of residence on the earth. But in the divine plan, it was decided that He would indwell believers beginning on and subsequent to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. This kind of residence prepared the way for further ministries of the Spirit within the believer.

Indwelling first took Place on Pentecost in Fulfillment of John 14:16,17.

Acts 2:1-3

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

⁶⁸ Some have confused the indwelling of the Spirit with the baptism of the Spirit. The two are separate acts. The broader truth is the residential indwelling, and baptism is one of several acts performed by the Spirit who indwells. It is that residential change which is predicted by Christ in John's gospel. The baptism of the Spirit is not predicted until the day of Christ's ascension, and was not understood to have happened until Peter remembered the prediction in Acts 10 (referred to by Peter in Acts 11). It was left to Paul to explain the doctrinal significance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁹ The Greek word ἐλέγχο carries the idea of convincing someone of something. The KJV translation "reprove" in John 16:8 misses the mark, as does the NKJV translation "convict." Furthermore, the verb is in the future indicative, indicating a single act of convincing. Convincing is not a long, drawn-out process of causing the individual to "feel guilty." Rather, it is an instantaneous act whereby the sovereign Spirit produces an attitude of being convinced.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

That this event indicates the coming of the Spirit is almost universally accepted. Acts 1:4 states, "...He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which, He said, you have heard from Me." The "promise of the Father" undoubtedly refers to what Jesus said in the upper room.

The tongues like fire sitting on each of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost was a dramatic enactment of the indwelling of the Spirit. It was a visual display to indicate that the Holy Spirit's residence on earth was not general, but specific. It relates to each individual believer.

The purpose for the prediction and the record of the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's change of residence and His indwelling of the believer is to "set up" certain ministries of the Spirit that can be applied to the Christian life. In John 15, for instance, the Lord Jesus predicts the future abiding life, and subsequent New Testament Scriptures indicate several specific ministries of the Spirit that depend on His residential indwelling, which had not happened as of Christ's teaching.

The Holy Spirit is the Enabling Force of the Christian Life.

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit the Christian has no basis for victory over the flesh. Note Galatians 5:16:

I say then: Walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Walking⁷⁰ by the Spirit consists of having a manner of life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit. The phrase "by the Spirit" is a prepositional phrase of means. "Walk by means of the Spirit," Paul says, indicating that it is actually the Spirit Who is doing the walking. If a believer attempts to control the strong desires of the flesh apart from walking by the Holy Spirit he is ultimately doomed to failure.

This sentence does not promise freedom from having the lust (strong desire) of the flesh. It says that such lust, when it occurs, will not be fulfilled when one walks by the Spirit. That is, the lust of the flesh will not become "the works of the flesh" that are listed in verse 19-21 of the same chapter. "Fulfilled" is used in one of its normal meanings of "being brought to fruition or completion."

Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the fruit of the Spirit is not attainable. Galatians 5:22 indicates a partial list of this fruit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

These characteristics are truly the Spirit's fruit, not the fruit of the individual believer. The word fruit is a perfect metaphor for something that is naturally produced by an individual, in this case, the Holy Spirit. No other *kind* of fruit could come from Him, only the positive values expressed by Paul.

⁷⁰ The Greek word for walk, *peripateo*, found some 96 times in the New Testament, is used metaphorically in several passages to refer to the idea of living a particular lifestyle. See, for example, Romans 6:4; 8:1; 8:4; 13:13. See also 2 Corinthians 4:2; 5:7; and 10:2. These are but representative examples. Throughout the post-Acts epistles, the word *peripateo* generally refers to living a lifestyle. So the imperative "Walk by the Spirit" in Galatians 5:16 could be accurately paraphrased, "Order your lifestyle by the Spirit."

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

These values are to be distinguished from other uses of these words in Scripture. They are the higher uses of the words love, joy, peace, etc. that are impossible for either the unbeliever or the carnal Christian to enjoy. This supernatural fruit goes well beyond any kind of fruit that comes from the old nature, though it may be similar in some ways.

The Holy Spirit points to Christ rather than centering on Himself. In John 15:26 the Lord predicts concerning the future indwelling Spirit:

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Some have been confused how one person of the Trinity could “send” another person. Are they not both God? How can one assume authority over another? The question is righteous, and must be answered. And the answer is found in the relationships of the members of the Trinity as a result of their agreement with one another.

The Holy Spirit *willingly subordinated Himself* to the Father and the Son in this matter. This was not a situation that was imposed upon Him, but an agreement between persons of equality.

In so subordinating Himself, the Spirit lost none of His prerogatives of deity. He remained equal with the other persons in essence and attributes. His subordination was temporary and related only to the current creation program. It is not an eternal relationship.

An unfortunate tendency of modern Christians is to misunderstand the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. In their rush to have some kind of emotional experience, which they often attribute to the Holy Spirit, they forget that He seeks no glory, nor honor. It is His primary purpose to point out the person and work of the Son. Yes, as we shall see, the Holy Spirit does fill the believer, and thereby provide a kind of necessary power, but this is not an emotional relationship at all. Nor, as we shall see, is this filling to be confused with the baptism of the Spirit, which was never designed as a means for the direct application of power in the Christian’s life.

The Holy Spirit Fills the Believer

The Bible teaches that there are two *different fillings of the Holy Spirit*. They are not identical, and cannot be made to be the same without great confusion. The filling of the Spirit in Acts 2 is a filling that is no longer available today, and is never mentioned in the grace epistles. Its final use is in Acts 19:29.

A different Greek word for fill is used in Ephesians 5:18. It is the more common word for fill, and carries a different connotation than the word in Acts 2:4.

We refer to these distinct fillings by the Spirit as *transitional* and *non-transitional* fillings. By transitional we mean that there was a transition from the program of law under which Israel operated, and the program of grace under which members of the body of Christ, the church, operates. Transitional filling, which is not available today, is distinguished in Scripture from the filling which the Christian today can enjoy. This is indicated, in part, by the two distinct Greek words that are translated fill.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Transitional Filling

The word used in Acts 2:4 (Greek, *pimplemi*⁷¹) means metaphorically to be totally controlled so that one's volition is suspended. It is used only a few times in the New Testament (twenty-four times, to be precise). It is used only in the Gospels and Acts. Note the few examples below.

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Luke 4:28

So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath...

Luke 6:11

But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Acts 5:17

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation...

Acts 19:29

So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions. (This is the final use of this word in the New Testament.)

The word *pimplemi* means to control in these kinds of passages. A person can be controlled by wrath, rage, indignation, or confusion. The word "filled" in Acts 2:4, then, has a limited use in the New Testament. As can be seen from its various uses above, it means to fill to the point of absolute control. In each case the individuals were controlled in some way, either by their own emotions or by conditions outside of themselves. They were controlled in such a way as to be out of control in another way. Their normal will was overcome, and they ceased to act in a rational manner. In Acts 2:4, they were so controlled by the Spirit that their individual wills were taken over by Him, and they performed in an impossible way.

This *pimplemi* type of filling produced speaking in foreign languages, and unlike the spiritual gift that is found later in the New Testament, this gift of tongues was totally under the control of the Spirit. These believers had no control over the language in which they spoke. The Holy Spirit gave them utterance, and they had nothing to do with it. They could not start and stop it, and they could not control it. The Holy Spirit did that.

⁷¹ Pronounced *pimp-lay-me*.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Non-transitional Filling

Non-transitional filling of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in only one passage, Ephesians 5:18 (Greek, *pleroo*⁷²), though the word itself is used 90 times in the Greek New Testament.

Ephesians 5:18

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled by the Spirit...

The contrast between being filled by the Spirit and being drunk with wine is the key to understanding this short statement. Like *pimplemi*, one of the meanings for *pleroo* is control, but there is a difference. We have seen that *pimplemi* indicates that the one filled loses control of himself, either in a limited way or entirely, and is controlled by something else. The word *pleroo*, on the other hand, indicates a control that is of a different type. Believers are unable to control the sin principle, so the Holy Spirit does it for them. He controls what is lacking in the believer, that is, any ability to control the old nature. In the physical sense, this word is used to “fill up space” or to fill what is lacking. Thus, the word metaphorically means the same thing with reference to the work of the Holy Spirit. He fills up what is lacking in the control of the believer, that is, the ability to control the sin principle.

Since the believer cannot control the works of the flesh, the Holy Spirit does so when such control appropriated through the grace program of the New Testament. It is significant that drunkenness is contrasted with being filled. First, drunkenness is one of the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. Second, it is a good illustration of the kind of control that the carnal believer is under when not walking by the Spirit. Anyone who has seen a drunk person try to walk immediately understands the precision of the illustration. Such an individual is, at least partially, under the control of the drink.

The observant student will note that the statement of Ephesians 5:18 is a command. Unlike *pimplemi*, which is never commanded, *pleroo* is. In other words, the requirement to be filled in Ephesians 5:18 is not optional. Yet, this passage does not teach *how to be filled*. The reason for this is undoubtedly found in the relationship of Paul to the believers in Ephesus. He had spent several years there, using that city as the base for his operations in Asia. The problem was not that the believers in Ephesus did not know how to be filled, because they did. Paul had taught them how when he was there. They just needed to be reminded to do that which they already knew was required. Perhaps a few Ephesians had become lax in their drinking, and had allowed themselves to become drunk on occasion. Paul reminds them that the spiritual solution for overcoming the works of the flesh is Spirit control, and that it needs to be applied to the current situation, without explaining the method for inducing such control.

The student needs to fully understand the means by which he can be controlled by the Spirit in the sense that Paul intended in Ephesians 5:18. The Christian must understand the specific way in which the Apostle Paul uses the word “flesh” as a metaphor for the principle of indwelling sin, and the believer must understand the nature of the works of the flesh that are produced by that principle of indwelling sin.

⁷² Pronounced *play-rah-oh*.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Notes

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Five

What is the Flesh?

The Three Kinds of Men

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his book *He That is Spiritual*, discusses 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:1 under the title, “Three Kinds of Men.” He was and is criticized for this terminology, but the criticisms are weak. It may be somewhat better to say “the three spiritual qualities of a man,” but the distinction is slight. What is certain is that Paul is comparing three spiritual conditions with the ability to understand the *things* of the Spirit of God. Furthermore, in the context Paul uses the word “things” to mean the things *revealed*, that is to say, the content of revelation.

1 Corinthians 2:14-3:1

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵*But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.* ¹⁶*For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

¹*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.*

The Natural Man (psuchikos)

The word “natural” in 2:14 refers to the unregenerate individual. The Greek word (*psuchikos*) is derived from the word *psuche*, which is usually translated *soul*. So the word could be translated “soulish.” In his unbelieving state, a man cannot receive or discern the things of the Spirit of God which have been revealed in Scripture.

Paul does not mean that an unbeliever cannot understand intellectually the statements found in the revelation from God. Some unbelievers are interested in the writings of Scripture, and have interpreted them accurately.⁷³ By “receive” Paul does not simply mean “understand.” There are perfectly good word families in Greek relating to understanding, but the apostle does not use any of those words. Rather he uses the simple verb *dechomai*, meaning to accept or receive. Paul does mean that the unbeliever, who may understand Scripture, simply does not accept its teaching; the unbeliever cannot not receive its truth because of a lack of spiritual capacity.

⁷³ The author has several commentaries in his library by unbelievers. Some of them do a better job at explaining the meaning of the biblical text than many so-called evangelical writers. Sometimes those who claim to believe the Bible have not taken the time to qualify themselves as independent students of Scripture, and simply repeat what they have been taught. Sometimes it is correct teaching, but sometimes it is not. And from time to time a “Bible-believing Christian” will have a doctrinal ax to grind, and will actually pervert the text to satisfy a particular view. Rarely do unbelievers do that. What they do instead, is to *sometimes* take pains to deny the spiritual truth of the statements being made, or the historical validity of Scripture.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Spiritual Man (pneumatikos)

The word “spiritual” in 1 Corinthians 2:15 refers to a spiritual Christian. The spiritual man is in a “state of spirituality,” meaning that he is, in Pauline terminology, walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) because he is filled by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). In this Corinthian passage, as with Ephesians 5:18, Paul does not explain how to become a spiritual man. Why? First, it is not within the scope of his teaching to the Corinthians. To diverge into the method for becoming spiritual would slow down his presentation of the discussion of the context, that is, the human ability to understand the revealed word of God. The second reason is because of his relationship to his audience. He had spent enough time with them that he had undoubtedly already explained to the Corinthians how to come to this state of spirituality. So we must look elsewhere for a discussion of how to become spiritual.⁷⁴

However, Paul does explain one truth about the man who is in the state of spirituality. He accepts the truth of the Word of God; he is able to “judge” it. The word translated “judge” is *diakrino*, and means more than distinguishing between that which is good and bad.⁷⁵ It carries the idea of discernment, of understanding. Unlike the natural man, the spiritual man is capable of understanding “all things.” Contextually, “all things” consist of the spiritual truth presented by the word of God. That Paul uses the word “judge” for this discernment ability shows that it is not simply intellectual understanding of the God’s word at issue, but the ability to understand its spiritual intent, and the ability to use it correctly. A natural man may very well understand the Bible intellectually, but such a man has no ability to use the Bible for what it was intended.

The state of spirituality is further identified in the following context (especially 3:1), which contrasts the spiritual man with the carnal man. The chapter break between chapters 2 and 3 is unfortunate, as the first few verses of chapter 3 continue the discussion from chapter 2.

The Carnal Man (sarkikos)

1 Corinthians 3:1 and following have been for many expositors of difficult interpretation and understanding. Why use a word like *sarkikos* (of the flesh, fleshly) to refer to a human being’s state? Is Paul referring to believers or unbelievers?

One reason for the difficulty is the unfortunate view of some that Christians cannot be characteristically sinful. Some go so far as to state that a “sanctified”⁷⁶ Christian cannot sin. How-

⁷⁴ See Chapters 7-9 where the grace method of gaining a state of spirituality is discussed in detail.

⁷⁵ *Distinguishing* between good and bad is the most common meaning of the idea of judgment, whether it be a legal decision in a court of law, a cultural decision as in a contest between contestants, or a personal act of judging between what is right and wrong.

⁷⁶ Some identify sanctification as a work of grace separate from salvation, a so-called “second work of grace.” According to them, once a person “gets sanctified” he enters a perfectly sinless state, and cannot sin. There are several errors incorporated in this approach which we will not discuss, but the basic one is a confusion with the process of sanctification, which continues throughout the Christian’s life, with a static state that occurs at the moment of salvation. This static state is sanctification from God’s perspective. God looks upon all believers as being “set apart” (the basic meaning of sanctify) to Himself. But Scripture also presents the truth of sanctification as a process, as in Romans 6. Near the end of that chapter, the apostle indicates that the believer who has ceased to be a slave to sin, but has become a slave of God, has fruit to holiness (sanctification). Such holiness is the results of correctly understanding and applying grace as a means for overcoming the sin that

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

ever, passages such as this one and others contradict that view. Here Paul addresses the Corinthians, who are carnal, as brothers. So carnality must have a limited meaning, indeed.

Now, to understand the meaning of the word *sarkikos*, one must realize that it is derived from the word *sarx*, which means “flesh.” Therefore, *sarkikos* could be translated “fleshly.” The word “carnal” is the Latin-based form with the same meaning as the Teutonic-based word “fleshly.”

What does the word flesh mean in the various contexts in which it is used? This is not a simple question because the word has at least nine different meanings in the English Bible.⁷⁷ One of those nine is of paramount importance to Paul’s discussion of Christian living. Paul uses the word *flesh* as another word for the same problem identified elsewhere in his epistle to the Romans. In discussing the problem of living a life apart from acts of unrighteousness, Paul uses the phrase “the sin.” For example, Paul asks in Romans 6:1, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” The word “sin” is actually “the sin.” Paul uses this particular form of the word to indicate not *acts of sin*, but of a *principle of indwelling sin*.⁷⁸ Indeed, in Romans 7:17 he further identifies this principle as “the sin that dwells in me.” In the very next sentence (Romans 7:18) he connects “indwelling sin” with the flesh when he states, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells....”

Paul identifies the “indwelling sin” as manifesting itself through the physical flesh in which nothing good dwells, hence, a metonymy.⁷⁹ Paul regularly uses the word flesh, the outward container, for the indwelling sin principle.

The problem of the believers in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 is simply stated.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ²I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

Paul could not deal with these believers as anything other than infants (*nepios*), a word always used negatively by Paul.⁸⁰ He identifies the specific inability that the Corinthians had in verse 2. They were not able to receive the solid food of the word of God. They were still drink-

indwells (Romans 7:17, 20).

⁷⁷ From *The Christian and His Enemies*, an unpublished masters thesis by Warren Rushton. The nine meanings of the word flesh that he lists are as follows: 1) all creatures – Genesis 6:17; 7:21; 2) all mankind – John 17:2; 3) the meat on the bones – Luke 24:39; 4) the human nature – John 1:14; Romans 9:3; 5) the days of Christ’s earthly life – Hebrews 5:7; 6) genealogical lineage – Romans 9:5; 7) an individual person – Hebrews 9:13; 8) the humanity of Christ – 2 John 1:7; 9) indwelling sin – Romans 7:17, 20.

⁷⁸ The phrase “sin principle” is the best way to express this meaning of the words “the sin” in this context. “Sin principle” simply means the tendency of the fallen human nature toward unrighteous acts, including sin acts.

⁷⁹ Metonymy is a figure of speech having to do with word substitution. One form of metonymy is to indicate the container for the thing contained. We use metonymy when we say, “the White House says...” Actually, it is the people in the White House who do the saying. Here, the container, the flesh, is used of the indwelling sin.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

ing milk, a condition that should no longer have been true, because they had been Christians long enough, going back to Paul's ministry among them, and they should have been able to learn advance spiritual truth. But they were unable. They were carnal.

To Paul the Corinthians carnality was evident because of the jealousy and strife they were exhibiting. As we will see below, jealousy and strife are included in the list of the works of the flesh. Carnality, then, is an unacceptable condition for the maturing Christian. By performing the works of the flesh, the Corinthians were identifying themselves as being in this condition.

A simple definition of carnality is as follows: An individual Christian is carnal when the sin principle (indwelling sin) controls him in such a way that he continually manifests one or more works of the flesh.

However, there are two distinctions concerning carnality that we must present at this point. We will be emphasizing these distinctions throughout the rest of this work.

1. Carnality must not be confused with Satanic attack or the attack of the world system.

Each of the *three enemies* attack in different ways, and there is no *direct* overlap in their attacks. It is true that Satan and the world system, when their attacks are realized in the individual Christian, operate through the old nature, since the new nature cannot sin (1 John 3:7-9, see below). However, the *source* of these attacks is from without, not from within, as is true when the believer is attacked by the indwelling sin principle.⁸¹

2. The solution to the attack of each of the enemies is unique. To apply the solution for one enemy to another is ineffective and spiritually dangerous. One cannot use the solution to the flesh to overcome Satanic attack or worldliness.

Although Dr. Barnhouse's analysis of the enemies is not consistent, he does make a correct point when he says: "The flesh, the world, and the devil are just as different in their modes of attack as are the varied branches of service in earthly warfare. The success of our defenses will depend upon our understanding of the differences between the three and the use of the divinely appointed methods of their defeat."⁸²

If there is any confusion of the enemies, the believer will attempt to apply the wrong solution to the problem of any given temptation. For instance, if a Christian is being attacked by Satan and attempts to use the defense method for overcoming the sin principle, he is doomed to failure. Satanic attack has a different remedy than carnality.

⁸⁰ *Nepios*, used 14 times in the New Testament, has a negative connotation. It seems to carry the sense of immaturity when used of literal children (Matthew 11:25). See Galatians 4:1, where Paul uses the cultural sense of the word to indicate a spiritual position. The writer to the Hebrews uses *nepios* of immature Christians who have spiritual problems (1 Corinthians 3:1, Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:13). The other word for baby or infant is *brephos*, a word which always has a positive connotation. For instance, the Lord Jesus was called a *brephos* at His birth (Luke 2:12, 16), and new Christians are to be *brephos* because they are to desire the pure milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2).

⁸¹ One common way to discern between the three enemies, and not a bad one, is the direction from which their attacks come. The flesh attacks from within the individual. Both Satanic attack and world system attack come from without. They are from sources external to the individual.

⁸² Barnhouse, Donald Grey, *The Invisible War*, pg. 176.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Source of the Flesh

1 John 3:9.

Whoever has been born of God is not performing sin, for His seed remains in him; and it cannot sin, because it has been born of God.

In order to avoid confusion, the source of the flesh must be identified. Understanding the source will allow the Christian to place the problem squarely within himself.

Being born of God is John's way of referring to regeneration, the reception of the new nature. Only Paul (Titus 3:5) and Peter (1 Peter 1:3) actually use the word regeneration in their discussion of the new birth.⁸³

In 1 John 3:9 the phrase I translated "it cannot sin" is usually translated "*he* cannot sin." But the grammar of the original Greek makes it clear that it is the seed⁸⁴ that cannot sin, rather than the person. The teaching is that the new nature, the seed which is born from God, cannot sin. Note the following statement by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

The source of sin is, then, the sin nature,⁸⁵ rather than the new divine nature. This important truth is pointed out in the same Epistle (1 John) in a passage which primarily teaches that the Christian does not now practice sin as he did before he received the new divine nature, but which also teaches that sin cannot be traced to the divine nature as its source. 'Not anyone that has been begotten of God practices sin, because his seed [the divine nature] in him abides, and he [with particular reference to the "seed"] is not able to sin, because of God he [the "seed"] has been begotten (3:9, literal). It is evident that the new nature is that which has been begotten of God, and because of the presence of this nature, the one in whom it dwells does not now practice sin as he did before he was saved, nor can sin ever be produced by the new nature which is from God. The passage does not teach that Christians do not sin, or even that some Christians do not sin; for there is no

⁸³ Paul uses the noun *paliggenesia* (παλιγγενεσία), while Peter uses the verb *anagennao* (ἀναγεννάω). Only Peter uses this word, twice in the same context (1 Peter 1:3; 1:23). Paul's word carries the idea of a new existence. Jesus used it in Matthew 19:28 referring to the future kingdom of God on earth. In 1 John 3:9, John twice uses the verb *gennao* (γεννάω), meaning to be born, the first time referring to the person, the second time referring to the seed.

⁸⁴ Again we see metonymy, where the word seed is substituted for the new nature. By referring to the seed (Greek, *sperma*) John identifies the birth nature of the problem. When man was born, he was born of human seed with the principle of indwelling sin inhabiting his body. But when a Christian is regenerated, he is born from a new "*sperma*," one that is begotten by God. This new nature, this seed, cannot sin, because it is born not from a human source, but from God. It is for this reason that the phrases "the new nature" and "the old nature" or sometimes "the sin nature" are used by expositors to distinguish this truth.

⁸⁵ Dr. Chafer, along with many older theologians, uses the phrase "the sin nature." This is perhaps unfortunate, as it implies that the old nature is inherently sinful. In fact, the old nature is the original Adamic nature. When Adam sinned, to his human nature was added the problem of indwelling sin, the sin principle. It was this fallen human nature that he passed on to his off-spring, and with which human beings are born today. It is probably slightly better, therefore, to refer to the old nature as being a sinful nature, rather than "the sin nature."

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

class of Christians in view, and what is here said is true of all who have been ‘begotten of God.’⁸⁶

Dr. Chafer is correct in his conclusions. However, he, unfortunately, continues to translate the phrase “it cannot sin” as “he cannot sin.” Let’s look more carefully at the Greek text.

As all first year Greek students learn, one finds the subject pronoun not as a separate word, but in the ending of the verb. The verb in question before us is *dunatai* (can). It has the word *ou* (not) immediately preceding it, and the two together could be translated by the single English word cannot. The ending of the Greek verb is *-tai*, the third person singular ending which can be translated either he, she, or it, depending on the context.

Again, we must understand how these “pronominal suffixes” work. The understood pronoun, whichever it may be, must be determined by its antecedent. The antecedent is the word to which the pronoun refers, and in this case, we must look back to the preceding clause to determine whether the pronoun should be translated as a masculine (he), a feminine (she), or a neuter (it).

What then, is the antecedent of the pronominal suffix? The rule of antecedence is simple. A pronoun (or pronominal suffix, as here) must refer back to the first *noun* to which it can refer. Working back to the previous clause, we find only one noun to which the pronoun can refer, the word translated “seed.” Now this word in Greek is *sperma*, and it is a neuter noun. Therefore, the pronominal suffix of *dunatai* (*-tai*) should be translated “it.” Hence, the correct understanding is that the seed cannot sin, which is consistent with the overall teaching of the New Testament, including 1 John 2:1-2, where it is clearly possible for the Christian to sin. However, that act of sin⁸⁷ comes from the old adamic nature as to its source, it does not come from the new nature, expressed in the word “seed.” It, the seed, the new nature, cannot sin.

This is confirmed by the first clause in verse nine (Whoever has been born of God is not performing sin). The key here is the word which I have translated “performing.” Other versions translate it “does,” or “practices,” or even “keeps on doing.” The Greek word is *poieo*, and it has several possible nuances in the original language. In this context it is in the present tense, undoubtedly signifying an on-going activity, or a regular activity. It is included here by John to avoid using the *verb* for sin. Rather, he uses the *noun* for sin, and makes it the object of the verb “performing.” John does not say, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin,” as some versions have it. This translation may give the idea that the person cannot sin, which is not John’s intention. He says, if we may expand our translation to include the concept of the continuative present, that the individual who has been born from God does not continually perform sin, not that he does not have the capability to sin, as some teach.

The question arises, then, how does one identify the source of the attack? How do we know when we are being attacked by the flesh as opposed to Satan or the world system? The apostles identified the nature of the attacks to indicate the source of the attack. So we will proceed to discuss the nature of the attacks of the flesh.

⁸⁶ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He that is Spiritual*, pg 116.

⁸⁷ Not the “temptation to sin,” since that can come from any one of the three enemies, the flesh, the devil, or the world system. While it can be tempted to sin, the new nature cannot succumb to that temptation. It cannot sin.

Chapter Six

***What are the Works of the Flesh as Listed in Galatians 5:19-21?*⁸⁸**

Before we can fully identify what the Bible means by being spiritual, we must identify the nature of the problem. The phrase “works of the flesh” refers to those unrighteous activities that have their source in the principle of indwelling sin, in the flesh. They might be termed “the works *from* the flesh.” Since Paul identifies the flesh with the indwelling sin principle, we must determine how to identify the nature of the attacks of the flesh.

Paul does not list the works of the flesh simply to forbid the believer from practicing them. It does not take long in one’s reading of the list to know that these are bad things that should be avoided. There is no need to tell a person that.

Why then, if it is not to tell Christians not to do them, are these works listed? Paul provides the list to the believer for *identification purposes only*. The Christian needs to recognize the fleshly nature of the problem in his life, and the best way to understand how the flesh works is to present a categorical list. One thing that the list does is to tell the Christian the nature of the flesh problem as distinguished from Satanic attack and worldliness. Only by applying the grace-based defense against the flesh as presented in the New Testament can the believer be successful in overcoming these manifest problems.

However, this list is not complete. Paul makes that clear, in the last statement, “and the like.” So this is a representative list of a category of problems.⁸⁹ A study of the attacks of the other enemies will distinguish between the very nature of these attacks and those of the other enemies. In other words, Paul expects his readers to further search Scripture for other such works, and to distinguish them from the temptations of the devil and the world.

Generally speaking, an individual is not tempted in every area of the works of the flesh. If a person is tempted in the areas of sexual perversion, he may not have any problem with other temptations, even sexual ones. An adulterer may not have any desire to enter into a homosexual relationship, for instance, and a person who has a problem controlling his temper may have no temptations toward illicit sexual relations at all. Every individual is a unique entity, and each Christian should examine his own strengths and weakness in this area. He should identify his “lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16) before it turns into a work of the flesh so as to provide the biblical remedy for that temptation.

The first four works are of a sexual nature. The sex act itself, of course, is a legitimate act when carried out in accordance with the Biblical doctrine of sexual relationships. However, like so many legitimate acts, sex can be perverted, and there are four distinguishing works that iden-

⁸⁸ We might well ask, “Why are the works of the flesh listed in the Bible, specifically in Galatians 5:19-21?” The reason will become evident as we study the individual works.

⁸⁹ Many passages occur where words from the Galatians list are associated with other wrong-doing of the same category. There are literally dozens of activities that come under the phrase “works of the flesh.”

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

tify that perversion. All perversions of the God-given sexual act, whether listed here or not, are to be categorized as works of the flesh.

Adultery - μοιχεία (*moichia*)

Adultery is engaging in sexual intercourse by a married person with someone not his or her legitimate mate. The noun adultery is only used 4 times in the New Testament, and the verb form “to commit adultery” 6 times, but the Hebrew word normally translated adultery was used, both literally and figuratively, in the Old Testament some 31 times. Adultery was a serious offense under the Mosaic law. It was so serious, in fact, that the penalty for the act was death (Leviticus 20:10, q. v.). Following the statement of Leviticus 20:10 the Lord delineates further forms of adultery, and other sexual perversions. All of them are given the death penalty.⁹⁰ This fearsome punishment was the means of controlling the illicit sexual urge.

Under grace today, the death penalty is no longer applied because grace provides a better way to control sexual problems. The law was, according to Paul, a “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7). There was no other way under law to control the problem, since the provisions under grace were not available at that time. As we study further, we will see that grace provides a means for overcoming not only the problem of adultery, but the rest of the works of the flesh, and is superior to the law, if it is correctly understood and applied.

Fornication - πορνεία (*porneia*)

Interestingly, fornication is not mentioned at all in the law of Moses. In fact, the normal Hebrew word for fornication is first found in Ezekiel 16:5, and all 20 uses are also found in Ezekiel.⁹¹ The word for fornication is usually, in the King James Version, translated by the more accurate word *whoredom*. Unfortunately, in that version and others, the word correctly translated adultery is also translated *whoredom*. Such a mishmash of translations has blurred the distinction between the two concepts.⁹²

The Greek word used here in Galatians (*porneia*), is found 26 times in the New Testament. It is clearly derived from the idea of prostitution, and indeed, the word for prostitute is a different form of this very word. However, it seems to be a word of broader meaning than adultery. Indeed, Jesus uses both words in Matthew 5:32:

⁹⁰ Israel was designed as a theocracy. God Himself ruled. As such, it was necessary for the country to remain pure. However, by New Testament times, Israel as a theocracy did not exist, nor does it today. This was one reason that Jesus did not permit the death penalty for this offense, and He forgave the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). Some foolish people today believe that the American government should re-institute the death penalty for sexual perversion. But the U. S. is not a theocracy, and if such a death penalty could be enjoined today, one could not legitimately look to Scripture for justification. It is possible that in the future theocracy when the kingdom of God is established on earth, such a penalty may be re-instituted. At that time Jesus Christ Himself will rule, and His judgment will be righteous and without error.

⁹¹ Several times the King James Version incorrectly translates the Hebrew word for adultery as fornication.

⁹² The distinction is also somewhat blurred by the fact that the normal word for fornication, or whoredom, is derived from the same Hebrew root as the word for adultery. One must be careful to note which Hebrew word is used in any given situation to be sure of his facts.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

The word translated “sexual immorality” in vs. 32 above is actually *porneia*. Therefore, fornication is any type of sexual perversion; it is an overall term referring to sexual immorality outside of the marriage bond. It is directly related to the visiting of prostitutes, something that was not covered directly in the Mosaic code, except under the term *adultery*.

Uncleanness - ἀκαθαρσία (*akatharsia*)

Under the law, uncleanness referred either to physical disease or ceremonial impurity. For physical impurity the Old Testament individual was cleansed either by water, or in some cases, the passage of time, or a sacrifice. Certain diseases, such as leprosy, were dealt with by physical separation. Lepers were required to announce their presence and stay separated from the non-infected.⁹³ But ceremonial uncleanness is related to the holiness of Israel who were to be separated from the nations around them. Certain animals were unclean, not for health reasons as is so often taught, but so that the Israelites would not eat the same food as the gentiles. Certain activities, such as handling dead bodies, caused ceremonial uncleanness. This idea of uncleanness was carried over into Matthew 23:27, but with the added moral idea of being filthy:

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like whitewashed tombs, which outside indeed appear beautiful, but inside are full of the bones of dead men and every kind of uncleanness.

But uncleanness as a work of the flesh goes far beyond the Old Testament symbolism. It is a term of intense sexual immorality.⁹⁴ God considers certain perverted sexual sins as causing impurity in a special sense. Interestingly, uncleanness is linked four times with fornication (Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; Revelation 17:4), while at the same time being distinguished from it. Perhaps they both are considered specific forms of fornication, though this is not explicitly stated. Uncleanness is closely linked with homosexuality in Romans 1:24-26, which gives us a clue as to how it is used in Galatians. Therefore, this word most likely refers to sexual perversion, such as homosexuality, bestiality, and so forth. Such sexual perversion is to be removed from the life of the spiritual believer by the power of the Spirit.

Under the law, those who engaged in homosexuality were to be executed (Leviticus 20:13). Without the power of the indwelling Spirit, there was no defense against perverted sexual acts for those so inclined. Homosexuality, for instance, has an ancient history as recounted by Paul in Romans 1:26-27.

Today, one method that the homosexuals use against those of us who disagree with their sexual choice is name-calling. They use terms such as “homophobia” to deflect their opponents from identifying their immorality. No Christian should give way under these attacks. And for a

⁹³ See Leviticus 13 and 14. Extensive instructions were given to Israel by the Lord concerning infections skin diseases, which are collectively termed leprosy. Several periods of separation are commanded of seven days each. This is clearly different than ceremonial uncleanness. It is designed to keep the infection from spreading.

⁹⁴ Other contexts use it in a broader sense, such as Romans 6:19 and 1 Thessalonians 2:3 and 4:7.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Christian who is inclined toward homosexuality, and some are, it is to be overcome using the grace available today. The solution for homosexuality in the unbeliever is faith in the gospel of salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Rather than condemning the homosexual or other sexually immoral persons, biblical Christians should give him or her the gospel, and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work. Verbal condemnation should be avoided, as it simply builds a wall between the believer and the unbeliever, making communication of the gospel difficult if not impossible.

Licentiousness - ἀσέλγεια (*aselgeia*)

Licentiousness, which could be translated *debauchery*, is a further stage in the process of sexual immorality. The word is used 9 times in the New Testament. In Romans 13:13 the word is associated with the noun *koite*, from which the English coitus comes. Its literal meaning is “bed,” but by metonymy it came to mean sexual intercourse. It is used both positively and negatively in secular Greek and in the New Testament, where the writer to the Hebrews uses it of the marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4). In the negative sense, *koite* refers to having sex with someone not one’s spouse, which makes it a perfect partner for *aselgeia*.

In the context of this list, licentiousness is the next stage after uncleanness toward complete sexual depravity. J. B. Lightfoot makes an interesting statement:

“A man may be ἀκάθαρτος (*akathartos*, unclean) and hide his sin; he does not become ἀσέλγης (*aselges*, licentious) until he shocks public decency.”⁹⁵

A person who is licentious enters into public exhibitions of illicit sex, publicly sharing his or her bed with multiple partners. We might believe that this is a rather modern evil, but it has been around at least since the time ancient Sodom, and temple prostitution dates back at least to the Babylonian Empire.⁹⁶ It was widespread by the time of the New Testament writings. The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was a center for such practices. According to ISBE:

The ritual of the temple services consisted of sacrifices and of ceremonial prostitution, a practice which was common to many of the religions of the ancient Orient, and which still exists among some of the obscure tribes of Asia Minor.⁹⁷

Paul, then, was including a regular practice of his time, something that was ancient in its practice. Licentiousness is still practiced today, and is becoming more widespread in the popular media and on the internet.

Idolatry - εἰδωλολατρεία (*eidolatreia*).

Idolatry, the worship of carved or “graven” images, is listed immediately after the various unrighteous sexual acts probably because in actual practice, such worship was associated with sexual perversion. While the practice was not limited to sexual perversion, in the idol’s temples of Paul’s day, such perverse acts were common.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Lightfoot, J. B. *The Epistle to the Galatians*, pg. 210.

⁹⁶ Unger, Merrill, ed. *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. “Harlot, Whore,” pg. 536-7.

⁹⁷ Orr, James, ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. “Diana; Artemis,” 1939. Electronic Edition: Bibleworks.

⁹⁸ See the comments on the temple of Artemis in Ephesus in the discussion of the previous work of the flesh.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Idolatry was a major evil in the Old Testament. The second of the ten commandments found in Exodus 20:4-6 states:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Because of the fallen human nature of the Israelites, the commandment was regularly disobeyed. It wasn't until after the 70 years in Babylon that Israel as a nation finally gave up idolatry. But the basic problem still persists today, and the spiritual cause of idolatry is not addressed by the law. It is a work of the flesh, and can only be consistently overcome by the application of grace principles.

The simple meaning of the word is clear, the worship of false gods represented by idols or images of some kind. The Greek word *eidolatreia* contains a form of the word idol, *eidolon*, which, in turn is derived from *eidos*, meaning that which is seen, something having a visible, external form. In the strict literal sense, idols are always visible to the eye. But metaphorical idolatry is also included under the term.

The last part of *eidolatreia* (*latreia*) means worship in the ceremonial sense. No longer do Christians need an actual representation of a specific false god to perform idolatry. Any illegitimate act of worship, any act that is contrary to the biblical doctrine of worship, is idolatry. One element that is true of biblical worship in both Testaments is the need for sacrifice. One cannot truly worship without it, and so the idolatrous person is making sacrifices in order to serve a false god, and that false god may not be a simple statue. It may, in fact, be any number of physical elements or requirements, even religious ones. And as we shall see, greed to the point of making sacrifices to gain money, is a form of idolatry.

Warren Rushton makes the following cogent statement:

“When Paul came to Athens, he found the city full of images (Acts 17:16). These people were attempting, in their ignorance, to worship gods by physical representations. To be religious in this way is by no means a spiritual thing; it is a work of the flesh. This activity of the flesh is very common in carnal Christians. An elaborate form of ‘public worship’ is of utmost importance to them. A simple meeting together, especially on Sunday morning, to hear the Word of God expounded without the trappings of doxologies, long pulpit prayers, choir responses, etc., would severely offend their esthetic nature. They are not satisfied with the simplicity of breaking of bread, fellowship and the ministry of the Word. They must have the approved liturgy before they feel like they have been to church.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Rushton, *Enemies*, pgs 25, 26.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Like the other works of the flesh, idolatry is a regular expression of carnality. As the biblical teaching about true worship is ignored, carnal man substitutes for it all kinds of activities which he calls worship, but which God does not recognize as true worship.¹⁰⁰

Another form of idolatry is mentioned in Colossians 3:5:

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Dealing with the same kinds of problems as in Galatians, that is, with works of the flesh, Paul identifies covetousness as idolatry. This may seem somewhat far fetched at first, but a careful examination of the word “covetousness” will clear up the problem.

The Greek word translated covetousness is *pleonexia*. It was a normal word for greed, particularly monetary greed. Now, as we have seen, idolatry is false worship that often involves making sacrifices. When a person sacrifices in order to fulfill his greediness, he is committing idolatry. Even Christians fall into the “work ethic” view of living, so that in striving to gain material goods they sacrifice their presence with their family, and neglect their spouse and children. One may even lie to one’s self, believing that such sacrifices are for the family, when, in fact, they are simply to gain money. Such is modern idolatry.¹⁰¹

Sorcery - φαρμακεία (*pharmakeia*)

Sorcery does not seem to be categorized with other works of the flesh. Unlike the four sexual works above, and the five works of attacking or striking out against others that follow, it seems to stand alone. The English word “pharmacy” is derived from the Greek word *pharmakeia*. The word was associated in ancient times with drugs, even as it is today. How did the word come to be translated sorcery, an altogether fitting representation?

The word came to mean “witchcraft” (KJV), or sorcery (a better translation) because of its close relationship to drugs in ritualistic religions and religious superstitious awe. Those who tamper in spiritualism or witchcraft are not under the control of Satan, as is commonly thought, but of their own flesh. Satan and his demons no doubt may use sorcery to deceive people, but they

¹⁰⁰ The biblical doctrine of worship contains virtually none of the modern ideas about worship. In fact, worship in the New Testament is not limited to a particular place. The New Testament assemblies knew nothing of worship services, or even the concept of corporate worship as it is now practiced. True worship today can no longer be practiced in buildings that constitute sanctuaries, as it was in the Old Testament, but in the physical body of the individual believer.

Furthermore, no Scripture teaches that the purpose of the gathering of the saints is for worship. Rather, the church gathered for fellowship with other believers and the ministry of the word, elements that could not be practiced in isolation. Biblical worship, however, is often practiced in a solitary situation.

¹⁰¹ It appears to this author that this particular work of the flesh illustrates a problem that is true of all of them. Money, like sex, is not evil of itself, but the greedy attitude toward gaining wealth can lead to evil activity. This shortsighted view is actually a problem with how one sees God and His character. Greed, particularly, is sometimes predicated by such things as financial security, especially in old age. But the only security a Christian truly has is found in God. This is not to say that a person should not plan for retirement, but when that becomes the overriding purpose to his life, along with having other material goods and physical comfort, carnality is the cause. He is an idolater.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

do not produce it, for its source is the sin principle that indwells each human being. Even today, illegitimate drug use is associated with false and even Satanic rituals in cult religions.

See Acts 19:19, where it appears the pagan Ephesians were guilty of practicing this:

Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Christians should not dabble in the occult or in sorcery. The author has sometimes been asked at this point about performing magicians. Such things as slight-of-hand or magic acts, where the individuals are performing tricks that are recognized as such, do not fulfill the biblical definition of sorcery. Some performers have used the occult as a foil, but only the very gullible will succumb to such acts as being real.

But those who seriously try to predict the future by such things as palm-reading or using the signs of the zodiac are engaged in sorcery. Christians recognize that such people as charlatans, and unbelievers may indeed be taken in by them, but the spiritual Christian will recognize their false religious practices for what they are and avoid them. They are, indeed, works of the flesh.

Hatreds - ἔχθρα (*echthra*)

The next five works of the flesh can be categorized together. They all express some form of striking out against others, though not necessarily in exactly the same way, or with the same purpose. The first work listed, hatred, seems to be a broader term than the others, and includes God as one of its objects of striking out. As with the four sexual works listed above, any illegitimate act of striking out against a person or persons is a work of the flesh.¹⁰²

The noun hatred, *echthra*, is used only six times in the New Testament, where the KJV translates *enmity*, except for here. It has also a more common adjective form, *echthros*, which is used some 25 times; it is almost universally translated “enemy” in the New Testament, meaning “one who hates,” and is therefore actively against someone else. It is used a number of times of Satan and his minions. But it is also used of humanity being an enemy of God and in need of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:21).

A significant use of the noun hatred (*echthra*) is found in Romans 8:7:

Therefore, the mind of the flesh is hatred toward God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be.

Rather than being translated “enmity,” as it is in the New King James Version and others, the word should be translated “hatred,” for the mind of the flesh, the carnal mind, is hatred against God personified. Furthermore, it is not subject to God’s law, and the reason for this is stated: it cannot be. The carnal mind is the human mind in its fallen state. The fleshly individual is controlled by that fallen human nature through indwelling sin, and therefore hates God. The seriousness of this work of the flesh is obvious, for it is not directed solely at other believers; it is also directed toward God Himself.

¹⁰² One act of striking out, wrath, may or may not be a work of the flesh, depending on the circumstances and attitude of the individual doing the striking. We will discuss this word under the heading of anger (*thumos*).

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

One finds another significant use of this word in James 4:4 where both the words hatred (*echthra*, translated “enmity” in the KJV) and enemy (*echthros*) occur. Note the author’s translation below:

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred of God? Therefore, the one who wants to be a friend of the world is shown to be an enemy of God.

A person who has an affectionate regard (*philia*, translated “friendship”) for the world system is hating God. So not only is hatred a work of the flesh, it is also related to the world system, the third enemy of the believer. Indeed, it is this statement in James where we understand the world system to be an enemy of God, and therefore an enemy of the believer.

As a *work* of the flesh, hatred is not simply an attitude, as we generally use the word in modern English. Rather, it is the *attitude realized*, the activity or practice that seeks to do damage or harm to its object.

Here in Galatians 5:20 only in the Greek New Testament is the word plural, probably meaning a characteristic state of relationships with several and various objects. The carnal believer can be hating many persons at the same moment, and this hatred seeks to harm, in whatever way possible, those being hated.

It is difficult for us to comprehend that a Christian could hate God in such a way as to actually attempt to do Him harm, but this is, in fact, the practice of one who has this work of the flesh operating in his life.

Contentions - ἔρις (*eris*)

The next work of striking out is translated “contentions” in the NKJV. The NASB translates it “strife” in its singular form. But the best translation is undoubtedly “argument” or “arguments,” though it is hardly ever translated such in commercial translations.

The word *eris* occurs 9 times in the New Testament. It refers to the inability to get along with others, having arguments. See Romans 1:29, where the word is translated “debate” in the KJV, while the NKJV follows the NASB in translating it “strife.”

The word seemed to have a strong verbal element to it. Thayer defines it with the word “wrangling,” an older English word that carried the idea of having arguments over inconsequential things. The Liddell-Scott lexicon uses the words “quarrel” and “disputation” to describe it. The older use of the word seems to mean “battle-strife.”¹⁰³

Paul paired *eris* with the next word, jealousy, not only here, but in Romans 13:13:

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

¹⁰³ *The Abridged Liddell-Scott Greek-English Lexicon*. Electronic edition.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Romans 13:13 word translated “strife” is *eris*, while the word translated envy is *zelos*, jealousy, not envy at all.¹⁰⁴ As we will see when we discuss jealousy below, *eris* and *zelos* are categorically similar, but individually distinct from the New Testament idea of envy.¹⁰⁵

It should not be a surprise that individuals in the Corinthian assembly had this carnality problem, reported by those of the household of Chloe according to 1 Corinthians 1:11:

For it was reported to me about you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are arguments among you.

The translation “arguments” is apt. Arguments tend to breakout in churches when some of those in attendance are carnal. See 1 Corinthians 3:3 where *eris*, translated “strife” in the NKJV, is listed among the problems of the carnal believers in that assembly. This problem continued even after the writing of 1 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 12:20, where the NKJV again translates the word “contentions,” Paul was concerned that when he arrived he would find this problem along with others still plaguing the believers there.

This form of striking out, then, is basically argumentation, striking out at others verbally. A carnal Christian may argue over anything and everything that he can.

Jealousies - ζήλος (*zelos*)

The Greek word *zelos* is difficult because it is used in both a good and a bad sense in Scripture. It is translated “zeal” often in the KJV, as well as “zealous.”¹⁰⁶ In this connection note Acts 5:17-18 where the NKJV translates the word “indignation.” It carries a negative connotation associated with striking out:

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation (jealousy),¹⁸ and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

What actually happened was that they were “filled with jealousy and laid their hands on the apostles...” This might be called “jealousy realized” in the bad sense. An individual who is jealous in this way is controlled by his fallen human nature through indwelling sin. Like the unbelievers in Acts 5, Christians can also act in this zealous way when they are carnal.

However, in 2 Corinthians 7:6-7 Paul uses *zelos* in the sense of zeal in a very positive way of the Corinthians,

Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was

¹⁰⁴ It is sad to observe how often translations such as the KJV and the NKJV (and others) confuse translations of words just for the sake of variety. A better translation is: *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in arguments and jealousy.*

¹⁰⁵ However, Paul did associate *eris* with envy (*phthonos*) in Philippians 1:15, though for a different reason, which we will discuss under “envy” below.

¹⁰⁶ There is no lexical difference in Greek between the words zeal and jealous. They are identical, at least in the negative sense, because a jealous person and a zealous person fit perfectly into the same definition. Zeal, as a positive act, is a different content of the word, and must be kept distinct from the negative definition.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

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

Clearly, *zelos* is not always a negative work (see also 2 Corinthians 9:2 and 11:2), but can be positive. As a work of the flesh, however, we must concentrate on those passages that present this word as a violation of righteousness.

Paul characterizes himself in his unbelief as being “zealous” in Philippians 3:6:

...concerning zeal, persecuting the church...

This use is instructive in showing that zeal was not simply an attitude, but an action, a zealous action, in this case, persecution, a form of striking out. It is, in fact, jealousy in action.

As a *lust* of the flesh, zeal (jealousy) is an emotional *response* (not simply the emotion itself), sometimes because a person feels that he has been attacked, or his belief system has been attacked. Paul was jealous for his viewpoint as a Hebrew. As a *work* of the flesh, zeal is used as the act of striking out against an opponent because of possible personal loss, or possible loss in position or authority.

Acts 7:9 illustrates this truth:

And the patriarchs, having become jealous, sold Joseph into Egypt.

The patriarchs became jealous and sold their brother because they were afraid he was trying to usurp their position. They came to this wrong conclusion because of Joseph’s recounting of his dreams. The jealous person goes about to maintain his position of authority even to the point of harming another. However, jealousy or zeal is not to be confused with envy (see below).

Outbursts of Anger - θυμός (*thumos*)

The translation of the NKJV is well-taken. The word *thumos* does not refer to the internal feelings that we sometime call anger. It means the outbursts of anger, the act of striking out orally or physically against the object with whom the carnal person is angry. Unfortunately, *thumos* is translated *wrath* in some versions, including several times in the KJV, but is not to be confused with *orges*, the actual word for wrath, which is not always a work of the flesh since it is a legitimate response in certain situations.

Anger, on the other hand, refers to loosing one’s temper, “flying off the handle,” an outburst of anger, and is often excused as an uncontrollable personality trait. According to Barclay, the emphasis of this word is something quick, or of short duration, blazing up and dying down.¹⁰⁷ In its 18 occurrences in the New Testament, it always carries this same idea. See 2 Corinthians 12:20 where the word *thumos* is listed along with several related works of the flesh not found in this list. All of them deal with some kind of striking out or strife.

As stated, *orges*, legitimately translated wrath, has a positive as well as negative connotation. Romans 2:8 is an example of its “work of the flesh” use (see also Ephesians 4:31 and Colossians 3:8), while its legitimate exercise is seen in Romans 13:4, where it is used of the legitimate act of a representative of secular government against evil-doers. Likewise, *orges* is the

¹⁰⁷ Barclay, William, *Flesh and Spirit*, pg. 52.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

word that is used regularly of the coming *wrath of God*, as in Colossians 3:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 2:16.

The word *orges* means rightly the act of striking out *physically*, not orally like anger. Anger can produce wrath, but it is not necessary that it do so. It is this idea that explains the statement of Paul in Ephesians 4:26, where both the KJV and the NKJV translate the word “be wrathful” as “be angry.” This confusion has brought consternation to many Christians, but when one realizes that anger (*thumos*) is not the word here, but the verbal form of wrath (*orges, orgizo*)¹⁰⁸ the statement becomes understandable. From time to time it may be necessary for a Christian to be wrathful, but it is never legitimate to be angry, hence one must not let wrath be caused by or result in an angry outburst.

Disputes - ἐριθεία (*eritheia*)

The fifth and final word dealing with the idea of striking out is *eritheia*. The word is translated “disputes” in the NKJV and “strife” in the KJV, and is actually a socially defined word that came to mean the act of playing politics. By the New Testament times it referred to the political promotion of one’s party or political affiliation. It may seem strange that this is listed as a work of the flesh, but this is indeed a work that often occurs in politicized local churches. When one begins to participate in running for office to gain control of the local assembly, this work of the flesh becomes paramount. Paul includes the word in his list in 2 Corinthians 12:20 of the problems he was afraid he would find in the assembly in Corinth when he arrived.

The word is of ancient origin, and carries the idea of selfish ambition for political purposes. Marvin Vincent makes the following observation concerning *eritheia*:

From ἐπίθοος (*erithos*), hired servant, ἐριθεία (*eritheia*) is, primarily, *labor for hire*. . . , and is applied to those who serve in official positions for hire or for other selfish purposes, and, in order to gain their ends, promote party spirit or faction.¹⁰⁹

W. E. Vine agrees:

eritheia denotes ambition, self-seeking, rivalry, self-will being an underlying idea in the word; hence it denotes party-making. It is derived, not from *eris*, strife, but from *erithos* a hireling; hence the meaning of seeking to win followers...¹¹⁰

Thus the word refers to selfish ambitions which cause a person to politically undermine another.¹¹¹ Paul warned the Philippians against it in Philippians 2:3:

¹⁰⁸ The verbal form *orgizo* is used 8 times in the New Testament. It is used both of the act of being wrathful (see Matthew 22:7) and the attitude that may or may not preceded the act of wrath (see Luke 14:21 and 15:21).

¹⁰⁹ Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, IV, pg. 165.

¹¹⁰ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. “Faction, Factionous.” Electronic edition, E-sword.

¹¹¹ Part of the problem is that the modern church has abandoned the New Testament ideal of church leadership. In New Testament times the church knew nothing of congregational government, voting for office, or any such thing. Elder leadership was and is the biblical ideal, and such leadership was based on the qualities required to meet the position, not the popularity or political position of the individual seeking the position. Congregational government allows politics into the running of the local assembly, and hence makes a place for carnality.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Here the word is translated “selfish ambition” but is contrasted with considering “others better than himself.” A politician always thinks he is best for whatever position he seeks and that he has the right to make decisions for others. Clearly the sincere Christian needs to avoid secular politics as well as “in church” politics. Today, there is a tendency for Christians to become involved in government issues. This is because, in the United States at least, government participation is allowed for all. This was not the case in Paul’s day. But still today the promotion of a secular party spirit is a foray into carnality.¹¹²

Dissensions - διχοστασία (*dichostasia*)

The word *dichostasia* occurs only 3 times in the New Testament, and one of those is a textual problem (see 1 Corinthians 3:3, where the critical text drops the word because of its reliance on certain manuscripts. The majority text retains it.). It is the first of two words in the list in Galatians that deals with factions or divisiveness, although one can readily see that it could be part of the same mind-set as playing politics. According to A.T. Robertson, *dichostasia* is an “old word for ‘standing apart,’ cleavages.”¹¹³

One of the major problems of the carnally minded in Corinth was the dividing into cliques or groups. The first three chapters of 1 Corinthians deals with those groups who gathered around the names of “important” individuals. Paul summarizes the problem in 1 Corinthians 3:4:

For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

This rhetorical question by Paul demands a “yes” answer. Such individuals are fleshly, and have need of a spiritual remedy. Certainly, modern assemblies are not immune to such behavior; indeed, cliquishness in assemblies has been a problem throughout church history. Sometimes it is the result of unbelievers becoming associated with the political structure of the church. It can be an extension of “playing politics,” the previous work of the flesh.

Heresies - αἱρέσεις (*haireisis*)

The second word dealing with factions is heresies, *haireisis*. The word comes from the idea of holding to an opinion. That opinion may be right or wrong, but a heretic is a person who causes divisions because of leading people to follow his opinion, regardless. He is, in fact, a divisive individual.

¹¹² This is not a popular position. Many Christians believe that they have a responsibility to “Christianize” the political process. They have been taught that the United States is a “Christian nation.” This is simply not true. Yes, Christians have been allowed to operate freely, though at this writing, such liberty is under attack, and has been for some decades. Such free operation could go away altogether. Christians must not base their Christian faith on political expedience or experience.

Some years ago, the author was roundly criticized, and even vilified, for holding this position. But Scripture is clear. The Christian’s citizenship is in heaven, and he should “let nothing be done through political ambition or conceit.”

¹¹³ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*. “Romans 16:17.” Electronic Edition. E-sword.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Hairesis, denotes...a choosing, choice (from *haireomai*, to choose); then, that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects...¹¹⁴

The popular view that heresy is the holding of false doctrine cannot stand. First, all believers go through processes of discovery and everyone at one time or another changes from the false to the true, or even from the true to the false. This of itself is not heresy, but is simply the process of learning engaged in by the human and fallible student. Second, Paul makes it clear that the one who commits heresy is dangerous to the stability of the local assembly. Note Titus 3:10-11:

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

“Divisive man” is *hairetikos*, translated heretick (sic) in the KJV, from the same word family as *hairesis*, heresy. The NKJV translation gets it right! Such a man is divisive, not simply wrong in his doctrine. And this divisiveness is so severe that after two admonitions, he is to be rejected. The word “admonitions” does not refer to encouraging the individual to change his doctrine or belief system. Rather it is the encouragement to apply grace provision to his fleshly problem of divisiveness. He is “warped” or more accurately, turned aside, and sinning, because he has been put on record that his divisive actions are contrary to God’s requirement.

Paul tells Titus, a man responsible for establishing leadership in local assemblies in Crete, to reject such a person. The implication of the word “reject” is to refuse to associate with him, to not allow him to participate in the local assembly. Such an act is indeed harsh, but the very biblical existence of the assembly may very well depend upon it.¹¹⁵

Therefore, heresy is not simply holding to false doctrine, though it may include that. Five times it is translated “sect” in the KJV, and not necessarily in a negative sense. However, note 2 Peter 2:1, where it is linked to false teachers. One reason that heresy is so odious, is because false teachers who are opposed to the clear teaching of the New Testament attempt to draw believers to become their followers.

But any carnal Christian can fall into divisiveness. Even those who are correct in their doctrine, those who desire for others to come to a truly correct understanding from the Bible, can enter into this error.

One example from the author’s own experience will illustrate this. As a young man he saw a church that had serious doctrinal problems literally torn to pieces by a man who, though he held to correct doctrine, became divisive. In his zeal to bring people to the truth, he drew several people after himself, and because of his carnality, misdirected them spiritually. As it turned out, he had done this kind of thing before and with the same result always. He would depart and start a new church, and would pull people from the original church which he considered in error. But

¹¹⁴ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. “Heresy.” Electronic edition. E-sword.

¹¹⁵ This is not the unbiblical act of “shunning” as practiced by some cults. A Christian should never shun another individual, believer or not. Rather, the heretic is no longer allowed to participate in the assembly. But otherwise, Christians should be friendly and encouraging to such an individual, hoping to influence him away from his carnality so that he can again enjoy the fellowship of the assembly.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

the new church was unstable, and he soon lost interest in bringing those people to any level of maturity. As a result, his consistent carnal practice harmed rather than helped believers.

The great lesson to be learned from this is that we who hold the truth are not responsible, or capable, of fixing another person's errors. That is the Lord's business, and it must be left to Him. The best advice to give a person caught up in a church that has serious doctrinal error is this: study the word, and act upon it not because of what others say, but because you have personally come to an understanding through of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If you should be compelled to leave such a church, do not encourage others to follow you out. You should let them approach you, if they will, for explanation of your actions from Scripture, but unless the Lord brings them to the conclusion that they should leave, they shouldn't be led to do so by you.

Envy - φθόνος (phthonos)

According to Vine,

Envy is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others: this evil sense always attaches to this word...¹¹⁶

Vine further distinguishes envy from jealousy:

The distinction lies in this, that "envy" desires to deprive another of what he has, "jealousy" desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself.¹¹⁷

Sadly, Vine seems to understand jealousy in the more modern sense of the word than the way it was used biblically. The difference between envy and jealousy lies in the fact that the two lusts, resulting in specific works, are almost directly opposite. As stated, jealousy strikes out because a fear of lost of position, respect, power, influence, etc. Such was the case of the religious leaders when they laid hands on the apostles. They saw a movement that would have eroded their power and prestige. Likewise, Paul persecuted Christians, as he felt they were undermining his Hebrew faith.

But envy is just the opposite. Vine is quite correct when he states that envy desires to deprive someone of what he has, but it does not stop there. He will take steps to gain what another has, even if it does not deprive the other person.

Now Vine defines the words in terms of feelings, but Paul uses the words in terms of the *acts* that result from the feeling, which feeling he calls *the lust of the flesh*. As a *work of the flesh*, envy is the activity of trying to deprive another or gain the same thing another has because of the feeling of displeasure, rather than simply the displeasure itself. It was because of envy that the chief priests delivered Christ to Pilate in Matthew 27:17-18:¹¹⁸

Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

¹¹⁶ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary*. "Envy, Envying." Electronic Edition. E-sword.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ See also Mark 15:10.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The religious leaders rejected Christ's messiahship, and desired that people follow their teachings instead. They wanted what He had, a devout following. Hence, they took steps to deprive Him of such, with the hope that they would gain it in His stead. Thus the lust produces temptation to action, and it is the action that is the work of the flesh.

Unlike *zelos* (zeal, jealousy), *phthonos* (envy) is never used in a positive way. This is because envy simply attempts to deprive someone else of what he has. It is never used in the positive sense of zeal, striving to gain something which may be a legitimate goal. Envy is destructive only, and will always attempt to do harm to another. Jealousy, when it is a work of the flesh, strives through incorrect means for things that are not legitimate for the jealous believer to strive for, but it does not *always* attempt to harm someone else who may have that thing.

One might, however, perform both jealousy and envy at the same time. They could be so closely connected in act as to be intermingled. But they are distinct, and should be viewed as such by the discerning Christian.

Murders - φόνος (*phonos*)

Regularly Genesis 20:13 is translated "Thou shalt not kill." However, both the NASB and the NKJV translate the statement, "You shall not murder." Not all killing is murder, as is proven by the Old Testament requirements by God to execute perpetrators of certain violations, including murder. In addition, God excludes killing Israel's enemies in its national wars as murder. Brown, Driver and Briggs give the first meaning of the Hebrew word (*rashach*) in Genesis 12:13 as, "murder, slay, with premeditation."¹¹⁹ Murder, then, refers to the *unlawful* killing of human beings. It occurs some 47 times in the Old Testament, mainly in the books of Moses.

There is a textual problem in Galatians 5, however; the critical text drops this word from this list, though the majority text retains it. Even so, murder is clearly a work of the flesh, whether it is included in this list or not.¹²⁰ See Matthew 7:21 and 15:19 where it is associated with other works of the flesh. Likewise, in Romans 1:29, Paul includes murder along with other works of the flesh under the general heading of "unrighteousness."

The verbal form, *phoneuo*, translated "to kill" in the KJV, is used 18 times and always refers to murder in the illegitimate sense, not killing in general. Paul uses the verb *phoneuo*, to translate Genesis 20:13 as does Matthew in Matthew 19:18. Indeed, this is the Greek word that is universally used to translate the commandment. See Mark 10:19 and Luke 18:20.

Another noun is *phoneus*, murderer, which occurs 7 times in the New Testament. It clearly refers to someone who commits the despicable act of murder.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Brown, Driver, Briggs. *Hebrew and English Lexicon (Abridged)*. Electronic Edition, Bible Works.

¹²⁰ One would expect this particular work of the flesh to be part of the current list associated with the earlier acts of "striking out." However, Paul may have reserved it for this place because of its association with the final two works, in the list, drunkenness and revelries.

¹²¹ See 1 Timothy 1:9, where three specific forms of murder are presented. The word generally translated "manslayers" (*androphonos*) in that verse is literally "killers of males," and has a different force than *anthropoktonos* used by John.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

However, “murderer” is not to be confused with the “manslayers” (*anthropoktonos*) of John 8:44 and 1 John 3:15, a more specific kind of murder. Trench says concerning the use of this word:

Anthropoktonos, which corresponds exactly to the English manslayer and homicide...is particularly appropriate on Christ’s lips in John 8:44; no other word would have been suitable. John 8:44 alludes to Satan’s great and only too successful assault on the natural and spiritual life of all mankind. By planting sin (and its result, death) in the authors of the human race, Satan infected all of Adam and Eve’s descendants. Satan was truly *ho anthropoktonos* (the manslayer), for he would gladly have slain not just one particular person but the entire race.¹²²

The next two works of the flesh are categorically associated with murder, sometimes in the sense of cause and effect.

Drunkenness - μέθη (*methe*)

Drunkenness (*methe*) meant the same thing in the Bible that it means now – being controlled by alcohol because of over indulgence. While the Old Testament does not specifically condemn this condition, it certainly is viewed negatively. The first mention of drunkenness is found in Genesis 9:21, used of Noah, and the situation was not a commendable one. This attitude toward drunkenness was also expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 21:34 in a parable about the nearness of the coming kingdom of God,

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

The generation of Israelites upon whom the kingdom of God will come must be alert. Drunkenness, along with other things, makes such awareness less than perfect.

However, for the New Testament believer, drunkenness is not acceptable in any situation. It is a work of the flesh, and to be avoided by the application of the doctrines of grace living. This is not to say that the spiritual believer cannot drink alcoholic beverages at all, as many legalists maintain.

Drunkenness is not to be confused with drinking intoxicating beverages, which is not forbidden in the Bible. Many have gone to absurd lengths in attempting to sustain such a view, even to the point of willfully misinterpreting words such as “wine” to mean something other than its normal alcoholic meaning, and affirming that the word only means grape juice of the non-fermented kind. Because abstinence is the only thing that they can think of to control the problem, they legalistically mishandle the subject. A careful study of the word “wine” will disabuse an individual of that silly notion. However, the fact that the New Testament does allow drinking is not the same thing as saying that it allows drunkenness. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul contrasts drunkenness with being filled with the Spirit,

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...(NKJV)

¹²² R. C. Trench. *Synonyms of the New Testament*. “Murderer.” Hendrickson Publishers, 1989. pg. 327.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The word translated dissipation means actually “excess.” Paul is contrasting drinking *too much* with being filled by the Spirit.

The word “drunkenness” means to drink to the point that one is controlled by the substance. *Some people, who have a particular weakness in this area, should not drink at all.*¹²³ For those who tend toward drunkenness, wisdom teaches that abstinence is undoubtedly the most efficient remedy. However, there is no place in Scripture that forbids the drinking of alcoholic beverages, as such, and to forbid drinking by all believers is legalism, pure and simple. Indeed, some sincere believers, who would never consider getting drunk, hold that the Lord’s table must include alcoholic wine in order to be biblical.¹²⁴

The next work, revelries, is associated with drunkenness, and may sometimes be an outgrowth of it.

Revelries - κῶμος (*komos*)

The word *komos*, which is related to rioting, is used only three times in the Greek New Testament, and is always associated with excess in drinking. Indeed, it is the common Greek word for orgy. In Romans 13:13 Paul states,

*Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and licentiousness, not in contentions and jealousy.*¹²⁵

Paul connects revelry directly to drunkenness, as sexual immorality (*koite*) is associated with licentiousness (*aselgeia*), and contentions with jealousy (*zeal*). Each word represents a work of the flesh, and it is not by accident that in Romans 13:13 the words are associated in three groups of two. Revelry, sometimes translated *carousing*, is the extension of drunkenness into riotous acts that were performed during the drunken orgies which were commonly associated with the worship of various pagan deities.¹²⁶

¹²³ The author does not drink intoxicating beverages, but not for any legalistic reason. His mother was an alcoholic, and he has been told by reliable authority that such a tendency to drunkenness is probably genetic. Therefore wisdom dictates that he should not drink such substances. Others, who have no tendency toward drunkenness, are not required to abstain, and each individual believer who sincerely wishes to please God must be careful in this area, as in any other potential area dealing with the works of the flesh. It is never wise to place one’s self in a situation where a potential weakness can find an outlet, and avoidance of such situations is commendable.

¹²⁴ While the author does not concur with that denomination’s view of worship in this area, he does recognize their sincerity, and would never accuse them of violating Scripture or sinning because they drink alcoholic wine in their meetings.

¹²⁵ Translation author’s. It is amazing to him that the NKJV cannot seem to translate the same terms the same way in the same kinds of contexts. Each of the words in Romans 13:13, with the exception of *koite*, is used in the list of the works of the flesh found in Galatians 5:20-21.

¹²⁶ Marvin Vincent (*Vincent’s Word Studies*) provides a compelling description of the word in his discussion of *komos* as used in 1 Peter 4:3, “The word originally signifies merely *a merry-making*; most probably a *village festival*, from κῶμη (*kome*), a *village*. In the cities such entertainments grew into carouses, in which the party of revelers paraded the streets with torches, singing, dancing, and all kinds of frolics. These revels also entered into religious observances, especially in the worship of Bacchus, Demeter, and the Idaean Zeus in Crete. The fanatic and orgiastic rites of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Thrace became engrafted on the old religion. Socrates, in the introduction to ‘The Republic,’ pictures himself as having gone down to the Piraeus to see the celebration of the festival of Bendis, the Thracian Artemis (Diana); and as being told by one of his companions that, in the

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

This list of 17 works is not, however, the end of the issue. Paul has one more thing to say.

The Things Like These - τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις (*ta homoia toutois*).

This last phrase (lit. “and the things like these”) indicates that Paul is only presenting a partial accounting of the works of the flesh. Since the works of the flesh are not limited to this list, we conclude that Paul has presented a sufficient number to categorize the kind of things that the flesh produces. For instance, all sexual aberrations are works of the flesh, as well as all acts of striking out at others physically or verbally.

By presenting this list to the Galatians, Paul makes possible the identification of other different problems the believer will encounter, such as Satanic attack and worldliness. A careful analysis of the writings of the New Testament produces an inventory of many more works of the flesh. See the appendix.

evening, there is to be a torch-race with horses in honor of the goddess. The rites grew furious and ecstatic. ‘Crowds of women, clothed with fawns’ skins, and bearing the sanctified thyrsus (a staff wreathed with vine-leaves) flocked to the solitudes [sic] of Parnassus, Kithaeron, or Taygetus during the consecrated triennial period, and abandoned themselves to demonstrations of frantic excitement, with dancing and clamorous invocation of the god. They were said to tear animals limb from limb, to devour the raw flesh, and to cut themselves without feeling the wound. The men yielded to a similar impulse by noisy revels in the streets, sounding the cymbals and tambourine, and carrying the image of the god in procession’ (Grote, ‘*History of Greece*’). Peter, in his introduction, addresses the sojourners in Galatia, where the Phrygian worship of Cybele, the great mother of the gods, prevailed, with its wild orgies and hideous mutilations.”

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Seven

How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh?

Part 1

The Position of the Believer Explained – Romans 6:1-10.

Introduction

Romans six contains the most complete explanation by Paul of the method of overcoming the flesh. While some elements of these truths are referred to elsewhere, Paul had usually spent time in those other assemblies. But the apostle had never been to Rome, and therefore presents the complete truth as he would have taught it upon initially founding a church.

The first ten verses of Romans 6 is a doctrinal section. It is designed to be practical, but without Romans 6:1-10, Romans 6:11-15, with which we will deal in the next chapter, cannot be applied. For it is with the truths expressed in those latter verses that we find the ability to have consistent victory over the flesh. They provide the practical application of not only the first ten verses of this chapter, but of how to be filled by the Spirit as expressed in Ephesians 5:18.

The author does not apologize for the detailed approach he takes in dealing with this vital subject. Too much encouragement to act right and not sin has been given by teachers and preachers without the precondition of knowledge having been met. Nevertheless, without a desire to please God, the knowledge is, at the very least, useless, and perhaps worse than useless, if it gives a person a feeling of well-being just by the knowing.

If the reader attends to this chapter and the following ones carefully, he may come to know, and perhaps even to understand, things that he did not previously. But if in knowing he stops short of application at the correct moment, he will be the sadder for it.

Dead to Sin – Romans 6:1-7

The Rhetorical Question

Romans 6:1-2

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin in order that grace might abound? ² May it not be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Evidently someone, perhaps Judaizers, had been saying that Paul's doctrine of grace led to a view that since grace abounded where sin abounded, then sin is legitimate, for it produces a positive result (see Romans 5:20-21). This is a variation on the false philosophy of casuistry which teaches that it is acceptable to do wrong if the end of the act is for good, that is, that the end justifies the means. This is a gross misrepresentation of Paul's doctrine.

“Certainly not!” or “May it not be!” is the strongest negation possible. Paul taught that sin does not produced grace, but that grace is the solution to sin. Those who represent grace as contrary to righteous living do not understand the doctrine. It is not a license to sin, but God's provi-

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

sion not to sin. One must understand that other means than grace to overcome sin, though they may appear to be successful, are not God's method. The legalistic approach, which is basically the presentation of the requirement to not sin without the grace method presented, is undoubtedly the most common approach to the problem of sin in the life of the believer. It is not God's method, but man's. God's method is the grace method.

By grace in Romans 6, the apostle is not referring to the grace provision for salvation, as he does in Ephesians 2:8. Rather, this is the grace for daily living dispensed by Paul as the steward of God. It is the grace to which he refers in Ephesians 3:2, which we might call living grace as distinct to saving grace. Such grace for daily living is God's attitude by which He provides all that is required to have victory in the Christian life over one's enemies. That provision includes the teaching of Romans 6:1-10.

The first concept that Paul presents is that the believer *died to the sin principle*. This introduces the truth of positional death.¹²⁷ Positional death represents a situation that has not physically occurred, but is viewed as nonetheless actual by God for a specific purpose. God sees the individual believer as having died *to sin*.

But this death is not death to the physical reality of committing sin, but is death to the principle of sin which indwells and produces the works of the flesh. Paul does not state that the believer is dead to acts of sin, which, if it were true, would render the Christian sinless.

Now the word "death" carries not its physical meaning of the immaterial person being separated from the body, which is then buried. *But the idea of separation, the basic idea behind the word death, still holds.* When an unbeliever becomes a believer, God changes how He looks at that person. He no longer sees the Christian connected to the principle of indwelling sin, but separated from it, dead to it. Again, this is not a physical separation. If it were, then the sin principle would no longer indwell. But it does so continue.

The rhetorical question, "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" introduces the purely doctrinal truth that the believer who died positionally to sin should not live in it any longer. It is a doctrinal truth that Paul will build upon as he continues through the sixth chapter of Romans. But it is not something that a person can practice, per se, but an idea that God wants the person to understand, an attitude that He enjoins upon the believer. He wants the Christian to see himself as separated from the principle of indwelling sin, and as a result not living in it, that is, to continually associate with it. Once a person views himself that way, he can then proceed to subsequent truths, the eventual end of which will be the controlling of the sin principle, restraining it from producing the works of the flesh.

¹²⁷ Some have misrepresented positional truth, and therefore reject it. Positional truth does not teach a falsehood, but a viewpoint. When a person is identified as being dead to sin, it does not mean, as some have taken it to mean, that the individual cannot sin. Some, recognizing that a man can sin even if he has died to sin, have therefore rejected positional truth, thinking that it teaches something that is not true. They have essentially thrown out the baby with the bath water because of a misunderstanding. But positional truth is not the doctrine of sinless perfection. Rather, it is just the opposite. Paul teaches that a person is not liable to sin, even though he is able to sin, if he recognizes his position. Such is the theme of this chapter.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Baptism into Christ

When a person correctly *understands* (not practices) his grace position of having died to indwelling sin, he will see himself as no longer controlled by the sin principle. Verses Romans 6:3-4 further expand this positional truth.

Romans 6:3-4

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Then we were buried together with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.

With the words, “do you not know,” Paul indicates that a certain knowledge is required to understand his teaching concerning the sin problem. In ignorance there can be no victory. Believers need to know and understand the words, “As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.”

Now we come to the use of a word which has cultural meaning that has been lost over the centuries. Today “baptism” is used most often of either dunking someone into water, or sprinkling them with water. Neither can be the meaning here.

“Baptized” here does not refer to water baptism. The believer is said to be baptized *into* Christ Jesus and *into* His death, not into water. Someone has rightly said, “There is no water in Romans six.”¹²⁸ In the first century baptism, including water baptism, was not simply a ritual, but carried deep significance. Baptism did something culturally, for which we today have no direct cultural equivalent. It *identified* the one being baptized with the person, or the message, of the one doing the baptism. Water baptism was used this way long before the New Testament was written, and it was well-established as an identification with a person, a position, or a movement.¹²⁹ When John baptized people in the Jordan, those submitting to baptism were identifying themselves with his message.

But Romans 6 baptism is not into water, but into Christ. It is a way of identifying individuals with the person of Christ. Such a baptism is performed by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:13), not by human hands. Unlike water baptism, which is but a symbol, and only temporary,¹³⁰ baptism into Christ is real, and is permanent.

¹²⁸ Several different baptisms are mentioned in the Bible. The two most prominent are water baptism and Spirit baptism. It is Spirit baptism to which Paul refers here. A thorough study of the concept of baptism in the New Testament shows that Paul’s concept of Spirit baptism is related to the induction of the believer into the body of Christ, and therefore an *identification* of the believer with the person of Christ in His death and resurrection.

¹²⁹ For instance, the Qumran community, the people who preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls (produced from around 200 BC to 70 AD), performed baptism to identify the individual with the community itself. According to Fritch, one of the cisterns at Qumran was railed off into four passages, as if to conduct people into it for baptisms and ablutions. He quotes from the Qumran literature to show that they community was a baptizing sect. (Fritch, Charles T. *The Qumran Community*. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1956, pgs. 5-8.) The author has himself been to Qumran and seen the baptizing pools.

¹³⁰ If water baptism were permanent the one being baptized would drown. The water is but a symbol of the thing the individual who is being baptized is identified with. In John’s case, he baptized people into the water of the

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Once the cultural understanding of baptism is clear, Paul's teaching becomes clear. Without baptism there is no position. Baptism was performed by the Holy Spirit in order to identify an individual with the element into which he is being baptized, that is, into Christ and certain of His activities.

Specifically, the believer has been baptized into and identified with Christ's death. So verse three explains the statement of verse two that the believer has died to the sin principle. In Christ, the believer is seen as having died when Christ died, two thousand years ago on a cross outside Jerusalem. Again we see no practice encouraged by Paul. He is laying the groundwork for further understanding by presenting how a believer should see himself with reference to the person of Christ and His death.

According to verse 4, a new kind of life results from the believer's identification with Christ's death and burial. Indeed, a co-burial with Christ is necessary in order to be co-resurrected with Him. This cycle completes the baptismal identification. God identifies every true believer with the person of Christ, His death, His burial, and His resurrection, so that the Christian is viewed as having been co-crucified, co-buried, and co-raised with the Lord.

Identification with Christ's death and resurrection is basic to living the Christian life. The phrase "raised from the dead" is literally "raised out from among dead ones," and clearly refers to Christ's physical, bodily resurrection. In the believer's position, then, God sees the Christian as having participated with Christ in His activities of death and resurrection.

The phrase translated "even so we also can walk in newness of life" is usually translated as though we should or ought to walk in newness of life. But this is not the meaning in this context. That application comes later, and we must not get ahead of ourselves. Here Paul is indicating the *ability* that comes from correctly understanding our position, rather than encouraging the believer to apply that ability. Paul says that we can walk, but he does not encourage us to walk in newness of life at this point. That comes later.

The meaning of "life" here must be distinguished from other uses of the word. Physical life is not in view, per se. Nor is Paul referring to *eternal life*, though that concept is also basic to being a successful Christian. Rather, he is referring to positional life, which we will call "resurrection life." But he is not referring to the Christians future resurrection per se, but to his present position as identified with Christ's resurrection. The word "newness" indicates that this is a new kind of life that the believer is identified with as a result of Spirit baptism, and is therefore available to him right now. God views the believer as already resurrected in Christ. One does not need to wait for the future resurrection to live a resurrection kind of life.

Jordan River, which water stood for his message of repentance. But there was no real, permanent baptism there, and that baptism did not always mean what it should have to those being baptized. In other words, it was possible to fake the correct attitude, and to be baptized hypocritically. Such is not possible with being baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. It happens apart from any personal acquiescence by the individual, and the only way we know it happened is because the Bible says it happened. Otherwise, we would remain in ignorance, and it could not be used as a truth to any effect.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Logical Results of Baptism

Romans 6:5-7

⁵ For if we have come to be united in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be united in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with Christ, in order that the body of sin should be abolished, that we should no longer serve as a slave to sin. ⁷ For the one who has died has been liberated from sin.

Paul's subject is still the positional death and resurrection to indwelling sin, with its results expressed in Romans 6:5-6. He explains several elements in these verses.

First, Paul presents the unification of the believer with the death and resurrection of Christ. The word "if" (Greek=*ei*) introduces a first class condition, which affirms that the condition is a fact. This condition states the logical inference of the previous truth in verses 3 and 4. We believers have genuinely been united with Christ in the likeness of His death.

The word rendered "united" means "grown together." While "united" is undoubtedly included in the meaning, the metaphor is lost in translation. In fact, the word has an agricultural connotation, and is used by the apostle to show the close relationship of the death and burial of the Lord Jesus to the position of the believer in Christ. Wuest states,

Here the word speaks of that vital union of the believing sinner and the Lord Jesus mentioned in verses 3 and 4 where God places him into Christ at the Cross, to share His death and resurrection.¹³¹

Paul uses the word "likeness" to show that the death is positional rather than experiential. Our positional death is similar to His physical death in that both are acts of separation. However, the word "likeness" means "resemblance, such as amounts almost to equality or identity."¹³² The believer is stated to have been identified with Christ's death because of the similarity of the two truths. Therefore, he "shall be" identified with Christ's resurrection. The future "shall be" is not a *temporal future*, but a *logical future*. The logical outgrowth of being identified with the death of Christ is to be identified with His resurrection.

The truth of the believer's identification with the death and resurrection of Christ "sets up" Paul's next statement, "knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified *with Christ*, in order that the body of sin should be abolished, that we should no longer serve *as a* slave to sin."

The phrase "old man" does not refer to the sin principle, or old nature, as some have it.¹³³ Rather it is another "position" word referring to the whole person as viewed from the perspective of his unsaved state.¹³⁴ At the point of salvation, because of one's identification with Christ's

¹³¹ Wuest, Kenneth. *Romans in the Greek New Testament*. "Romans 6." Electronic edition.

¹³² Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*. "ὁμοίωμα" Electronic edition. BibleWorks.

¹³³ For example, Albert Barnes in his notes on Romans 6:6 states, "From these passages it is evident that Paul uses the expression to denote our sinful and corrupt nature; the passions and evil propensities that exist before the heart is renewed." He is mistaken.

¹³⁴ Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown are correct when they say the old man refers to "'our old selves'; that is, 'all that we were in our old unregenerate condition, before union with Christ.'" Likewise, the "new man" is not the

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

death, the old unsaved person was crucified. However, the phrase “in order that the body of sin should be abolished” does not mean that the old person was destroyed in the ultimate sense, but positionally. Paul states that when one correctly understands the position of having been crucified that each Christian enjoys, the old man and his practices can be put off, and the new man with its righteous practices can be put on. This truth is clearly stated in Colossians 3:9-10:

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...

The purpose for the crucifixion of the old man is “in order that the body of sin should be abolished, that we should no longer serve *as a* slave to sin.” By the phrase “the body of sin” Paul must mean the physical body which is the instrument through which the sin principle operates. The phrase is not synonymous with “flesh” as is sometimes taught, as that word refers metaphorically to the principle of sin itself, which is inherent in the old nature. Vincent says, “The phrase *body of sin* denotes the body belonging to, or ruled by, the power of sin, in which the members are instruments of unrighteousness.”

The body itself is not inherently sinful, but provides the outlet for the indwelling sin principle. Functionally, the word “body” means the abilities to act consistently with either the old nature, or the new, while the phrase “body of sin” views the physical body as being available for the sin principle to control, is consistent with the subjunctive mood statement, “should be abolished” since the body of sin can be replaced positionally by a body that contains “members of righteousness.” The apostle is not stating that the physical body will be eliminated,¹³⁵ but that the outworking of sin in the physical body can come to an end. Therefore, the body can become a “body of righteousness.” To be “abolished,” then, refers to the elimination of the power of the sin principle to work its way out, so as to effect the acts of the body.

The final clause in verse 6, “that we should no longer serve *as a* slave to sin,” indicates the *result* of the body of sin being done away. The individual Christian, not yet having learned to have victory over the flesh, is viewed as enslaved to the principle of indwelling sin. If the physical body is released from any influence of the sin principle, the result is that the person is then freed from slavery.

The simple statement in verse seven summarizes and explains the results of the process of having died to the sin principle. “For the one who has died has been liberated from sin,” states the new freedom that a person has, whether he understands it or not. This is not a statement of potential, but of actual fact. All Christians, whether they realize this truth or not, have been set

generated new nature, but the whole person viewed in the state of salvation, “our new selves,” as it were (Colossians 3:10).

¹³⁵ The Greek word translated “abolished” is *katargeo*, a word that primarily means to render something ineffective, not to eliminate it altogether. The word is of difficult translation, so in the KJV it is translated, “might be destroyed,” while in the NASB it is translated, “might be done away with.” I have eliminated the words “might be” in favor of “should be,” to somewhat weaken the idea. “Abolished,” is an attempt to indicate the possibility of removal, rather than the fact of removal of the the body of sin. Short of translating *katargeo* as “rendered ineffective,” a somewhat weak translation, I chose “abolished” as the next best alternative. It’s still not very good, because of the simple fact that there is no perfect English equivalent to the original Greek word.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

free, liberated, from the sin principle by the work of Christ's death and resurrection and their positional relationship to it. Verse 8-10 bring to a conclusion the discussion of the believer's position by emphasizing the fact of positional resurrection life. It is this life that provides the basis for acting consistently with the new nature, which is, in turn, operative based on eternal life.

Alive to God – Romans 6:8-10

But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no longer, death no longer lords over Him. ¹⁰ For the death which He died, He died to sin once; but the life which He lives, He lives to God.

While in 6:1-7 Paul presents the positional truth from the perspective of the death, resurrection, newness of life cycle, beginning in verse 8 Paul presents the concept of resurrection life in detail.

The word "if" in verse 8 indicates another first class condition to indicate the fact that believers indeed died with Christ.¹³⁶ This statement is used to introduce the truth of this section, "we believe that we shall also live together with Him."

The future tense "we shall live" is not temporal, but logical, that is, the logical result of having died. The moment a an individual becomes a Christian, both positions are simultaneously true; he both died and came alive instantaneously. Resurrection life is once again in view, and the statement in verse 9 shows the importance of that fact.

Verse 9 continues the sentence begun in verse 8 with the participle "knowing." We must not overlook the importance of knowing in the New Testament The truth is simple, yet profound, "...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no longer, death no longer lords over Him ." Verses 9 and 10 teach that the physical death of Christ and His physical resurrection are the historical reality on which the believer's position is based.

Since Christ's physical resurrection freed Him from physical death, He does not die again; such is the nature of resurrection. It is an absolute that ends the dominion of death. Since lordship of death has been removed once the resurrection occurs, another physical death is not possible. This logical truth is further explained in verse 10:

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Since Christ died to sin once for all, so also did the believer. The death of Christ to sin was of a different nature than the death of the believer to sin, but the comparison is what matters.

That Christ "died to sin" refers not to His substitution for the sins of mankind is evident. Here the context is *sanctification*, victory over the sin principle, rather than *salvation*. And it is the sin principle to which Christ died. But not to His own, for He had none. Rather, He died with reference to the sin principle, as the actual basis for the position which the believer would oc-

¹³⁶ Three classes of conditions are regularly used in the Greek New Testament. The first class condition indicates that the condition is assumed to be true. We could paraphrase the statement, "If we died with Christ, and we did..."

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

copy. The physical death of Christ then has *more than one application*. Scripture applies it both to the redemptive work of Christ, and to the sanctification work of Christ, here and other places in the New Testament.¹³⁷

The position of the believer is that he died to the sin principle at the time of his identification with the person and work of Christ. This took place at the time of initial faith in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-5), and was true immediately, though not available to be practiced until the believer ceased to be ignorant of the doctrines of Scripture, specifically with reference to victory over the sin principle through the application of God's grace.

In verse 10, Paul expresses the connection of the *humanity* of Christ to God the Father¹³⁸ with the words, "*the life which He lives, He lives to God.*"

Again the resurrection life of Christ is in view as the basis for the believer's positional resurrection life. This resurrection life is the end result of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Without the perfect humanity of the Lord, the positional teaching of the New Testament would be impossible.

Now, if death is separation (and it is) then life is connection. Truly this can only be referring to the humanity of Christ, in that the divine nature is incapable of death, and all three members of the Trinity share it equally. It was the *human body* of Christ that died, and it was the human body of Christ that rose from the dead. In Christ's humanity, as the human representative of the believer, the Lord now has a unique relationship to the Father. There is a connection between the perfect humanity of our Savior and the divine person of God the Father that became possible *only* through the incarnation-death-resurrection process.

Positionally, this connection is also true of the believer. The practice, which is taught beginning in vs. 11, may be otherwise. Sadly, many believers do not understand their connection to God the Father, and struggle with the tendency to unrighteousness produced by indwelling sin. But a correct view of the Father, the one to whom believers are connected as identified with Christ's resurrection, is the ultimate basis for living the Christian life.

Summary

Romans 6:1-10 presents revelation from God of a doctrinal rather than practical nature. Paul wrote to dispel ignorance, and to provide a basis for the practice of the believer. Specifically, he laid the foundation for victory over the principle of sin by presenting the positional identification of the believer with Christ, His death, and His resurrection. The ultimate basis for living victory in the Christian life is the believer's positional connection to the Father, for it is that connection that is emphasized starting in Romans 6:11 and following. These positional truths can only be applied by understanding Romans 6:11-23.

¹³⁷ The Lord also died with reference to the program of Israel, so that messianic prophecy concerning His suffering might be fulfilled. His death and resurrection laid the basis for His future assumption of the Davidic throne.

¹³⁸ In places such as this, where Christ is contrasted with "God," the contrast deals with nature, not essence. Christ shared in all ways the essence of the other two persons. However, the word "God" is used of the Father to emphasize the distinction between the human nature of Christ with that of God's divine nature. It is a way of emphasizing that Christ was operating in His human rather than divine relationships to the Father.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Eight

How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh?

Part 2

The Position of the Believer Applied – Romans 6:11-15

Romans 6:1-10 lays the doctrinal groundwork for the application of that position taught in the rest of the chapter. Beginning in verse 11 the apostle explains how the believer can invoke the power of his position, and thereby gain victory over indwelling sin. Paul presents the *mental attitudes* that the believer must have in order for the Holy Spirit to control the sin principle. The application of grace for Christian living begins with the right mental process so that the Holy Spirit Himself does the work. It eliminates the “grit your teeth” method of Christian living, for the truth that God will perform that which is necessary to overcome indwelling sin.

The Mental Process Required – 6:11-13

The Consideration of the Believer’s Position

Romans 6:11

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

An amazing statement, this. In simplest of terms, the Apostle Paul lays out victory over the sin principle. Having laid the positional groundwork, the physical death and resurrection of Christ, Paul gives the straightforward command – Likewise you also, reckon yourselves (vs. 11). It is an emphatic imperative, with the “you” in the emphatic position. The requirement of God is stated: you reckon.

Reckoning is the God-required method of overcoming indwelling sin. The godly method of overcoming the sin principle is not to apply the human will to keep from sinning. The “Grit your teeth and refuse to sin” method is but an application of a non-biblical, legalistic philosophy. Such a method can only be temporarily successful, and is not the method prescribed by God.

Reckoning is something one does with one’s mind. Overcoming the sin principle, then, is the result of thinking correctly, having the correct mental process. The word *reckon* (Greek, *logizomai*, from which English gets the word for logic) means *consider something to be true*. That is all that it means. It allows no long winded narration on theological subjects, nor unintelligible jargon designed for the theologian. RECKON! CONSIDER IT TO BE TRUE!

At the moment the Christian fulfills the biblical command to reckon, he has entered into an application of his position that makes it *impossible* for the sin principle to operate effectively. The believer has the ability to not respond to the strong desire (lust) that has its source in the

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

flesh. Furthermore, it is actually impossible for the believer who is walking by the Spirit to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).¹³⁹ This ability is the result of the control of the Holy Spirit.

We learned in Chapter 4 (q.v.) that the grace provision for victory over the flesh is expressed in Ephesians 5:18. The Holy Spirit controls the believer in such a way that it is not necessary for him to fulfill the strong desires of the flesh. Romans 6:11 and the statements following it teach the biblical technique for bringing about that control.

But what is the Christian to consider to be true? By means of reckoning, the Christian's *position* is considered to be true, for he is to reckon *that he is dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord*. Note the two-part object of the believer's reckoning, 1) *dead to sin*, and 2) *alive to God*.

The word "dead" always carries the idea of separation in some sense. Being dead to sin means being separated from sin. Just as Christ died to sin in His physical body, so also has the Christian died to sin in his position at the moment of his salvation. The sin principle is in view; Paul does not teach here or elsewhere that the Christian is dead to *acts of sin*, but to the enemy of the believer, the flesh, the sin that indwells.

Also, Paul does not mean that the sin principle is dead or inactive. The command to reckon is based on the positional teaching of verses 1-10, not upon some extraordinary removal of the indwelling principle of sin. Were the sin principle actually removed, or even rendered inactive, the reckoning would not be necessary.

The distinction being dead to sin and being alive to God is expressed in Romans 6:11 by the conjunction "but." The act of reckoning is two-fold. Since the Christian has reckoned himself dead to the principle of sin, he is therefore to reckon himself to be alive to God. The contrast between being dead versus being alive is the key to this expression. Death is separation, life is connection. The Christian reckons himself disconnected from the sin principle, but connected to God the Father in a unique way.¹⁴⁰ This is not simply the relationship that is the result of salvation attained upon initial faith. Rather it is the result of a new relationship that is available only to believers who are "in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A consideration of "in Christ" is basic to the Christian life. The phrase has a meaning that is not easily expressed in English. In such a construction the word "in" expresses what grammari-

¹³⁹ Galatians 5:16 does not translate easily into English. The Greek construction using a double negative indicates that it is impossible for an individual who is walking by the Spirit to fulfill the lust of the flesh. But this double negative is virtually untranslatable because English double negatives are not a legitimate use. J. N. Darby, in his translation of this verse, attempts to indicate this impossibility by the words which I have placed in italics in this quote, "But I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall *no way* fulfill flesh's lust." The addition of the words "no way" are about as close as we can come to express this truth through an attempted translation. The Greek, which has two different words meaning "not" (*ou* and *me*) uses both of them in tandem, which is considered an emphatic negative. An awkward, yet accurate, translation of this verse would be, "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and you shall *not not* fulfill the lust of the flesh."

¹⁴⁰ There can be no doubt that God here means God the Father. His distinction from "Christ Jesus" shows that two different persons of the Trinity are involved in this statement. Trinitarianism is basic to Christian living. Christ, the Son, is personally related to the Father as a result of the plan of God expressed "before the foundation of the world." For a full discussion of this plan, see the author's work, *The Whole Counsel of God*.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

ans call a “locative of sphere.”¹⁴¹ Being “in Christ” indicates a relationship between the believer and the person of the Lord that is positional, and therefore the result of someone outside the Christian. The primary benefit of the individual being “in Christ” in this context is that the believer sees himself *as God sees him*. When God views the believer today in relationship to the sin principle, rather than seeing the Christian, He sees Christ.

How does the believer get to be “in Christ?” Someone places him there at the moment of his faith. That someone is none other than the Holy Spirit who places (baptizes, Romans 6:3) the believer into Christ. The word “baptize” is use of this act of the Spirit to indicate the very nature of the act itself. The believer is *identified*¹⁴² with Christ, so that God the Father sees Christ when He views the Christian. This, of course, is not the only way the Father sees the believer, but it is the way that is important in the issue of control over the sin principle.

The two-fold act of reckoning is the first responsibility the Christian has in overcoming the sin principle. Because of the renewed mind, the believer can consider himself in a way that lays the basis for overcoming the problem. The ability to reckon is built into the condition that the new Christian entered into upon salvation, and is therefore the result of the grace of God.

The Elimination of Sin’s Reign

Romans 6:12

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

Since obedience to the positive command of verse 11 allows the Holy Spirit to control the sin principle, it is possible for the believer to overcome the problem of committing sins. The negative command of verse 12 “do not let sin reign” not only indicates the new ability of the believer, but also the nature of the problem. The sin principle is personified as a monarch who reigns. It is the figurative¹⁴³ commander-in-chief of the individual’s mortal¹⁴⁴ body, and therefore gives orders that it requires the body to perform.

The statement “that you should obey it in its lusts” continues the figure of personification. The sin principle seeks for the believer to obey it in the area of its strong desires, its lusts. These

¹⁴¹ There is no true “locative of sphere” in English, though some expressions approximate it. This phrase is used by Greek grammarians to express an idiom of the ancient language. It indicates a logical relationship between persons or things. In this case, the believer is *insphered in Christ*, and that relationship has certain advantages for the Christian. As a result, God the Father sees not the individual sinner whose life is hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3), but the person of Jesus Christ. By reckoning, the Christian also considers that “alive in Christ” to be true.

¹⁴² Spirit baptism is a way of expressing identification. Water baptism does the same thing, though in a totally different and temporary way and for a different purpose. Spirit baptism is permanent. The Spirit does not immerse the individual into water physically, but positionally permanently into the person of Christ, and in the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, the believer is said to be “in Christ.” By the way, water baptism *is not* a picture of Spirit baptism in Scripture. Indeed, the two kinds of baptism are never compared, but are contrasted and distinguished (Acts 1:5).

¹⁴³ The figure of speech in verse 12 is personification. The sin principle is viewed as a person, a king, who reigns.

¹⁴⁴ Mortal means simply “liable to die.” Paul is emphasizing the weakness of the body itself, perhaps as a way of indicating the believers inability to control the lusts of the flesh on his own.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

strong desires, specifically, the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16), are viewed as the specific commands of the sin principle. The commander-in-chief orders, “Here is a lust, do it. Here is adultery, perform it. Here is anger, express it,” and so forth. But at this point the Holy Spirit has intervened and has controlled the sin principle, which allows the Christian to not perform those lusts. The sin principle is controlled not by the will of the Christian, but by the Holy Spirit.

The Presentation of the Believer’s Members

Romans 6:13

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Paul reaffirms the process of verses 11-12, in different terms and in reverse order, in verse 13. Continuing the negative of verse 12, Paul first states the requirement in terms of the members of the body. Then, reverting to the positional truth applied through reckoning in verse 11, Paul states the requirement in terms of the position of life.

The statement of verse 13 is in light of the fact that the Holy Spirit is now in control. The believer, therefore, can and should choose to not present his members as instruments¹⁴⁵ to the sin principle. The word “members” means the organic parts of the human body. It is through these organic parts that the lust of the flesh finds fulfillment.

Note that three acts of presentation are featured in this sentence, one negative and two positive.

(1) The object of the negative statement, “do not present” is the members of the body, the hand, the eye, the voice box, the sexual organs, etc. These members are viewed as instruments not to be presented to the sin principle.

(2) However, the object of the positive statement is not what we might expect. Rather than stating, “but present your *members* to God,” the apostle states “but present *yourselves* to God as being alive from the dead.” The object to be presented is expressed by the pronoun *yourselves*. This seems to further explain the statement of verse 11 that the believer should reckon himself alive to God. The Father is the one upon whom the believer must focus, not the Son, or the Holy Spirit. So again we see the *Father-centered emphasis* in the Christian life.

(3) Associated with the believer presenting *himself* to God the Father, he is able to present his members as instruments of righteousness to God the Father. In other words, the function of the members as instruments of righteousness logically follows the attention that the believer gives to God, so that the hand, the eye, the various organs of the body can be used in a righteous rather than unrighteous way.

Christians should think of the Christian life as a God-the-Father focused life. He is the goal of our spiritual attention. When the believer’s eyes are on God the Father, he will not be sinning.

¹⁴⁵ Greek = *hoplon*. The word refers to any instrument, but was used regularly of a weapon, an instrument of warfare.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Holy Spirit will control the sin principle and the new nature is unable to sin. Therefore the believer will be in a state of victory over the principle of indwelling sin.

A good illustration of this truth can be seen in the analogy of driving an automobile. One tends to steer where one is looking. Think of driving on the freeway with its lines providing lane boundaries. If a driver keeps looking at the lines, he tends to head toward the lines. But if he ignores the lines and looks further down the lane, he is able to stay within the lane without effort. The same is true in the Christian life. The lines are analogous to the law requirements. If one focuses on the negative restrictions, the law, he will be paying attention not to the solution, but to the problem. It is the nature of law that it forbids the act, thereby bringing attention to the wrongdoing, but provides no ability to overcome the problem. The legal process removes the individual's thoughts from the solution onto the problem. However, if one focuses on the Father, that person will be drawn to Him.

The Christian life is counter intuitive. Our intuition, our "common sense," tells us that if we don't pay attention to the legal requirement, we will fail. But God requires that the believer focus on Him rather than the requirements, because within the requirement itself lies a focus on the wrong-doing it prohibits. A law must be specific in its area of prohibition. It cannot say simply, "Thou shalt not." It must say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," thereby focusing on the adultery.

Herein lies the faith life. To be successful over the sin principle, the believer must *believe* the promise that God has made in the grace presentation of victory, even though it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. Those preachers who, however sincerely, focus on not sinning, but do so without presenting the grace provision of refocusing from the problem to the Father, are doing a disservice to the believer, and to God and His grace provision.

The Correct View of Grace Expressed – Romans 6:14-15

The Results of Being "not under law."

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:14 contains an amazing statement. Many have struggled over the idea that as a result of applying verses 11-13 that sin will no longer have dominion, but that is exactly what the word "for" expresses. The Greek word is *gar*, and it is used in a variety of ways, but the most common is the inferential use. Paul is stating that verses 11-13 imply the statements of verses 14-15. We may expand the word *gar* to mean, "We infer from the preceding statements that the principle of indwelling sin shall not have dominion over you."

The Greek word translated dominion means to be the lord over something, to rule it. The person under dominion of someone or something is under that person's or thing's control. That's exactly what indwelling sin does. It rules the life, and operates without constraint when the believer is not walking by the Spirit.

However, God requires that we believe the statement of verse 14, and in so believing, have victory over the sin principle. Now, the ground for this assertion seems far fetched: "for you are

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

not under law but under grace.” Paul uses the word “under” in a way that is somewhat foreign to the English speaker. He means “under a program of law” as a means of living the Christian life. This program of law includes not only the Mosaic code, including the so-called moral law, but any other statements of requirement without provision attached that may come up. As previously stated, it is difficult to keep the law-book small. New items keep getting written in such as, “Wear your hair this way,” or “Don’t eat these foods, they are bad for you, “ or “Give this percentage of money to the church, even if you can’t afford it.”

Note that Paul does not say, “Don’t put yourself under law.” Some have interpreted the statement that way. But Paul states an absolute, “You are not under law.” This is as true for legalistic Christians as it is for grace Christians. No matter what legalistic procedures one wants to apply to himself or others, that person is still not under any kind of law.

We state again, this does not release the believer from meeting God’s grace requirements. But it does say, no legalistic requirements exist, because there is no grace provision available.

I say again, Paul does not state that the Christian has no law.¹⁴⁶ Rather he says that the Christian is not *under law*. The phrase “under law” is a technical phrase that means to use law to attempt to have victory over sin. Such is the tendency of the “common sense” approach to Christian living. The human mind tends to become legalistic in its approach to living, whether it be living the righteous requirements of God, or the requirements of some supposed spiritual authority.

Now, the Christian is not under law in God’s program, that is, as a means of meeting God’s righteous requirements. However, he remains under law in the governmental sense. Governments love to pass laws, thinking (according to common sense) if one passes a law it will help solve the problem. Oftentimes, such laws make the problem worse, especially for those who have a particular tendency to violate a specific law. Nevertheless, *unless a governmental law violates Scripture*, the believer is obligated to keep it in its legal sense.

But *God’s program for spiritual Christian living* has set that methodology aside, and provided a new methodology. It will therefore help to identify the precise meaning of “not under law” as it is used in this passage, and to contrast it with what it means to be “under grace.”

The precision of the statement “not under law” is evident in the original language. The word “law” is without the article. As stated above, Paul is not referring to simply the Mosaic law, though that is certainly included. He means the believer is *under no kind of law whatsoever*. So, if the believer is not under any kind of law, does that mean that the Christian is free from doing right? Does it mean that the Christian has no law? By no means! It simply means that the Christian has no recourse to any law or set of laws by which he is enabled to live correctly.

¹⁴⁶ The Christian indeed “has law” though it is not exactly the same type as Mosaic law. We might refer to the requirements under grace as “non-forensic law.” Forensic law, such as the Mosaic code, requires punishment for failure. For the more radical offenses the punishment was physical death. For the rest the punishment was symbolical death in the form of a sacrifice. The Israelite was acknowledging the fact that the Mosaic law put him to death for even the seemingly slightest act of sin. The Christian’s law, on the other hand, has no penalty attached. It does not require the death penalty, though that is what the individual who sins actually earns. But that wage earned was paid by Christ. Christian requirements, then, are non-forensic.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

So, Paul does not say that the Christian may or may not be under law. Not being under law is a fact, not a potential situation. The Christian is *not* under law, no matter how diligently he attempts to use the law to sanctify himself. He is in a state of being under grace.

Being under grace, then, does not remove the responsibility for not sinning from the believer. It does remove the responsibility for controlling the principle of sin, however. And once the principle of sin is controlled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) according to the means provided in Romans 6:1-13, the Christian will not succumb to its temptations.¹⁴⁷

Herein, then, lies the basic difference between being under law versus being under grace. The law requires the individual to not sin, and to control himself. Grace requires the individual to not sin, and to invoke the control of the Holy Spirit in order to control himself. Self-control under the law produces nothing but self-righteousness. Self-control under grace is a fruit of the Spirit¹⁴⁸ which He produces in the life of the individual who is applying grace rather than law.

The Sin Problem to be Avoided

Romans 6:15

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Since grace controls the sin principle, Paul asks the next rhetorical question, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”¹⁴⁹ Had someone accused Paul of teaching that being under grace was identical to exercising license to sin? Probably so. Many accuse grace believers of teaching that a Christian can do whatever he desires.¹⁵⁰

But the conclusion to Paul’s argument lays that accusation to rest. Being under grace provides the ability to not sin. So then, the question arises, just how does that process work? Paul’s answer is simple, and straightforward. The Holy Spirit graciously takes up the control issue and provides the opposition to the flesh.

Therefore, we must come to a more precise understanding as to how the Holy Spirit expresses His opposition to indwelling sin. What does Paul mean when he refers to walking by the Spirit in Galatians 5:16? Is it simply a different way of referring to the filling of the Spirit presented in Ephesians 5:18? No, the two truths are related, but separate. The filling of the Spirit, tells one how the control of indwelling sin is accomplished,¹⁵¹ while the other expresses how the spiritual life can be lived on a regular basis, as presented in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Paul also touches on the same topic as Romans 6:1-13 in Colossians 2:20-3:11. Evidently, Paul had not been to Colosse, but others of Paul’s faithful companions had, and so he presents to the Colossians a somewhat abbreviated reminder of the doctrine of positional truth with its results.

¹⁴⁸ Galatians 5:22.

¹⁴⁹ Romans 6:15 concludes this section of Paul’s argument in Romans, and introduces the next section, dealing with the abilities and potential results of living the holy life since the believer has been set free from the legal constraints that empower indwelling sin.

¹⁵⁰ See comments on Romans 6:1-2 in the previous chapter. Paul comes back to that same idea here, probably because the accusation was so common among those his legalistic opponents.

¹⁵¹ See the discussion of Spirit filling in “Chapter Four” above.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Nine

How does the Believer Overcome the Flesh?

Part 3

The Opposition by the Holy Spirit Expressed

Galatians 6:16-18 is a passage discussing the same issue as Romans 6:1-13, but from a slightly different perspective. The question is no longer how to control the flesh (Romans 6), but how to recognize its attacks, and thereby to walk by to the Spirit. Paul had already discussed the Christian life with the Galatians when he traveled throughout their land. He does not need to discuss the control by the Spirit, which he mentions in Ephesians 5:18. Since he had not yet visited the Romans, he presents the truth of victory over sin in a more detailed way. But in Galatians Paul is reminding believers of what he had already taught them and how to recognize the attacks of the flesh. Why was this necessary? Galatians 5 is near the end of an extended discussion on the problem of legalism that was infecting the churches in Galatia, and so provided the necessity for revisiting the activity of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the flesh.

As noted, illegitimate teachers seem to have been misrepresenting Paul's message and accusing him of teaching that a person did not need to live right to please God. Furthermore, they were teaching that the correct way to God was to get circumcised, and to keep the Mosaic code. Paul condemns such teaching, proving that circumcision is unnecessary, and concludes his discussion by reminding how one correctly lives the Christian life.

Walking by the Spirit

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk by the Spirit, and you shall in no way fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The command "walk *in* the Spirit" as provided in some versions is better translated "walk *by* the Spirit," as it presents the true agent of the Christian's daily life, the Holy Spirit. To "walk by the Spirit" is to live a lifestyle¹⁵² that is by means of the Spirit's control, and is, therefore, not precisely the same as being filled, or controlled, by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). That passage simply identifies the fact of control. But Galatians 5 deals with the outcome of that control, and the ability of the believer to overcome the specific problems of carnality in his daily lifestyle, that is, in his daily walk. Specifically, Paul says that if a person is walking by the Spirit, he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

In this context the word "fulfill" carries the meaning of "bringing to fruition." If a person fulfills the lust of the flesh, he brings to fruition the activity of those lusts. Paul does *not* state that the lust of the flesh will cease to exist. That lust is produced by the fallen human nature, and will continue to raise its ugly head as long as the fallen nature exists. But *having the lust of the*

¹⁵² The Greek word *peripateo*, translated walk, is regularly used in the New Testament in the sense of "living a lifestyle."

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

flesh does not mean the same thing as *performing the work of the flesh*. And the One Who has the ability to control that lust is the Holy Spirit Himself.

Now, as previously stated, the word lust means “strong desire.” While the word has become associated in modern English almost exclusively with negative sexual desire, such was not the case earlier in the English language. Originally the English word lust simply meant strong desire, and was a very close match with the original Greek word which lays behind it. Some strong desires are bad, because they come from the fallen human nature. But some strong desires are good. In fact, as we shall see, the Holy Spirit also has lusts, or strong desires.

The negative “in no way” of verse 16 is very strong Greek double negative. Of course, in English double negatives are not valid. Or if they are valid, they mean the opposite of a negative, as the second negative cancels the first. But in Greek, the double negative acts differently. It strengthens and intensifies the negative idea. It indicates an utter impossibility.

It is this statement, then, that indicates the utter impossibility of committing a work of the flesh when an individual is walking by the Spirit. It is not simply unlikely, it is impossible. As we shall see when we discuss the attacks of Satan, the devil is able to by-pass the control of the Spirit in a way that the flesh cannot. So walking by the Spirit does not mean that a person cannot sin. It simply means that the source of the temptation to commit a willful unrighteous act is limited to an external attack of either Satan or the world system. For the believer being controlled by the Holy Spirit, the lust produced by the sin principle cannot be fulfilled.

Therefore, when a Christian applies the grace doctrines of overcoming the flesh as presented in Romans 6, and then walks by the Spirit, it is utterly impossible for the sin principle to control him. And, contrariwise, until he is controlled and walks by the Spirit, no matter how hard he tries, even the most sincere believer is fighting a losing battle. Only the Holy Spirit has the capability of winning the struggle against the Adamic nature. His strong desires, and His alone, can counter the lusts produced by the principle of indwelling sin.

The Lusting of the Spirit

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, with the result that you do not do the things that you desire.

Verse 17 describes the internal conflict that goes on when the believer is walking by the Spirit. Two sets of lusts, or strong desires, are conflicting. Kenneth Wuest rightly says: “The words ‘are contrary’ are (from the Greek word) *antikeimai* which means ‘to lie opposite to,’ hence, ‘to oppose, withstand.’ The words ‘the one to the other;’ are from *alleios*, a reciprocal pronoun in Greek. Thus, there is a reciprocity on the part of the flesh and the Spirit.”¹⁵³

This spiritual conflict can end in only one way. The Holy Spirit cancels the lust of the flesh, with the result that that lust is not fulfilled. The statement, “so that you do not do the things that

¹⁵³ Wuest, Kenneth S. *Galatians in the Greek New Testament*, pg. 153.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

you will” indicates the only possible outcome of this conflict. The individual is viewed as desiring to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. But he is unable to do so, since the Spirit is in control.¹⁵⁴

The Leading of the Spirit

Galatians 5:18

¹⁸ *But since you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Spirit control should not be confused with Spirit leading. The two are related, but distinct ministries of the third Person of the Trinity. As previously explained, Spirit control refers specifically to the Spirit’s overcoming the strong desires that have their source in the sin principle. However, Spirit leading has to do with drawing the Christian into various levels of spiritual maturity.¹⁵⁵ It indicates the Spirit’s ministry in leading the individual into correct spiritual application of the word of God, specifically with reference to grace doctrines.

Note the specific context of verse 18. If a person is being led by the Spirit he is not under law. Now, a person who is a believer is not under law, irrespective of any factor, except that God has placed him under grace. How then does it appear that a person must be led by the Spirit in order to not be under law?

The answer is found in the use of the conditional sentence in the original language. “If” here indicates what Greek grammarians call a “first class condition.” When used with a particular context, the word can sometimes be translated “since.” In other words, Paul is saying, “Since you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under law.” Therefore, since no Christian is under law, every Christian is being led by the Spirit toward maturity. However, not every believer understands this truth. While the Spirit is leading, that does not mean that the individual believer is following. Leading is available, but it may be resisted, either out of willfulness, or out of ignorance of Scripture.

Romans 8:14 states, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” The word “son” refers to an individual who has been “placed as a son” (adoption). In the culture of the first century this did not refer to a new-born, but to an individual who had reached an age of maturity set by his father. Through a ceremony, this individual was raised from the position of being a child to the position as an adult son, with all the privileges of being an adult. At that

¹⁵⁴ See again Chapter Four above for a fuller discussion of Spirit control.

¹⁵⁵ Sadly, Spirit leading is assumed by many Christians to refer to decision making. How often do we hear someone say, “The Spirit led me to go to this church?” Or perhaps “The Spirit led me to marry this person?” Indeed, almost any decision that a person makes can be, and often is, attributed to Spirit leading. When one uses the idea of Spirit leading in this way, he is misusing Scripture. Such phraseology is sometimes used to justify unbiblical decisions the Christian makes. When someone says, “The Spirit led me...,” that person is simply saying that I don’t want to hear anything negative about my decision. However, no matter how often one makes such a statement, the fact is, biblically speaking, the Spirit does not directly lead a person to make decisions. There is a biblical doctrine of decision making, but it has nothing to do with the leading of the Spirit. Why? Because the Spirit leads one to spiritual maturity, not to making specific decisions in specific cases. As a person grows spiritually, the decision making process becomes more in line with God’s desirous will, as one might expect. God expects a believer to make decisions based on biblical teaching. If a person is not violating Scripture, he is allowed to make any decision he wants. But one must grow in knowledge of the word of God to be able to be wise in his decision making.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

point, the individual was viewed as an adult, equal to his father in maturity. Such is the position of all Christians, and the Spirit desires to lead all Christians to maturity.

All Christians are considered adult sons of God positionally. But like so many positional truths there is also the process side. Believers are viewed as adult sons, but are they actually adult sons in practice? Sadly, the answer is an obvious “no!”

So *practical* adult sonship is the result of having matured to the point where individual has learned, and is applying, the grace provisions of walking by the Spirit. The Spirit continues to lead this maturing individual into further maturity.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit opposes actively the indwelling sin principle, the flesh (Ephesians 5:18), which provides for a daily lifestyle of walking by the Spirit. The application of principles for victory over the sin principle as taught in Romans 6 and Colossians 3 allows an individual to be free so as to not fulfill the lust of the flesh, by which the lust of the flesh produces the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19ff). As long as a believer is Spirit controlled, he is able to walk by the Spirit, and thereby not manifest the works of the flesh.

But questions remain. Is it possible for a spiritual Christian to cease to be spiritual?¹⁵⁶ If so, since the flesh is controlled by the Spirit, how is this accomplished? The answer to these questions bring us to a new external enemy of the believer, Satan himself. For, as we shall see, Satan is not directly controlled by the Holy Spirit as is the flesh.¹⁵⁷ There is no need for the spiritual Christian to invoke a specific ministry of the Holy Spirit to defeat the devil, because inherent in the application of his new nature, the believer can resist the devil. To defeat Satan one must understand his nature, origin, and attacks as taught in Scripture. Furthermore, the believer must learn the mental attitude defense against those attacks to overcome the temptations laid in his path.

¹⁵⁶ It is clear that a believer can be spiritual at one moment, and then cease to be spiritual the next. The Holy Spirit can become grieved (Ephesians 4:30), that is, caused to be sorrowful. Furthermore, the Spirit can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). To quench means stop something or to render something or someone ineffective. Here, the person of the Holy Spirit is rendered ineffective. The logical inference that we draw from these statements is that the believer who is spiritual can cause the Spirit to be sorrowful and to be rendered ineffective. This does not mean that the Spirit loses His abilities, but rather that He, according to God's plan, ceases to function in a certain way under certain conditions.

When a spiritual believer is walking by the Spirit, the flesh cannot overcome Spirit control. What does cause the Spirit to cease functioning in a specific area is an external attack of Satan that is realized when a believer does not defend against Satanic attack. Hence, the believer becomes susceptible to an attack of the flesh.

¹⁵⁷ We do not mean that the Holy Spirit could not control Satan if He so determined; but it is clear in Scripture that God has chosen a different method for victory over Satanic temptations.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Ten

Who is the Devil, (Satan)?

“The devil made me do it!” This line from comedian Flip Wilson¹⁵⁸ somewhat inaccurately sums up what many people think about Satan. Any and every bad thing a person does is blamed on Satan. Wilson was trying to be funny, and he usually was, but good comedy is not good theology. One of Wilson’s characters, Geraldine, wore a red dress, and often exclaimed, “The devil made me buy this dress.” Oops...sorry Geraldine, you’ve got the wrong enemy.

Satan is often blamed for bad or sinful things that he has nothing to do with. He doesn’t tempt people act according to their internal sin principle, nor, as we shall see, does he *directly* intervene in the attacks of the world system. It’s the world system that tempts people to spend beyond their means, or to buy clothing inappropriately.¹⁵⁹

These chapters on Satan will define the enemy and his attacks, as well as discuss the biblical means of overcoming those attacks.

Who is the Devil?

Ezekiel 28:13-15

¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. ¹⁴You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. ¹⁵You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. (NKJV)

No individual can be victorious against the adversary of our souls unless he understands that adversary; unless he understands his philosophy, his methods of operation, his methods of temptation.¹⁶⁰

When a Christian realizes how the Holy Spirit opposes the sin nature, he will then be prepared to understand how Satan works to remove him from the place of fellowship with the Lord to a place of sinful independence.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ For our younger readers, Flip Wilson was a comedian on television in the early 1970s, and one of the funniest. He died in 1998 from liver cancer.

¹⁵⁹ This enemy is sometimes engendered by the sin principle, especially if the clothing is bought to be sexually provocative, which is related to the sexual excesses of the flesh. But the clothing itself is produced by the world system, and it is the world system that is on display in the retail outlets around the world.

¹⁶⁰ Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary the Devil*, “Introduction.”

¹⁶¹ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 48. If the Holy Spirit truly makes it impossible for the sin principle to interfere in the life of the Spirit controlled believer, how is it possible for that believer to cease to be Spirit controlled? What

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Satan is out to get you! He desires to control the individual believer through a specific set of temptations that are distinct from the temptations of the flesh. Nor, as stated, are the temptations of Satan to be confused with the temptations of the world system.¹⁶²

We only know of the existence and nature of Satan from the Bible; there is no other source of information concerning this evil entity. Nevertheless, many myths abound concerning him, and he himself is probably the source of these myths. The devil with horns and a pitchfork is such a myth. In an attempt to make himself appear ludicrous, Satan has allowed himself to be represented by this ridiculous image.

We as Christians may laugh at that image, but we must not be fooled by it. That image is not the image of the enemy of the believer, the adversary¹⁶³ of mankind. That devil is a harmless buffoon. The devil of the Bible is a vile and dangerous spirit being who desires to destroy mankind.

He is, in fact, a fallen spirit being. However, he is not, as some have thought, an angel in the technical sense.¹⁶⁴ Rather, he is a cherub. In fact he is “the anointed cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14). The cherubim are a class of spirit beings that are nowhere called angels in Scripture. The word angel means messenger. The actual meaning of the word “cherub” has been lost in antiquity, but there is no statement that the cherubim were angels.

Perhaps they were “kinds of angels.” Some have thought so. But this brings us to a principle of interpretation that is vital to a correct understanding of Scripture. Unless a statement of the Bible can confirm such an idea, it is without merit. If God wanted to say that cherubim were kinds of angels He could have said so. He has the ability to do so, but He did not. It is inconsistent to draw such a conclusion for those who claim to hold to a normal interpretive process.

Cherubim are a different class of spirit beings from either angels (*malachim*) or *seraphim*. Some have suggested that *cherubim* are a higher, more powerful order than angels. Certainly Michael the archangel was respectful of Satan’s position and authority, not willing to accuse him (Jude 9). Jude uses this example to believers that they be unlike the evil men of whom he is speaking in vs. 8 “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” The word “dignitaries” is actually “glories” and refers to spirit beings of author-

mechanism exists by which the Spirit controlled believer can slip back into sin again? The answer lies in the attacks of Satan and the world system.

¹⁶² We emphasize the distinctions between the Christian’s enemies because they are so often confused in popular presentations. The distinctions are precise, and must be observed consistently to live the Christian life according to the New Testament pattern. As we shall see, Satan has a direct relationship to the world system. It reflects his value system, as well as his means of controlling the fallen nature of man. But the source of temptation is different between Satan and the world, just as are the defenses against these two distinct enemies.

¹⁶³ The very name Satan means adversary, opponent in the Hebrew language.

¹⁶⁴ In the non-technical sense, the word angel simply means messenger, and is used this way of human beings. The word angel is used of John the Baptist in Mark 1:2, where the KJV translates it messenger. The word angel is used in this non-technical sense of Satan in 2 Corinthians 11:14, where it says that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. But this is a deception, just as in the previous verse deceitful men transform themselves into apostles of Christ. Satan is not a messenger of light (a more correct translation than angel in this instance), any more than deceitful workmen are apostles.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

ity and power. Satan was one of this kind, so even Michael, who may have been in a lower position, did not speak of him in an accusatory manner.

Satan, then, is a very powerful spirit being, a cherub, who believes he has the right to control the earth, including believers today. This fact is clearly in conflict with those who deny the fact of Satan's existence.

The Fact of Satan's Existence is Clearly Presented in Scripture

1 Peter 5:8, 9

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

John 17:15

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

Many today reject the reality of the individual the Bible calls Satan, or the devil.¹⁶⁵ That the scriptural writers recognized such an individual is clear. He is presented as an individual who has mental facilities, makes decisions, and opposes God and His program.

To deny that Satan exists and is active hobbles the Christian in his daily walk. Yet many who call themselves Christians deny that Satan is an individual person. They represent him as a force, or even as the sin principle. But the biblical writers knew better. They knew that Satan desires to put the Christian to sleep concerning his existence, methods and goals.

That Satan is antagonistic toward the Christian is clearly revealed. In 1 Peter 5:8-9 Peter states,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Satan is presented as an active and aggressive individual being. He is seeking prey, and those who ignore his presence do so at their own spiritual peril. Now, as we shall see, Satan primarily uses his spirit being followers to do his bidding. He does not attack individuals directly, but does so through ranks of spirit beings. Nevertheless, the philosophy of attack is his.

Peter taught sobriety of mind expressly because of the aggressiveness of Satan. To be sober means to use one's mind carefully and accurately. This introduces a basic element of Satanic involvement; his attacks are against the mentality of the individual Christian. Furthermore, Peter commands vigilance because of the subtlety of the attacks of Satan. This idea of subtlety regularly accompanies discussions of Satan in Scripture. Not only is he lion-like, actively seeking the downfall of the Christian, he actively lays traps for the believer in certain areas.

Peter's simile, "he is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" indicates that Satan carries his aggressiveness to the extreme. Like that lion seeking to devour food, Satan seeks to overcome the spiritual vitality of the believer and thus control him. The figure suggests that Sa-

¹⁶⁵ The word devil means one who slanders or makes false accusations.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

tan seeks to totally “consume” the believer, so that he alone will influence the direction of the Christian’s life.

The apostle commands the Christian to resist the devil on this account (vs. 9). Resistance is the key, but it must be done in accord with the full revelation of the New Testament. To resist the devil using the wrong methodology is useless. Perhaps it is worse than useless, in that it may give the believer false hope of victory, where none is available. However, Peter does not detail the means of resistance in this passage. Since overcoming Satanic attack is part of the grace procedure, Paul is the primary mediator of the message of victory over the devil.

This passage also implies a difference between the nature of Satanic attack and the other enemies. Unlike the attack of the sin principle, which is from within the believer, the attack of Satan is external to the believer. Such was the case in the garden when the serpent tempted Eve, and is still the case today.

When Lord Jesus Himself requested of His Father that the believer would not be overcome by Satan in John 17:15, He was looking forward to the New Testament supply of grace provisions for defeating this terrible enemy. Truly, today God has equipped the saint for victory over Satan in ways that the Old Testament believer could not comprehend. The more one knows about Satan, his motivations and methods, as well as the defense against his aggression, the more likely will the believer have consistent victory over his treachery.

The Origin of Satan Explains His Nature

Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Satan: A Created Being

From where did Satan come? All who believe in the personal existence of the devil agree that he is a created being. As to when this act of creation took place, we can only state at this point that it was after the creation of Genesis 1:1.¹⁶⁶ The first of fifty-six occurrences of the name Satan occurs in 1 Chronicles 21:1 in the English Bible, but the first book of the Bible ever written was probably Job, wherein Satan is mentioned by name eleven times. And, of course, the person later called Satan was in the guise of a serpent in the garden of Eden.

Now this last fact tells us that the spirit being Satan was created and fell early, undoubtedly before Adam and Eve were created. So he was created between the initial creation in Genesis 1:1 and the creation of mankind on the sixth day of Genesis. It is best to think, then, that spirit beings as a class were created before man, but after the creation of the physical universe.

Genesis 1: The Precreation Chaos View

Now we enter into a controversial issue today. Some believe that the creation mentioned in Genesis 1:1 is not the original creation, but a subsequent act, and that the spirit beings were created before the opening of the book of Genesis. Typical of this view is that of Allen P. Ross:

¹⁶⁶ See the discussion below concerning those who believe Satan was created before Genesis 1:1.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The chapter (Genesis 1) would then be accounting for the creation of the universe as *man* knows it, not *the* beginning of everything, and Gen 1:1-2 would provide the introduction to it. The fall of Satan and entrance of sin into God's original Creation would precede this.¹⁶⁷

There are several reasons that some desire to make Genesis 1:1 an "intermediate" creation. The two primary ones are scientific and theological, the first dealing with the issue of the "geological ages," and the second dealing with the creation of spirit beings, and the subsequent fall of Satan and his spirit being followers. On the surface, one can see that this intermediate creation view of Genesis 1:1 is very helpful in dealing with these issues. However, it has serious problems of its own.

For instance, if Genesis 1:1 does not open with an account of the original creation of the heavens and the earth, why does it seem to do so? In order to hold to the intermediate view, one must abandon Genesis and try to correlate data from other passages. But when Moses wrote this passage, there were no other passages. If Moses had meant an intermediate creation, why did he not say so?

Furthermore, one must ask what Moses' original audience thought the prophet meant by his statement that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Could they possibly have thought it refers to a subsequent creation other than the original creation out of nothing? It seems highly unlikely that they would do so. Indeed, for Moses to have meant that, but to have worded the statement the way he did, would seem to have been duplicitous on God's part if the original out-of-nothing creation were not meant. For centuries, the understanding of readers approaching this passage has been that Moses meant that God created out of nothing the heavens and the earth. To abandon that view based on supposed scientific or theological reasoning seems specious at best.

Now this last statement is not to give credence to some forms of historical theology. We dare not say that any authority lies in previous interpretations provided by previous writers other than Moses. Some correct interpretations of Scripture may not have been written down until recently, even though individual believers may have held the correct view going back into antiquity.

So we are forced back to the original question. What would the original audience of Moses have thought the statement in question meant? The only possible answer can be that they would have understood Genesis 1:1 to teach that God created the heavens and earth out of nothing. Were they wrong? We think not!

Another problem, one which most authors realize, including Allen P. Ross, is found in the statement, "And the earth was without form and void." There are two views held about this statement. The first is that this clause reflects the state of the earth at the original creation of Genesis 1:1. Some who hold that Genesis 1:1 was an intermediate creation also hold this view. Ross states:

¹⁶⁷ Allen P. Ross, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, "Genesis". Electronic edition, E-Sword.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

But Gen 1:2 describes a chaos: there was waste and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. The clauses in Gen 1:2 are apparently circumstantial to Gen 1:3, telling the world's condition *when* God began to renovate it. It was a chaos of wastefulness, emptiness, and darkness. Such conditions would not result from God's creative work (*bara*); rather, in the Bible they are symptomatic of sin and are coordinate with judgment.¹⁶⁸

Genesis 1: The Restitution View

However, another view has been widely held, though it is now denigrated by many because they suppose that it conflicts somehow with the "young earth" position that they espouse.¹⁶⁹ It is widely called the "gap *theory*" as though it was not a legitimate approach to this passage, but it certainly is *as* legitimate as the intermediate approach which says that in the Genesis 1:1 "re-creation" God somehow allowed the earth to be created without form and void. To be fair with this view, however, some proponents say that Genesis 1:1 is but a general statement of the six days of creation, which identify the process of creation that is meant in the first verse of Genesis. Hence, they claim, the original pre-Genesis 1:1 creation was not "without form and voice," but was just as pristine as Genesis 1:1 seems to state according to the older, more literal view.

The gap view states simply that since the earth could not have been created "without form and void," and since Genesis 1:3 clearly presents the beginning of a restoration away from the formless and void state of the earth, that there must be a gap between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis, a gap in which the spirit beings were undoubtedly created, in part, if not in whole. Interestingly, both the Restoration View and the Precreation Chaos View hold basically the same position when it comes to the six days of Genesis 1. Both views see those six days as renovation rather than creation from nothing.

Having introduced the gap view, we will discuss one last, and to this author's mind, conclusive argument against the Precreation Chaos View. That view grew up in part because some theistic evolutionists have used the Restitution View to say that the long geological ages fit between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2.¹⁷⁰ However, it is not necessary to so say, and moving the gap back before Genesis 1:1 does not solve that problem. Recently I heard a theistic evolutionist espouse an old earth view by saying that the creation before Genesis 1:1 was billions of years ago. To say, as some have, that the original out-of-nothing creation prior to Genesis 1:1 solves the interpretive problem of placing the geological ages in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 has done nothing of the sort. It has simply created another gap, this one before the opening of Genesis!

Genesis 1: It's Importance to the Christian Life

Why is this topic important, especially in a work on the Christian life? There may be several reasons, but we will focus on two.

¹⁶⁸ Ross, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

¹⁶⁹ And with which this author generally agrees.

¹⁷⁰ See, for instance, Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: a Compendium, Three Volumes in One*, The Judson Press, 1963. Strong was a reformed Baptist who held to theistic evolution.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

First, it is important because it goes to one's approach to the interpretation of the Bible. If one uses later Scripture to read an interpretation back into Genesis 1:1, an interpretation that the original audience could not have understood, they have undermined the very reason the Bible was written part by part. Each generation of readers needed to know something being revealed for their own daily relationship to God. If not directly concerning how they should act, then concerning information of a background to lay the groundwork for how they should act. Such is the purpose behind the original writing of Genesis. Moses was not just writing to provide historical information; he was writing to lay the groundwork for God's dealings with the chosen nation of Israel and its existence to provide a means for producing the kingdom of God. At the time, Israel had escaped Egypt, but were having serious doubts about the authority of God. Moses wrote Genesis 1:1 to reveal that the God of Israel is the creator God.

Furthermore, those who do read other, later Scriptures back into Genesis 1:1 are guilty of the same error that some of them condemn. They themselves condemn the idea of reading the New Testament back into the Old, and thus being forced into abnormal interpretation of both Testaments. If it is not legitimate to force an interpretation of an Old Testament passage by reading a New Testament statement back into it, it is not legitimate to re-interpret Genesis 1:1 by reading later revelation back into it.

The second reason this is important, and the reason that is most germane to this presentation on Christian living, is that Scripture presents the devil as having lived on the earth in an unfallen state prior to Genesis 1:2. Again we must refer to Ezekiel 28: 13-14:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. (NKJV)

Many conservative interpreters of Scripture agree that the above passage refers to Satan. That interpretation is based on the principle of compenetration. Compenetration is a literary device that uses one person or thing as a foil for another person or thing. In this case, the king of Tyre (28:12) is being used as a foil for Satan. The actual physical king of Tyre is not being addressed in the passage, but Satan himself. The primary reason for evoking compenetration is because certain phrases in Ezekiel 28:13ff go well beyond any statement that could be applied to the original human foil. Certainly in the earlier verses in Ezekiel 28:1-11 the human prince of Tyre is in view, but the prophet continues with exalted language that could not in any way refer to a human.

Verse 13 presents an unusual statement. "You were in Eden, the garden of God" certainly cannot refer to the historical king of Tyre. Note the description of this individual, who is covered with precious stones. If this is the same Eden as Genesis, then the word refers to a place on the earth, the earth subsequent to Genesis 1:1, but before Genesis 1:2. It must refer to the earth of the prefall gap. This answers the question as to why the judgment upon the earth took place after Genesis 1:1. The earth became "without form and void" because of the judgment of God subsequent to the fall of Satan, the original resident of Eden.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

As we will see when we examine the Isaiah 14 passage below, when Satan fell, he fell *up*. He desired to ascend into heaven because at the time of his spiritual demise, he was on earth. Perhaps God had given him this star system as his abode.

A primary statement of interest to us is in verse 15, “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.” The word “created” is *bara*,¹⁷¹ the same word found in Genesis 1:1. Other than Adam, no human being was created, only generated from their human parents, so this cannot be referring to a human being at all.

Satan’s rebellion caused God to remove him from his position of authority. Verse 16 states, “By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.” God did not allow Satan to remain in control of his earthly residence. Perhaps Satan thought that he could ascend to heaven, and remain in control on the earth. He was mistaken. God gave the earth to a new group of beings, human beings. But Satan is not content. He desires to control the earth and its inhabitants.

Much more could be said about this fascinating passage, but we must go on. Another important passage dealing with Satan’s defection is found in the book of Isaiah.

The Fall of Satan Indicates His Motivation

Isaiah 14:13, 14

For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

Satan’s attitude concerning his desires is revealed to us. Warren Rushton succinctly states, “It should be understood that when Satan said that he would be like the most High that he was not desiring to be holy, just and righteous.... He wanted to be independent like God is, and be worshiped like God.”¹⁷²

Thus we see in Satan’s fall his thought processes in rejecting his God-given position in the created universe. It is ultimately this attitude of prideful independence which activates his attack against believers today.

Satan’s motive for temptation is related to his fall. In other words, when Satan tempts the believer, he does so consistently with his own motivations in sinning against God. Lewis Sperry Chafer correctly summarized this truth:

¹⁷¹ Some argue that the word *בָּרָא* (*bara*) can also mean “made from existing material.” True, but that is not its only meaning, and can only mean that when the context demands it. If “made from existing material” were meant in *this* context, one would expect to see *עָשָׂה* (*asah*, make) rather than *בָּרָא* (*bara*, create). Ezekiel’s argument is from perfection (*תָּמִים*, *tamim*, complete, having integrity) to the imperfection of iniquity (*עָוֹן*, *avlah*, injustice), and that cannot be stated of any human being other than Adam.

¹⁷² Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 49.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

“According to the Scriptures, the supreme motive of Satan is his purpose to become like the most High, and, though that purpose was formed even before the age of man, it has been his constant actuating motive from that time until now.”¹⁷³

Furthermore, Satan’s attacks from the beginning are consistent with this original arrogance. Warren Rushton expresses this truth:

When man was created, Satan soon suggested to Eve to act independently of God. Then through Eve he was able to get Adam to go against God’s command. When the devil tempted Christ, each temptation was geared to getting the Son to act independently of the Father. The main purpose Satan has in tempting believers is to draw them away from walking by the Spirit, thus to be independent... Basically, this is a form of pride which underlies all of Satan’s temptations to evil.¹⁷⁴

Independent pride is the basis for all of Satan’s activities. He operates in order to control the believer through a temptation to be high-minded. This type of pride is not the same thing as “self-centeredness” or “selfishness,” though we English speakers use the word pride of this condition also. Rather, Satanic pride does not so much seek to be the center of attention as it seeks to raise one’s self above the station in life which God has given him. The satanically controlled individual is one who is high-minded, that is, one who thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think (Romans 12:3).

The normal sense of “I will ascend” is that Satan desired to “go up.” This has been taken metaphorically by some, meaning that he only wanted to ascend as to his position of authority. There is certainly figurative language in this passage, but this statement does not appear to fit into that category. While it can be argued that Satan desired to improve his authoritative position in God’s creation, such does not seem to be the meaning here. Satan was in control of the earth. He occupied a place in Eden on the earth, but he was not satisfied. He desired to ascend to heaven. The subsequent statements in this passage affirm that truth.

He stated, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.”

So, Satan’s attacks against the Christian are consistent with his character as revealed in the various passages about his rebellion against God. In his attacks against the believer today, his primary motive is to cause believers to rebel against God, to act independently of God, and thus to come under his influence. So we must turn to the individual attacks of Satan to understand how he attempts to influence believers today.

¹⁷³ Chafer, *Satan*, pg. 71.

¹⁷⁴ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 526.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Eleven

How does the Devil Attack the Believer?

The general nature of Satanic attack is distinct from the other enemies. It is imperative that the believer realize the fact that Satan attacks through deceiving the mind of the Christian, and that the solutions to overcoming Satan are a set of mental attitudes available to the Christian. One very serious error in this regard is to apply to Satan the attacks of the flesh. Satanic attack is often confused with the attacks of the flesh. Such a confusion makes it nearly impossible for the believer to maintain consistent victory over this most vicious of the Christian's enemies.

Rushton clearly summarizes this error,

The popular concept of Satan's temptations perhaps could be summed up in the erroneous statement attributed to John Wesley: "all the works of our evil nature are the work of the devil." The nature of the devil's temptations must be clearly understood so that a proper appreciation of the nature of the defense can be made and the armor applied. Satan does not have to make approaches through the sin nature of the Christian or through the World's system. This fact comes into clear focus in observing how Satan tempted Eve and then Adam. Before the fall, there was no flesh in the sense of Galatians 5 or Romans 7. There was no κόσμος (cosmos) system at this time. Therefore, the devil came directly to Eve and placed an idea in her mind to weigh and consider. Satan immediately questioned the Word of God.¹⁷⁵

Later, the same author states,

Neither Adam nor Eve had a sin nature to which Satan could appeal. Similarly, when Satan tempted Christ, he could make no solicitation to a flesh nature, for Christ had none (Hebrews 4:15). The fact is, however, that Christ was tempted (πειράζω, Matt. 4:1) to evil. Satan does not make his appeal to the sin nature for at least three reasons: first, the strong desires of the flesh are under control for the Spirit filled Christian (Galatians 5:16); second, Satan's purpose is not to get men to be controlled completely by the flesh works; third, he can go directly to the mind with his thoughts which do not come even close to approximating the lusts of the flesh.¹⁷⁶

However, one must make a very fine distinction here. While the devil does not appeal to the sin nature, it is the sin nature of the Christian *that responds* in evil work to the temptations of Satan (1 John 5:18). Satan cannot touch the new nature; it is impervious to him. However, the old fallen nature is able to respond to the attacks of the devil, and does so when the solution to Satanic attack is not applied.

¹⁷⁵ Rushton, *Enemies*, pgs. 50-51.

¹⁷⁶ Rushton, *Enemies*, pgs. 51,52.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Schemes (wiles) of the Devil

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Some have translated the word for wiles *wiles* as *schemes*. Both English words only moderately express the truth of the original word. The Greek word for *schemes* or *wiles* is *methodia*. It is used in only two passages in the New Testament. In Ephesians 4:14 the NASB translates it “craftiness,” while the KJV translates it “lie in wait.” The idea seems to be that Satan is looking for the area of weakness in the individual that he can exploit through deceit. Satan will attack the individual, not in an area of strength, but deceitfully in the most likely area of his weakness.

“*Methodia* is from *methodeuo* (*meta, hodos*) to follow after or up; to practice deceit, and occurs nowhere else (Ephesians 4:13; 6:11) save in the late papyri in the sense of *method*. The word *planes* (wandering, like our ‘planet’) adds to the evil idea of the word.”¹⁷⁷

Another author says concerning this word that it, “...denotes craft, deceit...a cunning device....”¹⁷⁸

Rushton states, “The term ‘wiles’ of the devil emphasizes the deceitful aspect of his temptations. Satanic temptations never appear on the surface as they really are.”¹⁷⁹

The believer must recognize that Satan is subtle and deceitful. He is the most accomplished purveyor of untruth in the universe. He does not want the Christian to believe the truth of God found in Scripture, and goes to great lengths to suppress that truth. Believers find themselves tempted to abandon normal interpretive procedures and substitute error for truth when studying the Bible. The believer who relies on his own ability to determine the spiritual truth that Satan opposes through using erroneous methods of interpretation is heading toward a fall, and a very serious one.

The Designs (devices) of the Devil

2 Corinthians 2:11

...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

The following is a more literal translation of 2 Corinthians 2:11, “...in order that we are not taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his *mental things*.” Some translate the Greek word translated designs or devices in modern versions as “the things of the mind” (*ta noemata*), or “the mental things.”

The word *nous*, which shares a root with *noemata*, refers to the faculty of understanding as a result of experience in the daily life. It is specifically in the area of spiritual understanding that Satan attacks. His attacks are in areas of practical thinking, that is, thinking that affects the way

¹⁷⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV, pg. 538.

¹⁷⁸ W.E. Vine. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, IV, pg. 216.

¹⁷⁹ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 52.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

the individual performs. While, as we shall see, many of these attacks are not attacks to commit sin, they are attacks to think in negative ways that can produce unrighteousness and sin in the life of the believer.

Satan's attacks are primarily mental and not physical. Indeed, in the current age as presented by the New Testament epistles, Satan exclusively attacks the mind of the believer. For this reason, it is a mistake to go to books such as Job, or the gospels, where Satan was more active in physical matters. Even in Job, it must be remembered, Satan was required to ask God's permission before he could physically attack that righteous man. Evidently Satan was allowed, from time to time in the gospels period, to attack in the area of physicality, but the grace epistles do not speak to that problem. Probably this is because God has limited Satan's attacks *today*. Today God allows him to attack only in the area of the Christian's mentality. Lest this seem less dangerous than before, remember that Satan is a powerful individual whose original fallen condition was the result of an aberrant mental process.

We read in Acts 5:3, "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?" This event expresses the fact that Satan put it into the heart (read "mind"¹⁸⁰) of Ananias and Sapphria to lie. Lying, is, as we shall see, a result of high mindedness, the basic prideful attitude that has its source in Satan.

Rushton states, "The devil apparently has the ability to put his thoughts in the minds of Christians when allowed by God" (Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 53). However, this activity of Satan has limits. When one studies the areas of mental attacks presented in the epistles, it becomes evident that only *certain mentalities* are subject to Satanic influence. Not only does Scripture exclude the lusts of the flesh from the devil's attacks, also uncontrollable involuntary mental activity, such as dreams, are not subject to Satanic manipulation. Such activities are a product of the indwelling sin principle, and though not controllable by walking by the Spirit, are apart from Satanic exploitation.

The Snare of the Devil

2 Timothy 2:24-26

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

1 Timothy 3:7

Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

A careful consideration of these passages indicates several truths concerning the way Satan deals with Christians who are studying the Word of God.

¹⁸⁰ In the Bible, from ancient times, the heart is considered the seat of the mentality. We still use the word that way today when we say something like, "I learned that by heart," meaning that I memorized it. In the New Testament the heart never means the seat of the emotions, and we dare not give that important word such a meaning.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Those who oppose the truth of the Word of God are *ensnared* by the devil. They are opposing the truth of God's word in a vigorous, personal way shown by the fact that the apostle uses a Greek participle in the middle voice for the statement "those who are in opposition." The middle voice emphasizes the one performing the act. The Greek word derives from a verb form which means "to place one's self against, to oppose."

The ensnared individual, then, is one who for some reason, perhaps even unknown to himself if he has been deceived by Satan, opposes the truth of the Word of God. Ensnarement is not a specific attack of Satan, but rather, a general approach, so that when the believer encounters one of the direct Satanic attacks, he will not be able to correctly use the statements of Scripture to overcome them.¹⁸¹ Those who allegorize or spiritualize the text of Scripture are in peril of this very thing.

The ultimate cause of the ensnared condition is in the last phrase in vs. 26 "having been taken captive by him in relationship to that one's will."

The idea of being taken captive is from the Greek *zogreo*. It literally signifies "to take men alive (from *zoos*, alive, and *agreuo*, to hunt or catch."¹⁸²

An ensnared individual needs God to give them "a change of mind (repentance) with reference to a full experiential knowledge of truth." The word "knowledge" refers to that information which can be used as a practical defense against Satanic attack.

Paul expresses the recovery of the ensnared saint in the words "and they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil." The word "sober" also occurs in 1 Peter 5:8 of Satanic attack, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Kenneth Wuest writes, "In the words 'be sober' sobriety of mind is enjoined. 'Be mentally self-controlled,' is the idea."¹⁸³

Mental control is at the core of deliverance from Satan. If a believer is flighty in his thought process, especially with reference to spiritual truth, he is in danger of succumbing to Satanic attack. If a believer substitutes anything for Scripture in this battle, he is doomed to failure.

Ensnarement is consistent with the emphasis of the New Testament on the mental nature of Satanic attacks. Rushton states, "The idea of thoughts, mind, mental attitudes again comes to the forefront. Ensnarement, then, is no one specific temptation, but could involve different Satanic temptations, but the specific practical result in this case is the opposition to the truth of the Word of God."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ In the "armor" passage in Ephesians, the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" refers not to the Scriptures as a whole, but specific truths in the revealed Word that the believer can use to counter Satanic manipulation. Such statements are quoted not for the benefit of Satan, but for the benefit of the Christian. However, if the Christian is ensnared, such a benefit is no longer available. One must accept the fact that the Bible alone has the truth to live the Christian life. Any other sources, whether they be humanistic or philosophical, cannot equip the believer to every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

¹⁸² Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, I, pg. 168.

¹⁸³ Wuest, *First Peter in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, pg. 129.

¹⁸⁴ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 55.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

According to 1 Timothy 3:7 an overseer (bishop, elder, vs. 1) who has a bad testimony before the unbeliever may fall into a snare of the devil. Since the overseer is in a position of authority, it is possible for him to become prideful of place, and therefore think that just because he has that position he deserves to be well thought of, despite how he acts. One can only maintain such an attitude if Scripture is ignored. The believer's relationship with the unbeliever must be of the highest morality and kindness.

If the believer recognizes the nature of Satanic attack, he is able to overcome the specifics of Satanic attack. The individual attacks of the devil can then be overcome by a correct set of mental attitudes, but those specific attacks must be understood from Scripture to be recognized in time to apply the defense against them.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Notes

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Twelve

What are the Attacks of Satan?

The specific attacks of Satan against believers today are only the eleven listed below. As previously stated, all attacks of Satan are deceitful, target the mentality, interfere with the truth of Scripture, and seem to be based, at least to some extent, in the first attack, pride, or high mindedness.

Pride or High mindedness

Romans 12:1-3

Therefore, I encourage you, brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable worship act.¹⁸⁵ 2 And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what the good and well pleasing and perfect desire of God is.

3 For I say through the grace which was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think highly of himself beyond what is necessary to think, but to think sensibly, as God has distributed to each one a measure of faith.

Romans 12:1-3 deals with two problems that are associated with Satan.¹⁸⁶ One is “age conformity” which we will discuss below. The first one mentioned is “high mindedness” or esteeming oneself more highly than one ought. This appears to be an issue that is basic to all other forms of Satanic attack. When Satan fell, he fell as a result of this form of pride.

Concerning the selection of an elder, 1 Timothy 3:6 states, “...not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

¹⁸⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the Scripture translations in this chapter are by the author. The Greek word *λατρεία* (*worship act*) refers to the worship activity of a priest and is therefore generally translated service. This priestly service was done through ritual in the Old Testament temple, while today it is done through other activities of the believer. In the context of Romans 12, the specific acts of worship are the expression of the believer's spiritual gift. Many find it surprising that God views the physical ministry of the believer as worship, but it is clearly so.

¹⁸⁶ It is sometimes alleged that this passage deals with the problem of sin in general. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sin is not the topic here. Rather, Paul is discussing the problems of Satanic attack for the purpose of rendering the ministry of the believer ineffective. And while the attacks of Satan can lead to specific acts of sin, the primary focus of Satanic attack is the mental attitude of the believer, often through subterfuge and deception. Only five or six of Satan's attacks are to specific activities. But even there, his primary attack is mental, and when the believer succumbs to such an attack, acts of unrighteousness quickly follow. The specific topic of Romans 12:1-3 is the sacrifice of the believer's body as an act of priestly service. Paul is leading into a discussion of the correct use of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6ff). He assumes that the readers of Romans 12 have read Romans 6, and are having victory over the principle of indwelling sin.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Satanic pride is the attitude of one who thinks that he deserves a higher position than he actually occupies. It is possible for a young man who is in the position of an elder to come to think that his position of elder is of a higher status than it actually is. He can begin to think of himself more highly than his actual position warrants. Romans 12:3 indicates that the believer is “not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly,” an undoubted reference to the Satanic attitude of pride.

The word “pride” itself comes from the idea of being puffed up with smoke in this passage. It is not to be confused with another form of pride, selfishness, or self-centeredness. While they are similar, these elements are far from identical. As we have seen, self-centeredness is actually an attack of the flesh, and is not Satanic at all. Self-centeredness is not based on the position occupied by the individual, but on his perceived self-worth, no matter to what position he strives.¹⁸⁷

Age Conformity or Independence from God Produces High-Mindedness

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what the good and well pleasing and perfect desire of God is.

Although we deal with it separately, age conformity is not a different attack than pride. Satan is the “god of this age.” 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “...*whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*” (NKJV) As the god of this age, Satan uses the elements of the age to influence and control Christians.

An age is a period of time that is described as having certain characteristics. The major characteristic of the present age is that it is “evil” (Galatians 1:4). The word evil (Greek, *poneros*) is used of Satan himself who is designated “the evil one” (Matt. 13:8, et. al.). The word carries the idea of a malignancy. Satan’s godhood of the age indicates that he is in control of the “get-ahead” practices of the present time that are detrimental to the believer. It is primarily in the sense of spiritual ministry that Satan uses this philosophy to attack the Christian. The individual Christian’s ministry as a priest is greatly dependent on seeing himself accurately. Satan desires to pervert that accurate estimation, and cause a believer to think of his ministry in a way that is designed to promote the Christian into a position of prominence.

Age conformity is closely related to misusing one’s spiritual ministry as a believer priest. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul relates the problem, “*Therefore, I encourage you, brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable worship act. 2 And do not be conformed to this age, but be trans-*

¹⁸⁷ The fact that in English we use “pride” for both the Satanic attack and the flesh attack has caused no end of confusion. But we do recognize the difference in our modern culture. We generally think of self-centeredness as a form of immaturity, and it is often applied to children or others who act in a childish manner. High-mindedness, on the other hand, is often well-thought-of in our modern world. It is associated with ambition, with climbing the corporate ladder, with success in business and other endeavors.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

formed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what the good and well pleasing and perfect desire of God is.”¹⁸⁸

The problem of age conformity is specifically presented in these verses. It has to do with the act of sacrifice of the believer’s body in priestly service. Age conformity refers to ministering in other than a biblical way. The “will of God” in this passage refers to God’s desire that the believer serve according to biblical ideals. Specifically, in the context of Romans 12, age conformity deals with one’s misuse of his spiritual gift (vs. 4-6).

Now, when the believer uses the renewed mind, he can and should think correctly about the problem of age-conformity, and the attempt by Satan to induce an act of thinking in a high-minded way. The word for the *renewed mind*, is not the same word as thinking in a high-minded way. The renewed mind is the result of the regeneration of the Spirit, but high-mindedness is the result of using the fallen mental activity associated with the adamic nature.

Romans 12:3 makes it clear that the basic spiritual attack is one of high-mindedness. “*For I say through the grace which was given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think highly of himself beyond what is necessary to think, but to think sensibly, as God has distributed to each one a measure of faith.*” This is identical to the “puffed up” attitude that is the result of Satanic delusion mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:6 above.

Age conformity is not worldliness. 2 Timothy. 4:10 says, “*for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present age, and has departed for Thessalonica -- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.*” Because of mistranslations, age conformity is often confused with worldliness. In both Romans 12:2 and 2 Timothy 4:10, the NKJV translates the Greek word *aion* as world rather than age. However, age conformity is not the same as worldliness. The world is a separate enemy of the believer, while age conformity is one of the attacks of the adversary, the devil.

An excellent illustration of this can be seen in 2 Timothy 4:10, where Demas forsook Paul, “*having loved the now age.*” Demas did not become a worldly Christian. He did not forsake ministering. He simply redirected his ministry in a way so as to be independent from Paul. That is, Demas had become age conformed. The implication is that he desired a higher position than was due him. He was dissatisfied with ministering *under* the authority of the apostle.

To summarize, age conformity is an attack of Satan by which he attempts to cause the believer to be high-minded, to think more highly of himself than he ought. This is applicable specifically in the area of spiritual ministry of priesthood, and can produce an incorrect use of a believer’s spiritual gift.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, some modern versions, including the NKJV, translate the word *aion* found here as “world” rather than “age.”

¹⁸⁹ One sometimes sees the effects of high-mindedness in church leadership, especially in the area of the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11). It has become altogether too common to place a man in a position of being “the pastor” of an assembly, and then hold him in such high regard that his teaching cannot be questioned. Such men are often revered beyond what they should be, and they sometime court such reverence. Often, they are even called “reverend.” No place in Scripture was such a title ever used. Such pastors are often unquestioned in their presentation of Scripture. They stand before the congregation and no one asks any question for clarification. This was not the practice of the early assemblies, who met in a very informal way, with discussion going back and forth concerning the Scripture being taught. Sadly, even that got out of hand in Corinth.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Anxiety

1 Peter 5:6-9

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, in order that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because it matters to Him concerning you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking someone whom he may devour. Stand against him, stable in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being undergone by your brotherhood in the world.

The noun form of the Greek word anxiety (*merimna*) occurs 6 times in the New Testament. The basic meaning of the word is “to care, to be concerned,” and is usually so translated. However, in some contexts it has the negative connotation of “worry” or “anxiety” as it does in 1 Peter 5:7, and should be so translated.¹⁹⁰

Anxiety is an attitude of worry resulting from the idea that an individual thinks they should be able to control a situation over which they have no control, or worry over the outcome of such a situation. In the case of Peter’s original readers, the worry over suffering was causing a negative attitude which, in turn, caused negative acts to ensue. What these acts were we are not told, but the implication of the passage is that believers were complaining to others around them about the possible outcomes of persecution.¹⁹¹

The verb form (*merimnao*), which occurs 24 times in the New Testament, is used in Philipians 4:6-7, also in the negative sense of the Satanic attack of anxiety. The Apostle Paul states, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” The opposite of anxiety is internal peace.¹⁹²

Discouragement

1 Thessalonians 2:17, 18

But we, brethren, having been orphaned from you for a short time, in face, not in heart, were extremely diligent to see your face, with much desire. Therefore we desired to come to you, indeed, I, Paul, once and then twice, but Satan hindered us.

Discouragement is the negative attitude of the individual who believes his circumstances are out of control, that he is somehow being hindered, without recognizing the devil behind the problem. He believes that he should not have to undergo such conditions, generally because of

¹⁹⁰ The word “care” in the phrase “because he cares for you” is the word *melo*, which carries the idea of being concerned or interested. Unfortunately, the NKJV translates *melo* (anxiety) and *merimna* the same way, “care.”

¹⁹¹ At least the attitude of anxiety was out in the open. Someone either reported to Peter what was being discussed and the reasons for it, or else Peter knew it first hand from his dealings with his readers. But this was not silent anxiety. It was being expressed in some complaining manner. Some have suggested that these Jewish believers were even considering renouncing their faith Christ, but there is no direct evidence of this in the text.

¹⁹² This work discusses the word peace under the topic of the armor of God. See Chapter Thirteen.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

high-mindedness. He should, he thinks, be above such situations. Such mild forms of discouragement as frustration are also comprehended in this attack. It is based on an inadequate view of God and an unwillingness to subordinate to His program. Discouragement is often seen in statements such as, "Why me?" or "I don't deserve this."

A number of examples in Scripture indicate that Satan attempts to put roadblocks, or hindrances, in the way of individuals. In the New Testament, Satan attempted to hinder Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians, and was to a certain extent, successful. Why would Satan act this way? He undoubtedly did so in order to discourage Paul in his ministry, and thereby control his attitude.

The prime Old Testament example of Satanic hindrance is, of course, the story of Job. Satan attempted through physical circumstances to turn Job's righteous attitude away from God, and thereby produce in Job frustration and discouragement. Such a success would show that God was not truly in control of those whom He blessed. As with Paul, however, Satan's attack on Job proved ineffective. Of course, the story of Job also tells us that Satan can do only that which God allows. God will never allow a believer, even in the Old Testament, to be tested beyond his endurance.

Like anxiety, discouragement is situational. The same kinds of situations that bring about anxiety in some individuals produce frustration and discouragement in others. Satan, in his perverse wisdom, knows how to affect the minds of believers who are easily manipulated toward the one or the other.

Spiritual Fear

Luke 22:31-34

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat." ³² "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." ³³ But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." ³⁴ Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me." (NKJV)

2 Timothy 1:7, 8

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.... (NKJV)

Revelation 2:10

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (NKJV)

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Often, when the New Testament speaks of fear it speaks of Satan. When the Lord Jesus Christ told Peter that Satan desired to “sift him as wheat,” He was referring to the Satanic temptation of spiritual fear. When Peter claimed that he was willing to “go with You, both to prison and to death,” Christ’s response was the prediction that Peter would deny Him three times before the crowing of the rooster. The Lord’s prediction was fulfilled in Luke 22:57-62. Peter’s fear had overcome him because Satan had indeed, “sifted him as wheat.” That phrase tells us something of Satan’s method. He found a spiritual weakness and exploited it. Metaphorically speaking, when Satan sifted Peter, fear fell out.

Evidently Timothy was afraid to share the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:8). Paul reminds him in 2 Timothy 1:7 that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” The fear of giving the gospel of salvation is a common problem, especially among young believers. After all, who wants to be thought of as a religious fanatic? Who wants to be the recipient of the sarcastic question, “Do you really believe that stuff?” The innate desire to be accepted and well-liked can produce a situation that Satan can use to bring about spiritual cowardice. One can easily see that this is based on the Satanic attack of high-mindedness. The lowliness of Christ is not appealing to the normal way of human thinking.

Revelation 2:10 indicates that God was going to allow Satan to manipulate a situation so that some believers in Ephesus would be cast into prison for ten days. Again we state that such manipulation can only occur when God allows it. This is not to say, however, that every bad situation is the result of Satanic attack. Indeed, many are the result of acting out the principle of indwelling sin. Others are part of God’s providential program for believers to bring them to maturity. But Satan will use even those circumstances to bring about fear.

Stealing

Ephesians 4:27, 28

...nor give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the good thing, in order that he might have something to share with the one who has need.

Here we come to a specific act of wrong-doing rather than simply an unrighteous mental attitude. Stealing is a result of Satanic pride (high-mindedness) because the one who steals thinks himself above working. This is not simply a matter of physical laziness. Some who steal work very hard at it. Rather, the willingness to steal from someone else is based on the idea that the one stealing is somehow superior in position to his victim, and therefore has the right to take what he wants.

The alternative to stealing is stated, “*rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good.*” It is either the one or the other. No middle ground is comprehended. Even the most unskilled Christian can find something to do. Even the most unskilled can do “*what is good,*” that is, what is beneficial, rather than hurtful.

The purpose for working in this passage is stated, “*that he may have something to give him who has need.*” To help others in need is contrary to the Satanic attitude of pride. The one who

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

shares is putting value on another above himself and therefore sees himself as subordinate to the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6).

Lying

Genesis 3:4

Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. (NASB)

John 8:44

You are from your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to do. That one was a man killer from the beginning and he was not standing in the truth because the truth is not in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own sources, because he is a liar, and the father of lying.¹⁹³

Acts 5:1-10

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? She said, Yes, for so much. Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. (NASB)

Another unrighteous act based on pride is lying. One function of a lie is to cause others to think more highly of the liar than they ought.

The first instance of a lie is found in Genesis 3:4 where the serpent deceived Eve. This example shows that lying is not simply misrepresenting the truth. It is a misrepresentation designed to deceive the other person, and thus bring benefit of some kind to the liar. In the case of Eve, Satan was desiring to control the first humans who had usurped, to his mind, his position in the creation. He had abandoned the earth, but still desired to rule over it. This high-mindedness is expressed in the temptations of Jesus, and continues until today. It is that desire to rule that will cause Satan to manipulate mankind during the tribulation period.

¹⁹³ Often translated "and the father of lies." However, the word refers to lying as an act, not to the lies themselves.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Lord Jesus explained the Satanic motivation in John 8:44 “Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *sources*, because he is a liar, and the father of *lying*.” The phrase “from his own *sources*,” could be expressed “by his own people.” Satan produces lies today through the words of human beings.

Perhaps the best example of Satanic influence in lying is found in Acts 5:1-10, where Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, conspired to lie to the Apostles. Peter clearly connects lying with Satanic influence in the words, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?” The answer to the question is not given, but contextually we may surmise that Ananias and Sapphira did so in order to be held in high esteem by others when they did not deserve it.

Spiritual Idleness

1 Timothy 5:13-15

And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. ¹⁴ Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵ For some have already turned aside after Satan. (NKJV)

Three specific and related Satanic attacks are mentioned in the above passage: spiritual idleness, gossip, and being a busybody.

Spiritual idleness is not freedom from activity. When the young women of 1 Timothy 5:13-15 were idle, they were busy with the wrong things. The problem was one of priorities. They were idle in that they were not doing God’s work as they had agreed to do.

Idleness, gossip, and being a busybody are all associated with Satanic influence in the words “give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan.”

Gossip

The Greek word for gossip does not appear to be limited to talking about people behind their backs. It also includes the discussion of subjects that are not fit to be discussed.

While by no means are Christians limited to talking about spiritual matters, we are to guard our speech so as not to get involved in vain speculations and foolish talking. It is correctly linked to being a busy-body, because a person who is curious about things not his business often spends time talking about such things.

Busy-body [curious arts]

A busybody is curious about things concerning which he or she has no legitimate business. While curiosity can be a good thing, it must not be carried to extremes, especially when its object is the personal lives of other individuals, especially of believers.

Being a busy-body seems to be the flip side of spiritual idleness. The Greek word indicates that these women were busy, but engaging in illegitimate activities, and were curious about things that were none of their business. The same word is used in Acts 19:19 where it relates to

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

unbelievers practicing magic, certainly no business of the biblical Christian. In the 1 Timothy passage no such activity is engaged, but these women were spending their time doing and talking about things other than spiritual ministry.

Throughout the three foregoing Satanic attacks, the common theme is lack of setting priorities. Misusing one's time when one should be engaged in spiritual ministry is Satanic in its source. This is consistent with the idea of "age conformity" wherein Satan attempts to re-direct the ministry of the believer priest so as to render it less effective.

An unforgiving attitude [grudge holding]

2 Corinthians 2:6-11

This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (NASB)

Evidently someone in Corinth had committed an act that was sufficient to cause the believers there to remove him from the assembly. Paul encourages them not to continue the situation beyond that which is bearable for the individual. The implication of the passage is that the ultimate goal is to restore a believer to fellowship, not to keep him away forever.

Paul enjoins the Corinthians to forgive this person, that is, not to hold a grudge against him. At the appropriate time they, "*ought* rather to forgive and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love to him."

The idea of forgiveness in this passage is not the same as the idea of forgiveness for sins. The Greek word here is *charizomai*, meaning to be gracious toward, rather than *aphiemi*, which means to remove the consequences of an act of unrighteousness. The believer should be gracious towards other believers, and attempt, if possible, to bring them to restoration.

Satanic influence in grudge holding is seen in verses 10 and 11 in the words, "For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." Satan's devices are his "mental things," that is, the area of mental attitudes wherein his attacks lie.

The areas of Satanic attack in this chapter are all mental. Satan is not allowed to attack believers today in physical areas unless it is to manipulate situations. Indeed, Satanic bodily attack was rare in Scripture, and the book of Job makes it clear that Satan must ask permission for such attacks to occur. Evidently such attacks were allowed during Christ's earthly ministry. But the grace epistles allow for no such attacks today, and therefore, there is no defense against them, nor is one needed. To go back to the Gospels for such information is to delve into kingdom matters not part of the grace program today.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

For the Christian only one defense against Satanic attack exists: resistance that consists of taking a stand against him. How does one do that? By applying the “whole armor of God.”

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Thirteen

How does the Christian Defend Himself against Satanic Attack?

Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, my brothers, be powerful in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the craftiness of the devil, because our fight is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual beings of wickedness in the heavenlies. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God in order that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having procured all things, to stand. Stand, therefore, having girded about your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all things having taken up the shield of the faith with which you will be able to quench all the arrows of the evil one which have been set aflame. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the utterance of God...

The Purposes of the Defenses

The purpose for applying the “whole armor” is *to stand*. The word stand is used in the same way in this passage as when we use it in phrases like “to take a stand.” It is Paul’s term for resistance against Satanic influence. Peter likewise indicates that we are to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8,9). James echos this truth in James 4:7, “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*” The word “*resist*” in both passages also means “to stand against.”

The general grace method, then, for overcoming Satanic attack is resistance. Paul’s command, “Stand, therefore...” is based on the fact that God does not require believers to perform acts that He has not given them the grace to perform. A. T. Robertson is correct when he says that the imperative here means, “take your stand.”¹⁹⁴ Satan will flee from the believer who takes his stand biblically. He is powerless against the correct application of God’s gracious defense.

In the Ephesians 6:10-17 passage Paul presents the specific mental techniques required to resist Satan, and to defeat his nefarious purposes in the life of the individual Christian. These mental techniques are only available by grace in the current age, for nowhere else in Scripture is this kind of resistance taught. Since this is the only passage in the Bible that presents such truth, Christians ignore it at their peril. We therefore conclude that such resistance is grace-based resistance, because God Himself is the only source for the new mind that He provided for the believers of this age.

¹⁹⁴ Robertson’s *Word Pictures* on Ephesians 6:14. Robertson calls the imperative “stand” here an “ingressive aorist,” which contemplates the beginning of an action. “Start taking a stand” seems to be the idea.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The Nature of the Defenses

Twice the apostle mentions “whole armor,” which translates the Greek word *panoply*. The armor cannot be applied piecemeal. One must be wearing the entire *panoply* of God, or else he can make no adequate defense. In other words, the *set* of mental attitudes presented here must be a regular part of the way the believer thinks.

The teaching does not seem to be a defense against individual attacks by the application of individual pieces of armor. Rather, it appears that Satan rarely attacks only in one area at a time. Consequently, one must “Put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The whole *panoply* of God is available to the believer for each attack. The Christian must use the totality of these mental attitudes to ward off each attack of Satan.

The emphasis on the armor of God is often misunderstood. The important things are not the *physical significance* of the various pieces of armor, such as the helmet or the breastplate, which are often said to protect the head (intellect) and heart (emotions). This is evidently NOT the reason Paul chose the metaphor of armor.

Rather, the emphasis is on the *spiritual* and *mental attitudes* represented by the pieces of armor. For instance, the girdle of truth emphasizes truth, not a girdle.

When one puts on the armor, then, he is putting on an entire set of mental attitudes. The success which one has against Satanic incursions is directly related to his ability to understand and apply these mental attitudes consistently.

The metaphor of armor presents the Satanic problem in terms of conflict. Satan is an active enemy, an enemy who attacks as though a soldier in war. Therefore, the believer is viewed as a soldier wearing a set of armor, defending against each incursion of Satanic warfare.

The Identity of the Defenses

The Girdle of Truth

An expanded translation of this statement is, “having your loins girded about with truth.”

The word “truth” is anarthrous, that is, it does not have the word *the* before it, which told the original readers that no specific truth is in view, but rather anything that has the quality of truth. Satan is a liar, and is in the business of deceiving believers. This includes, but is not limited to, the truth of Scripture.

Truth consists of seeing things, such as events or circumstances, as they actually are. It is necessary to view situations of life through the revealed truth of God’s word in order to have an accurate grasp of reality. While God’s word is definitely “the truth,” and Christ is truth personified (John 14:6; 17:7), the girdle of truth is not limited to the truth found in Scripture or in Christ. While these indeed form the basis for all truth, Satan may attack in any area in which the individual lacks a clear-cut understanding of truth.

Sometimes Christians believe things without adequate support for their position. These things could be in almost any field of activity, such as interpersonal relations (we seem always to be ready to believe an untruth concerning someone we don’t really like), cultural attachments, political views, etc.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Satan desires believers to have a wrong attitude toward God and His program. In fact, any place where Satan can pervert truth as it is applied to daily living is related to ensnarement, including the misinterpretation of Scripture, or the misapplication of Scripture to specific situations in life. Pride itself is based on a lack of seeing one's self and one's position as they actually are.

The spiritual Christian will strive to be truthful, and to seek truth throughout all the circumstances of life. Now, this is not to say that God requires a believer to always *know* the truth. Such a thing is not possible. But God does require a believer to have an outlook that strives toward truth, and that striving is not for self-gratification, nor any other selfish ambition, but in order to overcome Satanic attack in a God honoring way.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

An expanded translation is "...and putting on *like a garment* the breastplate *that consists of* righteousness."¹⁹⁵

In this context, righteousness consists of doing the right thing, both mentally and physically. It includes the concept of right mental attitudes as well as right practice. If one does not have a correct view of how righteousness is applied, both positionally and practically, defeat of Satanic attack is impossible. Positionally, the believer has become "the righteousness of God in Him (Christ)" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore the basis for acting right is grounded in a correct perception of our identification with Christ in His righteousness.

The concept of righteousness is often ridiculed in modern society. Persons who strive for righteousness are often mocked with savage sarcasm in the world. The making light of right living is based on a twisting of righteousness, to make it seem to be not right. Accusations of having a "holier than thou" attitude abound in such an atmosphere. Piety is degraded in to a hypocritical piousness that does not care about people. Those who uphold righteousness are said to be uncaring, because they desire individuals to be responsible. And so the attacks go on, and on.

It is not easy to live righteously in an unrighteous world, perhaps because an individual believer may be susceptible to thinking of himself in a personally righteous way. The believer must understand that self-righteousness is not God's righteousness. A believer is not "better" than an unbeliever in God's sight, except from the limited perspective of imputed righteousness, for which a human being has no responsibility to attain, nor ability to apply. All is of God, all is of grace. A believer's view of himself must be based on this Christian doctrine found in Scripture. Such a view is the basis for the mental attitude of applying the breastplate of righteousness.

The Gospel of Peace Shoes

An expanded translation is, "...and having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel that consists of the peace."

¹⁹⁵ The Greek words are correctly translated "of the righteousness" and are a "genitive of apposition," indicating that the breastplate *consists of* righteousness. This is a common use of the genitive case, and shows that the word "righteousness" is the more specific term. In the metaphor, then, the word righteousness is being emphasized over the word breastplate. The specific nature of this righteousness is often ignored. It must refer to the righteousness that the Christian has as a position in Christ and an ability to act right that comes from God. This cannot be, therefore, simply an attempt to do right from one's own ability. The righteousness here is absolute, and any failure to do right when under Satanic attack indicates that the whole armor is not being applied.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Since the word “gospel” occurs here, many have thought that this refers to giving the gospel of salvation to unbelievers. In other words, some teach that if a believer is faithful in giving the gospel of salvation he will be successful over Satanic influences. Yet one searches in vain for verification that evangelism is a solution to personal victory over Satan. Even Rushton, in his discussion of this piece of armor, incorrectly states “Many times opportunities are lost for bringing the gospel to others because Satan has brought a temptation to be cowardly in spiritual things (2 Timothy. 1:8).” While this may be true, it does not speak directly to the nature of the gospel here. The key is an understanding of the nature of peace, rather than an assumption that just because the word “gospel” is used that this must somehow refer to evangelism.

Note that in the literal translation above we have placed before the word peace the article *the*. The corrected form “the peace” here indicates a specific peace, something intended to be identified specifically. A short consideration of the word is therefore in order.

The word peace when applied to the Christian life generally falls into one of two categories, either inward peace, or external peace, that is, peace among individuals.

Exegetically, the gospel here *consists of peace*. In the context of Satanic attack, this certainly refers to an inward mental peace brought about by being grounded in the truth of God’s word. A believer who is a “young man” as his spiritual maturity level, and is said to have overcome Satan, is said to be “strong” and also that the “word of God abides in him” (1 John 2:13-14). Philipians 4:6-7 speaks of this as well in the context of anxiety, which is Satanic. Vs. 7 specifically says, “And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Such inward peace consists of a lack of mental agitation, a lack of worry about circumstances over which the individual has no control. The more one knows from Scripture about who God is, and how He operates, can correctly apply that Scripture to the Satanic attack of pride. For mental anxiety is based on pride, the idea that we, the individual, should be in control, and discount, therefore, the fact that only God is sovereign in the universe.

The best understanding, then, of the “preparation of the gospel that consists of the peace” is that peace of mind is available to the believer who applies the armor of God against the mental attacks of the evil one. Then the believer can apply this inward peace by submitting to the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6-8). The more one understands God, the more inward peace one will have.

The Shield of the Faith

An expanded translation is, “...in all situations taking up the shield of the faith, by which you will be able to render ineffective all the arrows of the evil one, which have been equipped with fire.” This is the first of three pieces of armor that emphasize the Scriptural understanding of the victorious Christian.

The word faith here *does not* refer to the act of faith, that is, to the individuals act of believing, but to *the body of truth that is believed*, the faith revealed in God’s word. Satan attacks with reference to the specific things Christians are to believe, specifically with reference to the grace

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

program and our victory in it. If one does not have a firm grasp of “the faith” he will be unable to successfully counter Satanic attack.

This element of the armor has wide-ranging implications. For instance, in order to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3) the Christian must know what the faith is. This element of armor and Jude’s requirement concerning it, are dependent on the believer knowing and believing the doctrines of Scripture. This in turn implies that the doctrines of Scripture are knowable using the correct methodology of study and interpretation. One area of Satan’s attack is that of spiritual laziness. Many Christians are oppressed by such laziness, and spend little or no time studying Scripture. Another aspect is moving away from the normal meaning of the language of the Bible, which is done when one allegorizes or spiritualizes the text. Making something figurative when it is not figurative, or rejecting something as a figure of speech, when it is, is another aspect of this Satanic influence.

One reason for this may be because many Bible teachers are not doing the job of providing the tools for Bible study. To say that the Bible teaches a particular truth without explaining how an individual can learn that truth for himself is unacceptable. Bible teachers need to teach others how to learn for themselves, how to accurately interpret Scripture using normal, non-allegorical methods of interpretation, how to use legitimate Bible study methods based on synthesis and analysis, and how to apply a truth arrived at by prior study, rather than by jumping to an application about which the teacher desires to teach. The ultimate goal of a Bible teacher is to wean his students to become independent students themselves, not simply to be dependent on him or others.

Another implication of the shield of the faith is that the believer is at home in the word of God sufficiently to identify mistruth when he hears it. The shield that consists of the faith relates to “having the word of God abide in you” which is said to the “young men” of 1 John 2. These young men (spiritually maturing believers) are overcoming Satanic attack, and the implication of 1 John 2:14 is that they could not do so if they were not intimately familiar with and relying upon the communication of God found in the Bible.

Besides grace living, such doctrinal areas as the facts of the Trinity, the nature, attributes and essence of God, the nature of justification and salvation, the person and work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the nature of and distinctions between sin and unrighteousness, the doctrine of the church local and universal, and even the prophetic truths of the future millennial state and the coming rapture of the living believer at the time of the resurrection are included in the term “the faith.”

It is popular to denigrate such an understanding in the modern “evangelical church.” While lip service is sometimes given to these truths, rarely are the great doctrines of Scripture proclaimed in the regular meetings of the assembly. “Dry, dull, boring” we are told they are. Yet they are essential to correct Christian living. In the rush to build large congregations, the ministry of the proclamation of the word of God has been “dumbed down” to the point where spiritual strength and victory are all but impossible. Is it any wonder that Satan is running rampant throughout the so-called Bible-believing churches of today?

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

How can a Christian “be powerful in *the* Lord and in the might of His strength” if he doesn’t even know what the words mean? But such power is an absolute requirement if one is “to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” The image is one of Satan shooting flaming arrows at the believer. These “darts” represent specific attacks against specific doctrines, and can only be understood and deflected by the doctrinally informed Christian. But again we ask, “How can the believer deflect these attacks against the faith if he is ignorant of its very truths?” Of course he cannot.

The Helmet as the Way of Salvation

The expanded translation is, “And take the helmet that consists of the means of salvation.” This is the second of the elements of armor that emphasize the Scriptural knowledge of the believer. However, the traditional translation, “the helmet of salvation” is incorrect, for the word salvation is not the noun σωτηρία (*sōtēria*), but the adjective σωτήριος (*sōtērios*). As we will see, the distinction is significant.

“And take the helmet that consists of the way of salvation.” This is the second of the elements of armor that emphasize the Scriptural knowledge of the believer.

The adjective generally translated salvation, σωτήριος (*sōtērios*), means something different than is often assumed by Christians because of its common translation. It does not speak so much of the fact of salvation as it does to the means of salvation, that is the grace provision for applying salvation. The means of salvation consists of all the truths that can be applied to the saved believer *after* initial salvation. For that reason, some say σωτήριος refers to the content of salvation. It starts with the fact (not the act) of being saved, but includes all the truth concerning the state of salvation that was revealed through the New Testament apostles concerning the spiritual relationship that the believer today has with the trinitarian Godhead. It also includes the content of regeneration and sanctification, as well as the practical truth of the priesthood of the believer. Furthermore, it includes the various current ministries of the Holy Spirit as well as High Priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, nothing can be left out of the positional and practical truth concerning the state of salvation which Christians enjoy if one is to apply this element of the armor diligently.

Rushton states that the word salvation here includes “the salient features of the content of salvation a believer receives.... First Thessalonians 5:8 uses the terms ‘helmet, the hope of salvation’ with reference to the church being saved from wrath.”¹⁹⁶ We agree with Mr. Rushton concerning the word *salvation* here referring to the content of salvation, but his statement seems to indicate an identity between the statement in First Thessalonians with the one in Ephesians. This is unfortunate, as the two are not equivalent.

Salvation in First Thessalonians is *sōtēria* in the genitive of apposition with the word *hope*. It looks forward with expectation (hope) to the future tense salvation that the believer will receive in the resurrection and rapture of the saints of this age.¹⁹⁷ This is not so here in Ephesians, where the idea is not forward looking, except with reference to the current life the believer experiences

¹⁹⁶ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 76.

¹⁹⁷ See First Thessalonians 5:9. The context is prophetic, and refers to salvation not yet available.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

daily. As noted, it is not so much salvation that is in view in Ephesians, but the means by which one can overcome Satanic attack, that is, how to be saved from those attacks by God's gracious provision.

The more one studies the state of salvation as taught in Scripture, the more one becomes strong in overcoming Satanic attack.

The Sword of the Spirit

“And to take the sword of the Spirit, which is God's utterance.” Here we find the third element of the armor that relates the believer to the revealed word of God.

The “word of God” here is not a reference to the Scripture, *per se*. The Greek word is not *logos*¹⁹⁸ but rather *hrema*, which refers to an utterance on a specific subject. The element of armor here is actually the application of specific statements of God found in Scripture as defense against specific attacks against the truth of the Word. It is this procedure that we see exemplified by the Lord Jesus when He accurately quoted Scripture to defeat Satan's attacks in the wilderness.

When Satan attacks a believer to reject a particular truth, the believer should be able to express that truth from the specific utterance of Scripture that makes it. It is not enough to have a general knowledge of Scripture. The believer must be grounded in what the Bible factually says about each element of doctrine taught in the Bible. This is not to be confused with the common “memorizing of Scripture” that often takes place. Such a practice, while potentially helpful, is actually counter productive unless the one memorizing actually *understands* what the statement being memorized *means*.

To memorize Scripture with a misunderstanding of the meaning of the text can give false hope to the believer. Christians who regularly misuse Scripture to support a false viewpoint will find no help in overcoming Satanic oppression. The implication of this element of armor is that the believer can know precisely the meaning of the text he memorizes. Ultimately it is more important to know the meaning of Scripture than to simply memorize it.¹⁹⁹

It is clear from all that has been said, that a thorough, comprehensive understanding of all Scripture, with specific understanding of “the faith” and “utterances” on particular truths is nec-

¹⁹⁸ *Logos* has a variety of meanings in Scripture, not the least of which is “communication.” It is this broad truth that is being emphasized in the phrase “the word (*logos*) of God.” God has communicated accurately the truths that He wants mankind to know. The Scriptures then are the *logos* of God. But they also contain the *utterances* (*hrema*) of God on specific topics.

¹⁹⁹ The author gave up memorizing Scripture years ago. He has found that constant daily study of the Word is more beneficial than the artificial practice of memorizing. Indeed, as a result of continual daily study, the author knows and remembers more Scripture now than he did when as a student he memorized literally hundreds of texts. Those were retained in memory only a relatively short time, as the truth they represented was not fully understood, but now that the Scriptures are understood and applied regularly, the statements themselves have become indelibly inscribed on his mind. He recommends that the believer study the meaning of the text of Scripture, and then, when time allows, memorize the text subsequently to understanding its meaning. He will find that, after diligent study, very little memorization is necessary.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

essary for consistent victory over Satanic attack. Spiritual laziness in studying Scripture is one of the major devices of Satan to thwart Christian victory over his advances.^{200 201}

As previously mentioned, it is this element of armor that Jesus was using when Satan attacked Him. Each time Satan perverted a statement of God, Christ countered with an accurately quoted passage from Scripture. “He [Jesus] was not quoting Scripture to ‘scare off’ Satan, but rather he was reinforcing His own human nature in this time of testing. Christians should use the Scriptures in a similar way when undergoing [Satanic] temptation.”²⁰²

It is necessary that the believer have a correct view of Scripture as God’s communication of truth to man. Using normal principles of interpretation and application a Christian becomes equipped with the truth of Scripture.

To apply the armor of God one must with his renewed mind study Scripture, especially those portions of the New Testament dealing with God and His current program. And in so doing, he will develop an understanding of prayer and supplication that, while not a defense against Satanic attack, provides a basis for an on-going and intimate relationship to God.

²⁰⁰ Throughout the discussion of the armor of God the concept of truth as revealed in God’s word comes forth. In the modern (or post-modern) world, the concept of truth has been scrapped for relativism. No longer are Christians told that they can know for sure what Scripture teaches. Truth, they are told, is relative, and we should accommodate the beliefs of other religions, and not be judgmental. Since there is no such thing as absolute truth, a legitimate approach to God, we are told, is found in all religions. Tolerance has been re-defined as meaning that no dogmatism must be allowed. We do not desire to offend other religions, but to bring those people into the fold through love and approbation. One wonders what the apostles think of the modern church, so-called. Paul, who called the Corinthians to account, who confronted Peter and Barnabas with their error, who stood against the legalists of his day, would not recognize the modern “evangelical church” in America.

²⁰¹ The author has appended an Outline Summary of Biblical Doctrine to this work. It does not contain everything the believer needs to know, but could be used as a starting point for studying categorical truth.

²⁰² Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 77.

Chapter Fourteen

How do Prayer, Supplication and a Sound Mind Relate to the Attacks of Satan?

Ephesians 6:18

...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...

The above verse is connected directly with the list of the armor of God by which the believer overcomes Satan. Prayer, however, is *not* an element of the armor. Rather, prayer and supplication are to accompany the successful defense against Satanic attack, but they are *not* rightly to be considered a piece of armor to be used in defense. While the believer, recognizing his weakness before Satanic attack, may evoke God's power (prayer) and ask for help (supplication) in order to rightly apply the armor, it is the armor itself that is the defense. Rushton states,

“The purpose of prayer in regard to Satanic temptation is not because of the little poem, “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”²⁰³

The idea that prayer is a defense against Satan has caused immeasurable spiritual harm to believers. They pray and pray, and yet are unsuccessful. Often this is because they assign to Satan the works of the flesh, or even worldliness, thinking that prayer will overcome any weakness tending toward wrong doing. Such confusion has led to even further confusion in applying the armor of God.

In fact, prayer does not stop Satan's attacks nor render them ineffective. It may actually encourage him to redouble his efforts, as he is offended by the close dependence of the believer on God. But the grace provision of the armor, rightly applied while depending on God, is sufficient to overcome Satanic and demonic influence.

Prayer and supplication (asking for help) then accompany the mental attitudes and understanding supplied by the armor. Prayer, as an act of worship, holds God in highest esteem, and focuses the mind, not simply on Satan, but on the one who, through His grace, has provided the armor as the powerful means of protection against Satan's influences.

Another quality that is often overlooked in dealing with Satan is sober mindedness. The following passages indicate the importance of this mental attitude.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Peter commands a two-fold act for those who would recognize the attacks of the devil.

“Be sober” means simply to be serious in one's thinking concerning Satanic influences. He is not to be taken lightly.

²⁰³ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 77.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

“Be vigilant” refers to alertness or watchfulness. The believer must be able to see Satanic attack coming before he can rightly apply the armor. This implies that he knows what attacks come from the devil so that he can rightly defend himself.

2 Timothy. 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sober mind.

Here the term “sober” is the same Greek root as the word “sober” above. A sober mind has the ability to understand things accurately, soberly, and therefore not experience a spirit of fear. While Satan is not directly named in this context, elsewhere fear is associated with him. See *Chapter Twelve* above.

The spirit of fear which God did not give the believer refers to spiritual cowardice, a problem that plagues many believers. A Christian who is a spiritual coward is a Christian under Satanic influence.

Note that the spirit, or attitude, that the believer did receive from God consists of three elements:

1. It is a spirit that consists of love. One area that Satan would interrupt in the spiritual Christian is his ministry of love to others. This is the problem that Timothy had. He was afraid to minister, and thereby was not exhibiting God’s love.
2. It is a spirit that consists of power. The believer has received the inherent mental power from God necessary to overcome Satan and his agents. This is part of the grace provision that God made available to correctly apply the armor.
3. It is a spirit that consists of a sober mind. A sober mind is actually a provision of God so that the believer is able to think accurately and seriously concerning not only the attacks of the devil, but also all areas of spiritual understanding.

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Age conformity, as noted, is an attack of Satan. Basic to this and all other attacks, is the problem of high-mindedness. This is a special form of pride whereby the believer thinks that he should occupy a higher position in ministry that he actually has. The counter to this is to apply sober thinking. This ability, given by God will allow the believer to see himself accurately.

Thinking soberly is associated with a measure, or proportion, of faith. The word faith here refers to faith in God to apply the biblical rather than human solutions to the Satanic problem. In other words, the Christian must believe that God’s way works, and each one has been given just enough faith to accomplish that act of faith. The believer then, is assured that he can, indeed, think soberly.

Titus 2:6

Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded...

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

We include this reference of a more general sort concerning sober mindedness for two reasons: 1) young men have a need to learn to be serious in their mental functions; 2) it is legitimate to encourage young men to be so. This may seem obvious, but in practice we find many afraid to express the need for sober mindedness on the young. This is applicable in the area of biblical understanding, and does not preclude enjoyment or even entertainment. But it does indicate that the young need to concentrate their thinking in biblical and spiritual understanding.

The context deals with Paul's instruction to Titus on how to deal with various categories of people. The very categories he uses are instructive:

- 1) Old men, verse 2;
- 2) Old women, verse 3;
- 3) Young women, verse 4;
- 4) Young men, verse 6;
- 5) Slaves, verse 9.

The fact that the encouragement to be sober minded is given to the young men indicates their special need in this area. This is not to say that the other categories do not need to be sober minded, but that this area is not the primary focus of their need.

Some have suggested that this was a local problem, and that Paul was only referring to those Christians living in Crete. Perhaps, they say, the problem was culturally conditioned, and that only the young men in Crete needed this particular instruction. This seems unlikely. Rather, it seems to be a general situation that he is addressing, as it is with the other categories of believers addressed.

Prayer, supplication, and sober mindedness are basic to Christian living. While prayer is not a universal deterrent to any attacks of the enemies of the believer, it is basic to the correct attitude when confronting temptation. It is not the length of time spent in prayer that is properly the issue at hand, but the constant attitude of prayer, remaining mentally in the presence of God while holding Him in the highest esteem. Supplication, which consists of asking for help when one feels lacking, is a comforting act for the sincere believer. By studying Scripture, and seeking God's help in understanding through illumination, the Christian is applying the correct mental approach to victory. And sober minded alertness to the attacks of Satan will keep the believer ready to respond to the enemy's attempts to lead the sincere Christian away from God and His program into an intolerable attitude of independence from God.

Another aspect of Satan's influence is indirect, and is actually a different enemy altogether. But there is a relationship between Satan and the world system that cannot be ignored. The world system, which deals with the social, economic and political aspects of human endeavor was established by Satanic intent, and continues to operate to control humanity in an ungodly way.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Notes

Chapter Fifteen

What is the World System?

Introduction

Of the three enemies of the believers, the most subtle, and perhaps the most difficult to deal with, is the world system. There are several reasons for this that will be examined as we study this doctrine.

That the world system is indeed a problem cannot be denied by the serious student of Scripture. We live in a modern world where the allures of the world system are strong and varied. They range from simple material excesses to the inappropriate delving into the depths of the political systems of the various nations with which Christians are associated.

One of the major problems with studying the world system is the fact that several different Greek words are translated by the single English word “world.” As a result, sometimes passages are associated with the world system that should not be. The only solution to this is to make sure, using an adequate concordance, that only the Greek word *kosmos* is actually applied to this problem. The following Greek words are all translated “world” at some point in modern translations of the New Testament:

- 1) *Ge* refers to the material substance that makes up the planet on which we are standing. It should be rightly translated earth or land – Mark. 4:8.
- 2) *Aion* refers to a time element, and should be translated “age” – Hebrews 1:2. Sadly, in the KJV and many other versions this word is regularly translated “world.”
- 3) *Oikoumene* is best translated “the inhabited earth,” as it refers the people living on the earth – Matt. 24:14; Revelation 3:10.
- 4) *Kosmos* refers to an orderly arrangement of things, and has several contents in Scripture. Its root meaning is found in 1 Peter 3:3, where it is correctly translated *adornment* in the KJV. Its normal translation is “world” and is *the only one* of the four words that should ever be so translated.

Another major problem with studying the world system is that the Greek word *kosmos* has more than one meaning, or content. This is, in some ways, a more difficult problem than the above one because it cannot be solved by simply looking in a concordance. Here the meaning of the word *kosmos* must be discerned through a careful analysis of the context in which the word occurs. Below are listed the four ways in which the word *kosmos* is used in the New Testament. Each of these can legitimately be translated by the English word “world,” as English also uses the word in the same way:

- 1) The Created Universe – Ephesians 1:4.
- 2) The Earth – John 1:10; Acts 17:24.
- 3) The Population of the Earth, especially the Unbeliever – John 3:16.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

- 4) The World System, the Enemy of the Believer – 1 John 2:15. It is this fourth way that is the topic of this chapter. The world system is made up of people, but believers and unbelievers. Its organization, however, while having some positive benefits, can also become seductive and contrary to spiritual thinking.

The Beginning of the World System

Genesis 4:17

And Cain knew his wife, and she became pregnant and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city by the name of his son, Enoch.

A study of the world system reveals that it is an orderly system that is primarily economic in its designs. That is to say, that merchandizing and other forms of commerce are at its very heart and all the other elements of the world system flow from that. The building of cities, the first of which was the city of Enoch, had several benefits, each in some way related to making a living for their inhabitants.

It is often thought that ancient cities were built primarily for protection. This is based on their often strategic location, the walls which surrounded them, and the hills on which they were built. However, this view ignores the reason why such protection was necessary. The accumulation of wealth within a city was alluring to the mind of the brigand and the thief. However, the control of roadways that assisted in commerce accounts for the location of cities as much as their strategic need.

As the brigand became politically powerful, he desired to control the merchandizing that went on in a region, which merchandizing was facilitated in several ways by cities. Therefore he desired to control or eliminate those cities so that he could control the wealth of the region.

Out of this primarily economic venue, armies and police forces came into existence. Armies were developed for control of the region, while police were developed to protect the citizens within the city from internal violence. In some situations, the same group made up both organizations. Such protection made the city more desirable to live in, and thus cities grew into strong economic centers. Gradually, cities began to be associated with one another, and larger national entities came into existence. The desire to control these nations produced highly centralized governments, ruled by an oligarchy, or in many cases a king.

Associated with the development of armies is the craving for power over others by the rulers of the nation. One of the basic ways in which that power was exercised was control of the wealth. Thus taxation was invented, and used by the brigand king and his associates to further consolidate his control. Such legalized theft has not changed in five thousand years.

Thus the world system was born with the establishment of cities, and the means to control them. Today that system is so well-defined as to be the way in which most people think things must operate. Various forms of government exist, but they all tend to one end: economic control.

Ultimately, the economic/social/political world system must come to an end, for God's program on the earth is to establish righteous government over mankind. One of the great themes of the Bible is the promotion of the ideal of righteous government. But as long as fallen man controls government, righteousness tends to be secondary, or even lacking altogether.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The End of the World System

Matthew 18:36

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.

This passage is often taken to mean that Jesus was saying that His kingdom is not on the earth. But He is not saying that at all. He is referring to the political/economic structure in place at the time of His trial. Pilate, whom Jesus was addressing, understood this. The world system, of which Rome was a major part at the time, had to come apart before the Kingdom of God is established on the earth. Pilate undoubtedly understood very little about how the world system would end, but he recognized the claim of Jesus, and the fact that it was out of his hands. Undoubtedly Pilate thought Jesus a lunatic, but he knew that Jesus' kingdom was no threat to Rome at that time.

This attitude of Pilate would have been strengthened by the Lord's statement, "now My kingdom is not from here." Note that Jesus uses the adverb "now" to begin this statement. It's a time word, not a place word. He is identifying that His kingdom was not immanent; it was yet future. The adverb "from here" is an adverb of place. More specifically, it can be used as an adverb of source. Jesus is saying to Pilate that His kingdom does not have its source in the current world system, and therefore is not a continuation of the Roman world program.

The world system will end when the Lord establishes His kingdom on the earth. His kingdom will not be a continuation of that cosmos system, but a replacement to it. The cosmos system will come crumbling down; Satan will no longer be in control as he will be chained during the first thousand years of the kingdom. When he attempts to reestablish control after the thousand years he will not be successful (Revelation 20:7-9).

The Structure of the World System

The word *kosmos* comes from a root which means "orderly." The word itself means literally, "an orderly system." As such it can be applied in many ways and its application as an enemy of the believer can be defined accurately. Kenneth Wuest makes the following cogent remark:

*"Kosmos refers to an ordered system. Here it is the ordered system of which Satan is the head, his fallen angels and demons are his emissaries, and the unsaved of the human race are his subjects, together with those purposes, pursuits, pleasures, practices and places where God is not wanted. Much in this world-system is religious, cultured, refined, and intellectual. But it is anti-God and anti-Christ."*²⁰⁴

One aspect of the world that makes it so appealing is that it is not all bad. If it were, it would be easy to spot the negative influences and counter them. But the world system is more subtle than that. The problem of its subtlety is expressed well by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

That things good in themselves are included in this great system is doubtless the occasion for many deceptions. The fundamental truth that 'whatsoever is not of

²⁰⁴ Wuest, *In These Last Days*, pg. 125.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

faith is sin' (Romans 14:23; cf. Hebrews 11:6) is not recognized or believed in the *cosmos*. The humanitarian enterprises, the culture, the laws, and religious forms of the *cosmos* constitute no evidence that God is recognized in His true position or honored. This is a Christ-rejecting *cosmos*. Its princes "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8),²⁰⁵ and apart from the restraining power of God they would crucify Him again and destroy His witnesses. They evince no penitence for their climatic racial crime—the savior, as such, is still disowned and rejected. Social ideals are borrowed from His teachings. His purity and grace are held forth as a pattern of life, but salvation through His blood is spurned. The independent, self-centered, self-satisfied, autonomous *cosmos* asks for no redemption since it recognizes no need. It is the embodiment of the philosophy of which Cain is the archetype.²⁰⁶

If the believer is to accurately understand the seriousness of the problem of the world system, he must understand its very nature. Once the nature of the world system is understood, the believer has a better possibility of countering it successfully.

The world system is ruled by Satan

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Matt. 4:8, 9

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and displayed to Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, ⁸ and said to Him, All these things I will give to You, if You fall down and worship me.

The ruler of this world is none other than Satan himself. John 12:31 indicates that the world system is under judgment, and its ruler, Satan, will be cast out. Note that the world system is already under judgment. That the sentence has not yet been carried out is plain, but the future casting out of Satan is certain. This refers to his future incarceration in the lake of fire.

Satan owned the kingdoms he offered to Christ in Matthew 4, since he is the ruler in both political and spiritual realms. In other words, this was a legitimate offer to the humanity of Christ to establish His kingship over the earthly realms which Satan owned and controlled. Satan was attempting to short-circuit the messianic program, as he had so often done in the past.

²⁰⁵ Dr. Chafer perhaps mistook the meaning of this verse. It illustrates the problem of translation, as the word translated *world* in 1 Corinthians 2:8 is *aion*, not *cosmos*, and the sentence is not about the extended world system, but an age. The phrase "the rulers of this age" does not refer to what they were ruling, but when they were ruling. But to which age was Paul referring? I believe that it was the "age of the world system," so ultimately Dr. Chafer's comments do, in fact, relate to the period of time defined by the world system. See the section below, "The World Operates During a Specific Period of Time."

²⁰⁶ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, II, pg. 85.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The World Manifests the Wisdom of Satan

1 John 5:19

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Satan is the guiding spirit of this world. The phrase “lies under the sway” is one word in the original Greek, and means simply “to lie upon.” But the implication is one of control. It’s as though the world system is sitting on Satan’s lap, and is thereby controlled by him. Make no mistake. The world system is not a benign system. It is controlled by Satan for his own nefarious purposes.

The World Operates during a Specific Period of Time

Ephesians 2:1, 2

And you He made alive when you were dead in trespasses and sins ² in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who is now working among the sons of disobedience....

It is unfortunate that the NKJV has retained the translation of the KJV “the course of this world.” In fact, the translation should read as above, “the age of this world.” It refers to the period of time during which the world system operates, beginning with the first city and ending with establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

But we are speaking with the mature ones, but not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are becoming useless, ⁷ but we are speaking the wisdom of God in a mystery which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which not one of the rulers of this age knew, for if they knew it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

No stronger indictment of the world system can be found than this. “This age” is undoubtedly the age of the world system mentioned in Ephesians 2:1-2, not the present evil age. Rulers, do not rule over the age, but over the world system during its existence. The “present evil age” mentioned in Galatians 1:4 is also going on at the present time. The word age refers to periods of time that are specific, but they can and do overlap, much the same way as sports “seasons” overlap in the United States today. Before any of the ages began, God ordained a wisdom of which the rulers do not and cannot understand.

The deep things of God are countered by the deep things of Satan. The wisdom of the world system is the wisdom of Satan, not God’s revealed wisdom. Paul claims to speak the hidden wisdom of God that the rulers of the age of the world system knew nothing about. This is the revealed wisdom of God, and cannot be gained by examination of the philosophy of the world.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The World System has its own Godless Agenda

Ephesians 2:12

...that you were at that season without Christ, having been estranged from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers concerning the covenants of promise, having no hope, and godless in the world.

The world has its own standard of conduct. It is the vehicle through which Satan works out his program. Gentiles were apart from Israel in the Old Testament time, and had no recourse. They were in the world; indeed, they constituted the world system. A careful study of the Old Testament shows that many of Israel's laws were designed to keep her separate from the world system that the gentiles controlled. The fact that Israel failed shows the inability of the law to control the problem of the world. Under grace, as we shall see, God has provided a program of love that overcomes the world.

Several passages in John's writings teach that the world system is opposed to God and hates those who follow Christ. We will examine only a few:

John 7:7

The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

The Lord is speaking of the world system as it related to Him during His earthly ministry. He does not mean that the world system cannot hate His disciples *at all*, just that during His earthly sojourn the actual object of its hatred is toward His person.

The Lord also tells why the world system hates Him. The world system thinks of itself as good, refined, and offering benefits. But it is only good from its own perspective. Its works are evil, even those that seem to be good. How can this be? It is because the world system is an attempt by Satan to substitute his rule for the rule of God. If all the works of the world were bad it would be obvious even to the most spiritually inept that something was wrong. Therefore the works appear to be good, and through this subtlety Satan controls those who are given over to worldliness.

John 15:18

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before you.

In the upper room the Lord makes it clear that the world does hate His disciples, as indicated by the first class condition, which here could be translated "Since the world hates you." But the priority is clear. It hated the Lord before it hated His disciples. Here we must take great care. Many Christians are unaware that they are the object of the world system's hatred. They do not understand the danger that is around them. This danger is primarily spiritual, but from time to time it spills over into active malice, and the danger becomes physical. Vile persecution results when the leaders of the world system come to exercise their hatred of Christ and His disciples.

John 16:33

I have spoken these things to you in order that you may have peace in Me. You have tribulation in the world, but have courage; I have overcome the world.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Still in the upper room, the Lord indicates that the relationship of the disciples to the world will be one of tribulation. This is probably a statement designed to instruct the eleven that after His departure things would become difficult, and we know that it did. In 1 Timothy 2:1-2 Paul exhorts Timothy that his supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men. He especially mentions “rulers and all who are in authority” in vs. 2. This is not specifically for their salvation, but for the maintaining of peace, so that believers “may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” This is the primary purpose for rulers in God’s program. Only when things are peaceable can the believer be free to present the gospel of salvation to unbelieving mankind (vs.4). God desires all to be saved (however, He has not determined it to be so), and the method of bring men to salvation is through the free presentation of the gospel of salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Therefore, when the Lord says that He has overcome the world in John 16:33, He does not mean spiritually. In fact, the world system is under judgment as the result of His earthly ministry. This undoubtedly refers to the fact that Christ defeated Satan and his system of control when He died and rose. This defeat will be realized physically at future establishment of His kingdom, but the believer can take comfort that the world system is ultimately defeated, and that even when doing its worst, it is under God’s overall control.

1 John 3:13

Do not wonder, my brothers, if the world hates you.

John reflects the Lord’s attitude toward the world. It hates the believer. This statement cannot be limited to the disciples of Lord’s earthly sojourn. It refers to the believer who is, according to chapter 2, having victory over the world.

Biblical hatred is not to be confused with the idea of hatred today. More often than not, when a person today says that he hates, he really means that he is angry with someone or something. Or else it might mean simply that he strongly dislikes something, as when my wife says, “I hate spaghetti.”

Biblical hatred is more than an emotion. In fact, it can be totally without emotion. Hatred is an attitude by which the one who hates desires to do the greatest harm he can to the object of his hatred. The world would, if possible, eliminate all Christians from its environs. It will do as much harm as it can get away with. It may value religions, or at least say that that it believes in the freedom of religion, but it hates with an abiding hatred Christ and all true Christians. It has attempted to keep Christ from being mentioned in its schools and other government programs, but it sometimes recognizes and even promotes false systems of worship. The biblical believer must seriously consider whether he should partake in these programs, or if he should keep himself and his children from participation in these worldly provisions.

Qualities of Those Characteristically Related to the World System

The World is Ignorant of God

1 Corinthians 1:21

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, God was well-pleased through the proclamation to save the ones who believe.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The world system has its own wisdom. That is, it has its own way of getting things done.

An individual cannot know God through the world's wisdom. It uses the wrong method, though the world is a master at religiosity and ceremonialism. These things have no place in the practice of the maturing Christian. Superstitious awe, which is a work of the flesh, has its place in the world system, and is often promoted, especially in its forms of entertainment. But such superstition is not limited to entertainment, for it can be seen even in the ceremony of some who claim Christ, but are caught up in ceremonial activities in their churches, thinking that somehow God will bless them through such activity. False worship is often promoted through such activities in church, even those which claim to be Bible believing. So-called worship leaders teach that emotional response, often engendered by singing songs containing false doctrines, is actually worship, but it is not.

But there is a biblical doctrine of worship, and it is totally apart from emotionalism and ceremonialism. In the Bible, worship is primarily making sacrifices. In the Mosaic program sacrifices were made in a place called the temple, or the sanctuary, exclusively in Jerusalem. But today such sacrifices are made by the activity of the believer in serving God (Romans 12:1-8).

The sanctuary of God today is NOT a building on a lot, but the body of the Christian and that body is to be a living sacrifice, not a dead one. In sacrificing his physical body the believer is performing a "reasonable service" of worship²⁰⁷ (Romans 12:1). The physical body of the believer is the metaphorical temple of God, and the Spirit Himself inhabits that temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

But the world system has corrupted the thinking of many sincere believers. The New Testament assemblies never met to worship "collectively," because worship is performed in the physical body of the believer wherever it may be.²⁰⁸ Sadly, today buildings are called "sanctuaries," and meetings are called "services." The Bible knows nothing of this false terminology. Thousands and even millions of dollars are spent to accommodate large numbers of people for so-called worship services. Highly organized, based on worldly norms, believers are being led away from the simplicity of the biblical assembly.

²⁰⁷ The word translated service in Romans 12:1 is *latreia* (λατρεία). This word, which originally referred to the work of hired servants, came to refer to the activities of a priest in a temple, and is regularly used that way in the New Testament. Paul's encouragement to the Romans in 12:1 and following deal with the sacrifice of the body of the believer as a priest. Today, each believer stands as a priest before God, and he or she should be prepared to sacrifice his body in the service of worship. The context, down through 12:8, deals with the function of spiritual gifts. When a Christian is serving God through the use of his spiritual gift, he is worshiping!

²⁰⁸ The only purposes ever given in the New Testament for the assemblies (churches) of the believers is breaking of bread for fellowship (Acts 20:7), something that cannot happen alone. But worship, biblically understood, can happen in private or in public. Jesus made it clear that no place is a place of worship today. His incarnation and the future coming of the Holy Spirit to inhabit the bodies of believers changed that! See John 4:20-24.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The World is Corrupt

2 Peter 1:4

...through which things precious and great promises have been given to us, in order that through these things we may become sharers of the divine nature, having escaped the lust and corruption in the world.

Corruption means to bring something into a worse condition internally. It refers in secular Greek to the decomposition of a dead body. This corruption is mentioned again in 2 Peter 2:19 in association with pollution or defilement brought about by the world.

Spiritually, the worldly individual is decomposing. He is without any internal mechanism for overcoming the decadence of the world system.

The word “lust” refers to the strong desires produced by the world system. When a believer succumbs to these strong desires for material, social and political benefits he is in a corrupt position. But through the promises of God carefully applied the fact that the believer has escaped this corruption can be applied.

The promises here refer to the ability of the new nature to produce the correct attitudes necessary to overcome the temptations of the world. Namely, the believer is able to direct the spiritual provision of God’s love to the correct object, and thereby not love the world system and the things of which it consists.

The World is Polluted

2 Peter 2:20

For if, having escaped from the stains²⁰⁹ of the world by the full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but having become again entangled,²¹⁰ they are defeated, their last condition has become worse than their first.

Defilement or pollution is an external stain, or contamination. It refers to the continued degradation of those so stained. They are viewed by God as dirty, and no longer clean in His sight.

The subject of this verse are the false teachers who pervert the word of God. They are described in detail in this chapter beginning with verse 2.

Today the world is full of these dangerous people. They are slick talking individuals who are attempting to pad their own worldly position through the proclamation of emptiness (vs. 18).

The World is Under Satanic Control and Therefore Manifests the Character of Satan

1 John 5:19

And we know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the evil one.

²⁰⁹ Greek = *miasma* (μίασμα), a stain, either physical or moral. This word is found only here in the N.T.

²¹⁰ Greek = *empleko* (ἐμπλέκω), to braid or tangle. Used twice, here and in 2 Timothy 2:4. The picture of these false teachers is that they are beyond hope. They are so tangled by the world, they are in a state of abject defeat.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

We return to this statement of Satan's control of the world to emphasize the Satanic relationship that the world system enjoys. It lies in him, and is therefore controlled by him. The phrase "evil one" translates the Greek word *poneros*, referring to that which is malignant. Its evil is not static; it grows.

The world system, then, is controlled and characterized by Satanic malignancy. One cannot remain pure by associating with it in a friendly manner. This brings into focus the source of both the corruption and pollution brought about by the world system, and why it is so devastating. These conditions are nothing less than Satanic evil influencing the worldly individual.

The World is Under Judgment

1 Corinthians 6:2

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent in the smallest court cases?

Ephesians 2:2, 3

...in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who is now working among the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom we also all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, performing the desires of the flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, as were also the rest.

According to 1 Corinthians 6:2, the world will be judged. This is not referring to the judgment of Satan, but of the individuals associated with the world system. Just how this judgment by the saints will take place is not revealed. It is enough to know that the judgment is coming, and this should prompt an attitude of correctly evaluating disputes between believers.

The phrase in Ephesians 2:3 "children of wrath" is best understood as "children who are to receive wrath," or perhaps "worthy of receiving wrath." Wrath refers to God's striking out physically against evil. This may very well mean that worldly unbelievers are deserving of going to God's time of wrath, the tribulation, even though not all will do so. They certainly deserve it.

Dear believer, the world is not your friend. It hates you, it attempts to corrupt and pollute you. It desires for you to follow its norms in "religious" matters, primarily in false worship and ceremonialism. It seeks your friendship and your love. Step one in overcoming the temptations of the world is to understand its malignant nature, and to be aware of its malicious influences.

But, and herein lies a serious situation, the believer is in the world. Indeed, the believer must use the world and its activities to survive. So Christian needs to know what the Bible teaches about his personal relationship to the world, which we will now examine.

Chapter Sixteen

What is the Christian's Relationship to the World System?

Great care must be exercised by the believer in his relationship to the world system. Unlike Satan and the flesh, the world system can be legitimately used by the believer. Indeed, it must be used in order to meet certain needs, and even legitimate desires. And in this, lies danger, for it is possible for the believer to be overtaken by such legitimate use.

This relatively short chapter will discuss some of the positives and negatives associated with the world system, and discuss the legitimate as well as the illegitimate use of the system.

Believers May Use the World

1 Corinthians 7 introduces through a series of related statements legitimate relationships in several areas. One of these areas is the world system, and because of its prominence in Scripture, the student of the Bible should carefully examine the statements concerning both uses.

The world system produces products that are necessary for the survival of the individual. Such items as food, clothing, and shelter are produce almost exclusively by the world system. Other commodities, such as transportation, entertainment, governmental services, are also available to the believer if used correctly.

In the Old Testament, God required physical separation of Israel from the world of the Gentiles. The legal method consisted of not participating at all in the commercial and culinary program of the non-Israelites. They were not to eat certain foods, for instance. Some teach that this abstinence was for health reasons, but this view must be discarded. The reason, as amply illustrated by Daniel, was not to succumb to the allures of the Gentile world. Daniel refused to eat the food offered by the Babylonians, and their fear was that he would grow ill. They ate good food, and they wanted their captives to eat good food. But Daniel refused.

Now, there was nothing wrong with the food of the Babylonians. They did not grow ill because they ate pork and shellfish. In fact, the Babylonians grew strong on their food. The reason the Mosaic law forbade those foods was so that the Israelites would not be tempted to intermingle with the Gentiles.

If you read the Hebrew Scriptures carefully, you will find that the law could not curtail the excess of the Israelites. While the law was righteous and good, the Israelites were not, and so they went ahead anyway, and ate what they wanted, and married who they wanted, and dressed how they wanted.

Yes, even the way Israelites dressed was proscribed in the Mosaic law. They were not to mix linen and wool, for instance. Some have thought that this was because the mixing symbolize impurity, but we must be very careful about such conclusions. It is more likely that they were forbidden was because God did not want them mixing in the commerce of the Gentiles around them, who regularly mixed linen and wool.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

But today, under grace, things have changed, although some have seemed to miss that the change took place. Abstinence is proclaimed to be God's method, for instance, when dealing with worldly entertainment. It is true that there is great allure there, but the solution biblically is not abstinence, but correct evaluation and direction. Yes, some things produced by the world should be avoided, but realistically, it is almost impossible to avoid all worldly entertainment.

We must learn to evaluate it, and leave out what is not forthcoming and godly. We must develop an approach that realizes worldly philosophy cannot be avoided, but must be sifted through the sieve of Biblical truth. What we cannot avoid we must evaluate, and we must teach our children to evaluate.

The legalistic approach simply will not work. But what will work, if correctly understood and applied, is the biblical method of victory, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

For now, it is enough to know that we are allowed to use the world system. That is, we are allowed to use it up to a point.

Believers Must Not Abuse the World

1 Corinthians 7:31

...and the ones who use this world as not using it to the full. For the form of this world is passing away.

The word sometimes translated abuse in 1 Corinthians 7:31 means to use something to the full. Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 9:18 in reference to preaching the gospel without charge so that he would not abuse (use to the full) his authority in the gospel. The word was used in the secular Greek of the day²¹¹ in the sense of squandering a dowry, that is, using it up.

Herein lies the key. The world system may be used, but not used up to the full. We must evaluate through the biblical lens, and remain committed to our love of God and His program.

1 Corinthians 1:20

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Did God not make foolish the wisdom of this world?

Evaluation is the key. The above rhetorical questions teach us that God's wisdom, that is, the wisdom He revealed in Scripture, cannot be compared to that produced by the world system. The philosophy of the world system is corrupt, and its wisdom is foolish. The debater of this age will, of course, deny this. He will produce what he believes to be sound and logical arguments for his geopolitical views, for his economic view, for his lifestyle views. But, they are foolishness when compared to God's wisdom as found in Scriptures.

James 4:4

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hatred of God? Therefore, the one who wants to be a friend of the world is shown to be an enemy of God.

²¹¹ P Oxy II. 28114 (A.D. 20-50)

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Just how serious is this problem? James makes it clear. A person who is friendly with the world system is metaphorically speaking sexually unfaithful. A person who is a friend of the world is adulterating his relationship to God. We will learn why this is true from 1 John, and James does not go into detail as to why he uses such sexually charged language. But he makes it clear what makes that language necessary.

A person who is a friend of the world hates God. The word “friendship” is *philia*, one of two words translated love in the New Testament. It means affectionate love, emotionally based love. A person exercising that kind of friendship hates God, and that includes the Christians to whom James was writing. Hating God does not mean that they were emotionally involved in hatred. It means that they were attempting to do God harm by their friendship with the world. Christians would deny this, but it is nonetheless true.

The result, is expressed by James in these words, “Therefore, the one who wants to be a friend of the world is shown to be an enemy of God.” Even Christians can be enemies of God, because they are opposing God and His word.

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (NKJV)

The world should never be the source of procedures for performing activities of a spiritual nature, for example, the worship and promotional practices of the church. It is sad that the simplicity of the New Testament assembly has been lost. Man is given to ceremony and formalism, and such began to manifest themselves early in church history. Today the great majority of churches, even those who claim to be Bible-believing, rely on ritual rather than Scripture to determine their practices. Tradition and worldly philosophy have overtaken many who profess the name of Christ.

Philosophically, Christians should be careful how they use the world. It is not required that the believer give up all his world based practices. But regarding spiritual matters the world must not be used, nor its authority allowed. This author believes that the use of public education is marginal at best, especially for the immature Christian who hasn’t had time to discern the evils of the world. Christian schools or home schools are much to be preferred.²¹²

Certainly there are good things in public education, but they appear to be outweighed by the evil. The Christian should seriously consider whether sending a child to a local public school is abusing or using the world system. Convenience is no argument in favor of abusing the world.

²¹² This author admits to a certain viewpoint here. He spent over twenty years administering and teaching in Christian schools. The primary reason was that, as a Christian parent, he was unwilling to allow unbelievers to indoctrinate his children. Public schools, which are dominated by unbelievers, tend away from a Christian view of life and toward a secular world view. However, this is not to say that Christian schools solve all the problems of worldliness. The Christian parent should be aware of the doctrines the school teaches and practices, as legalistic programs are as bad as worldly based programs, and immature Christian teachers can be harmful spiritually to children, as well. It is a difficult problem, and great care must be taken by the mature Christian in the raising and education of children.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Nor is the lack of funds. Warren Rushton penned the following words back in the early 1970s and they are still relevant today:

It is impossible to mature and have victory over the world if one does not know how to use the world, and this factor is governed by the Scriptures. It is also necessary to be discerning about one's self and family. Pressure from Satan's system is placed upon Christian families in the form of public education. Discerning parents need to consider if utilizing the local public school system is abusing rather than using the world.²¹³

A believer who is using the world to the full is said to be a friend of the world because he gains pleasure from it (James 4:4). An act of determinative will is involved. James condemns in the strongest of terms those individuals who are friends of the world as adulterers and adulteresses.

A Christian who is abusing the world will exhibit the world's characteristics by showing worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:20). His philosophy of life will be geared to the rudiments of the world (Colossians 2:8).

The nature of the temptations of the world are, sadly, little known and little taught in today's churches. But if the sincere Christian is to overcome this most subtle of spiritual enemies, an enemy who he experiences every day, he must come to understand the nature of the world system's attacks.

²¹³ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 93.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Chapter Seventeen

What are the Temptations of the World System?

Temptations that come from the world system are different than those of either the flesh or Satan. While it is true that the world system is controlled by Satan, the attack of the world is passive rather than active. Satan directly attacks the mind of the believer. But the world system is indirect and more subtle in its attack. And since the world is passive and subtle, and since the believer may use the world, the believer must exercise personal wisdom in dealing with the things of the world.

Like the flesh and Satanic attacks, the world system operates against the fallen nature of the individual Christian. The new nature is not capable of sinning (1 John 3:9),²¹⁴ but the fallen nature is capable of acting on temptation, and therefore performs acts of sin. While the source is external, the temptations of the world (and the other enemies as well) are internal, and mental. See James 1:12-15.²¹⁵

1 John 2:16-17

For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.(NKJV)

The Contents of the World System

Note that the three elements of the world are expressed in terms of internal negatives. Like the other enemies, we must identify the very nature of the problem, out of which acts of sin can arise. Note that the three following contents of the world are not acts of sin, but consist of two

²¹⁴ See the discussion of this passage beginning on pages 43-44 above.

²¹⁵ James make it clear that lust logically precedes temptation. James 1:14 states, "But each one is tempted by his own lust, being lured away and enticed." When the internal feeling of lust (strong desire) occurs, it is the result of a process. Indwelling sin produces its own strong desires, but the strong desires related to Satan and the world system have an external source. First, lusts become internalized, and then belong to the individual, they are his own. Once the strong desires are internalized, they can, and usually do, produce immediate temptation. The individual is being lured and enticed to action. No longer is it simply a strong desire, but the person begins to examine means of fulfilling what is now his own lust. The temptation has begun, and the question is now, "Will the tempted individual commit an act of sin?"

Note that the tempted individual has not yet sinned, as lust and temptation are mental and emotional, not physical. James 1:15 indicates the process of moving from the internal to the external, couched in a metaphor of the birth process, "Next, the lust, having conceived, gives birth to sin, and the sin, having become full grown, gives birth to death." Lust has conceived, that is, has brought into existence the temptation. Then, just like a baby is born by moving through the birth canal, that lust/temptation cycle gives birth to an act of sin. But before that happens, while the lust/temptation is still internal, the God of all grace has provided a biblical way out of the cycle. The birth of sin is not automatic, because it can be interrupted by God's grace provision over each of the enemies.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

lusts or strong desires, and one attitude of vainglory, translated pride in most versions. These, in turn, produce temptation, and finally lead to the activities of worldliness in the daily life of the believer.

The Lust of the Flesh

This lust of the flesh is not to be confused to the lust of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:27 which has its source in the sin principle. In 1 John 2:16 the lust of the flesh refers to strong desires *felt* by the flesh (objective genitive, note articular construction). That is, the flesh is *not lusting*, but is the object of the mental attitude of lust.

The *lust of the flesh in Galatians 5:16*, on the other hand, refers to strong desires *produced by the flesh* (subjective genitive, note anarthrous construction). That is, the flesh is doing the lusting.

These two “lusts of the flesh” must be kept distinct to avoid the confusion of the enemies. The lust of the flesh of 1 John 2:16 is satisfied by the world system’s provision of material goods to satisfy the flesh, that is, the needs and desires of the physical body. On the other hand, the lust of the flesh of Galatians 5:16 is only satisfied when the principle of indwelling sin causes the believer to perform one or more of the works of the flesh.

It is possible to be worldly and not be carnal. This seems to have been the situation with the “young men” of 1 John 2. They were overcoming the flesh, which produces carnality, because they had passed through the “little children” (*paidia*) stage into the young man stage. But it was directly to them that John states, “Love not the world.” The structure of the Greek verb allows for the idea that these young men were in the process of loving the world and they needed to stop doing it. “Stop loving the world” John says. They were spiritual young men. They were not carnal, and were strong and overcoming Satanic attack. But they were still loving the world system.

The Lust of the Eyes

Again, this is an objective genitive, “the strong desires felt by the eyes.” Rushton makes the following comment:

This should not be thought of as only using the eye gate to reach the sin principle within. This would be very redundant, to say the least. John apparently is using the term ‘lust of the eyes’ to refer to that part of one’s human nature that receives pleasure from what it sees, but should not be classified as a work of the flesh. An example of this could be recreation, sports, etc., which give pleasure to the human nature but are not themselves works of the flesh.²¹⁶

Rushton also states,

The word ‘lust’ is literally ‘strong desires,’ and not necessarily bad, but which must be judged by the context. There are many things in the world that provide pleasure and can be used, but must not be an object of the Christian’s love. when

²¹⁶ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 90.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

these things prevent the Christian from depending upon the Lord and being used of Him, they are out of bounds.²¹⁷

When one sees something produced by the world system that is pleasing to the eyes, a person might love that object to the point of making a sacrifice of time or money in order to gain possession of it. That object could be anything from a new, bright and shiny automobile that the individual does not need, to an expensive painting to hang on his wall. Any object pleasing to the eyes can produce the lust of the eyes, and could become an object of ungodly love.

The Pride of Life

This phrase should be translated “the vainglory felt by physical life.” The word pride is inappropriate here, as the Scriptures use that word in the sense of being high minded. Being high minded is a Satanic attack, not an aspect of the world system.

Vainglory refers to boasting or bragging about gaining an abundance of the material that is necessary to sustain physical life on earth.

It means, originally, empty, braggart talk or display; swagger; and thence an insolent and vain assurance in one’s own resources or in the stability of earthly things, which issues in a contempt of divine laws.²¹⁸

The word “life” is *bios*, referring to the physical existence. It is to physical existence that the world system makes its appeal. It includes those things that are necessary to sustain physical life. It is for this reason that the believer is allowed to “use” the world system. One cannot maintain physical existence without it.

Such things as food, clothing, and shelter are necessary to sustain life, but when one begins to have a strong desire for these to the point of re-directing his sacrificial love from the Father, he has become controlled by the world system. When one begins to sacrifice time and money that should be otherwise used to the glory of God, he is performing an act based on the vainglory of physical life.

The sin acts associated with the world system come about when the believer strives to gain benefit from the material goods of the world system beyond what is needed. When one realizes that he does not need something, but sacrifices to gain it, and willfully directs his considered sacrificial love toward it, he is committing an act of sin.

The Instability of the World System.

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)

1 Corinthians 7:31

For the form of this world is passing away.

²¹⁷ Rushton, *Enemies*, pg. 91.

²¹⁸ Vincent, *Word Studies*, II pg. 336.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

It should not surprise us that both John and Paul understood that the world is passing away. The system is inherently unstable, because it is without God. It is being wrung out like an old rag, and when the Lord establishes His kingdom on this earth, the world system will cease to exist.

Paul uses the instability of the world system to teach believers not to abuse it. It is senseless for a Christian to be worldly, since the world system is not permanent, but his relationship to God is. The goods gained from the world system, including economic independence, are but temporary, and can be lost when conditions in the world change. Security for the believer should not be gained from the accumulation of goods, but from reliance on God and His word.

John uses the instability of the world system to encourage his readers to not love it. The very fact that it is an unstable system means that at some time and in some way it will become extinct. Therefore, to become involved in friendship with the world is a dead-end practice. The world cannot ultimately sustain even physical life.

The discerning believer will know this to be true. The economic and political realities of the world system come and go. Kingdoms and nations rise and fall. Money loses its value. Investments, gain and lose value. Christians are part of these things, and can use them. But they are not to love them, they are not to make unreasonable sacrifices to attempt to sustain them. Our citizenship is not on this earth.

Philippians 3:20-21

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (NKJV)

Sadly many Christians are caught up in the world system. They are loving a particular government, a particular nation. But our love is to be toward God, not toward the ephemeral political systems of this planet. They are passing away. The only stable governmental system is still in the future, and it will be a total, autocratic dictatorship of a benevolent and perfectly righteous God.

Scripture clearly teaches that God is the One who sustains life, not the world system. That God has provided that the world system continue to exist and provide goods does not mean that it will continue to do so forever. It will eventually be eliminated by God. The Christian who will be spiritually successful must learn to defend against the temptations that come through the strong desires produced by the world system.

Chapter Eighteen

How Does a Christian Defend Himself against the Attacks of the World System?

Refuse to Love the World System

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone is loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Two alternatives are presented by John in this passage. The first alternative is to love the world system, and the second is to love God the Father. Such a strange juxtaposition in the object of the believer's love can be explained by realizing certain facts.

The word love here (*agapao*) is the imperative verb form of the noun which is the fruit of the Spirit love (*agape*). The imperative indicates a requirement to act. It refers not to an emotion, but to a decision to make a personal sacrifice on behalf of its object. Directing one's love to the Father is the only true defense against worldliness (see below).

In fact, the implication of John's statement is that the individual who is overcoming the world system is one who is expressing the fruit of the Spirit, sacrificial love. The implications of that truth are profound. The successful world overcomer must be walking by the Spirit. Galatians 5 indicates that love is a production of the Holy Spirit, but several passages teach that the love produced must be understood by the spiritual believer. For instance, 1 Corinthians 13 indicates that the various qualities of Godly love can and *must* be recognized.

The phrase, "the love of the Father" means the love directed toward the Father (an objective genitive). One must direct the fruit of the Spirit love to specific objects. A believer who is loving the world system is not loving the Father. The act of love is exclusive, directed to either the one or the other. One cannot love both at the same time!

Love is limited to a single object in this context. In other passages the believer is directed to love other believers, to love his wife, etc. But here, the believer is to love the ultimate object of his love, God the Father. The result of this love is that the Christian will sacrifice himself on the altar of God's program for man. He will not expend undue effort on attempt to fix that which is not fixable, the world system. He will recognize that the physical quality of life is not nearly as important as the spiritual quality of life.

One enjoy physical goods, but must keep in mind that that enjoyment is not to take him away from his primary task as a Christian, to live by and promote God's biblical program upon the earth. The love for the Father produces that kind of sacrifice.

Since the spiritual believer is able to recognize and direct the fruit of the Spirit love in such a way that the Father is the object of his love rather than the world system, he is able to do good works in a way that please God rather than himself.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

The discerning believer also will recognize the world system is unstable, and does not provide security in this life.

Be Discerning

1 John 2:17

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)

John 18:36

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I might not be given over to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.

The world system is passing away. Note that John is using the present tense in both passages above. He indicates thereby that the passing away of the world system is an on-going process. The meaning is clear. A believer who loves the world is loving something without long-term value. It is the height of short-sightedness for a Christian to love the world system. It is an unstable system. It cannot maintain itself because it is built on a false foundation, that of human work and effort.

John 18:36 indicates that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It will be on the earth, but not at this time. The world system will end when Christ sets up His kingdom. However, that is not the only way the world system is unstable, for it cannot sustain its economic and political systems even as it operates them. They tend to fail, and to be replaced by other worldly political, social and economic programs. This author is blessed to live in the United States, but the discerning Christian will recognize its instability. It is already in the process of failing, and only the providence of God will allow it to continue. All human political systems attempt to place more control over the individual, which makes them susceptible to rebellion and replacement. A discerning Christian must not place his faith in an unstable political system, not even that of the United States.

Not only is the system passing away, its strong desires are also passing away. This refers to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes previously discussed, because the physical objects desired are temporary, and will ultimately decay.

When Christ's kingdom is established on the earth, it will take the place of and bring an end to the world system. No longer will the Satanic influences and attempts at control be allowed. The corruption and decay will stop, and the curse on the creation will be lifted.

Not only will the world system cease, Satan will be chained for the first thousand years of the kingdom period and will not be able to tempt believers. Since the devil has been removed from the earth, it is obvious that the world system cannot continue, since they are so closely connected. Then, after the final defeat of Satan, the new heaven and earth will come to be.

What a glorious future the biblical Christian has to look forward to. This creation will ultimately be renewed, and the future ages will continually bring glory to God. Amen.

Grace and the Enemies of the Believer

Conclusion

If the New Testament has a theme, it can be couched in the rhetorical question, “How does a person live the Christian life?”

It is the purpose of this work to answer, at least partially, that question. True spirituality and spiritual maturity (they are not precisely the same) comes from a consistent and constant interaction with the word of God. The wonderful teaching of Paul concerning inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16 -17) begins to answer that question. The ultimate goal of his presentation is found in vs. 17, where Paul indicates the sufficiency of Scripture in the life of the believer. He concludes by saying that the purpose for the inspiration of Scripture is “...in order that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.”

The word “perfect” in this quote refers not to sinlessness, but to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is available only through a correct understanding and application of Scripture.

Also, the believer is “thoroughly furnished to every good work.” The idea is that the maturing Christian is completely outfitted, so that he can perform every good work. We must not read this as being a partial furnishing to some good works. Paul’s point is that Scripture is sufficient to *thoroughly* outfit the believer to *every* good work.

“Every good work” contains both the negative and the positive. By implication, it deals with not doing bad works, that is, thinking and acting contrary to God’s will. But it also carries the positive idea of performing whatever good work God has in store for the believer.

The book before you limits itself to dealing with the problem of temptation and sin in the life of the believer, not with the further great doctrine of good works. Much more could be said in this area, especially concerning the outworking of the priesthood of the believer. The doctrine of priesthood answers the great question, “What should I do to serve the Lord?” The answer to that question would take several more volumes.

Finally, a personal word. The truths presented in this book are effective. From personal experience I know for a fact that they do what God designed them to do, given that the individual is a true believer in the gospel of salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and that the believer is committed to God’s program for his life. While ultimate perfection must wait for the future resurrection, relative maturity is available by the consistent application of correctly interpreted Scripture. The true believer will never stop growing as long as he maintains a constant relationship with God through His word.

I leave you with one final Scripture from 2 Peter 3:18:

*But grow in grace, and in the full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*

APPENDIX

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

The Doctrine of Scripture

The Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God and is therefore the precise communication by God to man. It is inspired, that is “God-breathed” in the autographs, and is therefore from God as to its source. The Bible (prophecy of Scripture) was produced as the result of the “bearing-up” of its human authors by the Holy Spirit. The whole of Scripture is therefore authoritative for the faith of every believer. Those passages of the New Testament dealing directly with the church, the body of Christ, are authoritative for the practice of that body. Since the Bible is God’s communication to man, it is to be interpreted literally (normally, including the recognition of symbols and figures of speech), historically (from the viewpoint of the original recipients), and grammatically (from the original language of the communication.)

(2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

The Doctrine of Dispensations and Ages

Sadly, the lack of distinction between an age and a dispensation has caused misunderstanding to the extent that people do not even like to use the word dispensation. However, the word occurs in Scripture, and must be dealt with fairly, and understood as Paul used the word. It is a vital doctrine, because the word dispensation relates the revelation of God to the specific area of Christian living. When Paul spoke of the “dispensation of the grace of God given to me for you” in Ephesians 3, he was referring to his act of dispensing the revelation about grace for daily living.

A consistent normal (literal), historical, grammatical interpretation of Scripture results in distinguishing various acts of dispensing certain household revelation. Dispensationalism is not an approach to the Bible, an interpretive method, nor a broad-based view of the Bible, but is a doctrine of the Bible which is the result of a consistent normal interpretation. A dispensation is the act of dispensing revealed truth to part of mankind, and as such, a dispensation is a subsection of the doctrine of revelation given by God during time. Not all revelation relates to the dispensational relationship of a household member to God. Consequently, revelation dealing with truth other than daily living is not part of dispensational revelation.

The normal method of interpretation distinguishes between ages and dispensations. An age is a period of during which God reveals to His rational creatures something about Himself by comparison or contrast. Ages came to be at creation, continue to exist during time and will continue throughout future existence. But an age is not a dispensation, and dispensational thinking should never be used to divide the Bible into time periods.

A dispensation is a distribution of revealed truth to a group of people designated a household, and two such households are emphasized in Scripture, Israel and the church. The means of daily living for Israel was dispensed through Moses, who dispensed law as the principle of daily living for the individual Israelite. The means daily living for the church was dispensed by Paul, who dispensed grace truth for the daily living of the individual Christian.

The dispensing of grace was previously unrevealed (a mystery, Greek - *mysterion*), and finds in the Apostle Paul its steward. “Dispensational grace” is to be distinguished from “saving grace” in that:

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

- 1) saving grace has always been available throughout all ages, while dispensational grace became available only when Paul began to dispense the revelation of grace to the church, and,
- 2) saving grace provides all that God requires the unbeliever to fulfill to become a believer, while dispensational grace provides all that God requires the believer to fulfill to please Him in daily life.

Dispensationally, law was never intended to provide either the basis for nor the means of justification, but as a means for regulating the lifestyle of the individual member of the household of Israel.

(Ephesians 3:9; Galatians 1:4; I Corinthians 2:8; Ephesians 2:7; 1:10; 3:9; 3:21; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3; Galatians 3:10-12; I Timothy 1:4; Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 3:1-7; Colossians 1:24-28; I Corinthians 4:1; Romans 4:1-5; Romans 5:20-21; Romans 6:15-16).

The Doctrine of the Trinity (the Godhead)

By Trinity is meant that God is one eternal, self-existent, immense and simple Spirit Who is individualized by three distinct and identifiable persons designated to the present creation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons of the trinity subsist equally in the essence, and each participates equally in the attributes and nature of the Godhead. Each is equally worthy of worship, trust, and obedience. Each of these divine persons has a distinct function in the execution of the decreedal purpose and glory of the Godhead.

(John 1:1; John 4:24; John 10:30; Deuteronomy. 6:4; Exodus 3:14; John 5:21-29; I Kings 8:23; Isaiah. 66:1-2; Psalm. 139:7-10; James. 2:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 15:26; John 16:7; I Corinthians 8:6)

The Doctrine of the Father

The First Person of the Trinity, designated the Father, is the object of all spiritual attention and the ultimate source of all things. He assumed His position of Father in relationship to the Son at the time of the decree. The Fatherhood relationship to the Son denotes their equality of nature, while at the same time it expresses the subordination of the Son to the Father in the execution of the divine purpose. The Father enters a Fatherhood relationship with believers in this dispensation through their spiritual birth, at the time of which He indwells them, and makes them partakers of a quality of the divine nature. The Father is the primary object of the believer's communication. Not only did He send the Son to earth, He also sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as a result of the Son's request, though He Himself is never sent by the other Members of the Godhead. The Father raised His Son from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit.

(John 1:1, 2; John 5:18; I Corinthians 8:6; Psalm 2:7-10; Romans 6:11; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:20; Ephesians 4:6; 2 Peter 1:4; I John 3:9; John 16:23-26; I John 5:14, 15; John 14:26; 15:26)

The Doctrine of Jesus Christ

The Second Person of the Trinity, designated the Son, is the eternal Word (Greek = logos), the great "I am." In His incarnation He became the man Jesus of Nazareth, lived a perfect life, was crucified, and rose bodily from the grave. In His preincarnate state, He planned and made the

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

ages. As the Logos, He was the agent of creation and thus all things came into being by, through, and for Him. In the incarnation, He took upon Himself a true human nature through the miracle of the divine conception and virgin birth, while retaining His divine nature with all its relationships. After living a righteous life, apart from any act of sin, He died as a substitute for all men, was buried and rose on the third day. He subsequently ascended bodily into heaven and is presently fulfilling His intercessory and mediatorial ministry. He indwells believers of this dispensation imparting a quality of His life, which constitutes their possession of eternal life. He will rapture the church prior to Daniel's seventieth week. After the 70th week, He will return bodily to earth and institute His mediatorial Davidic reign for a thousand years. After His reign during the millennial age, He will turn the kingdom over to the Father where the authority of the Godhead will again be instituted with the result that the Son will continue to reign throughout all subsequent ages.

(John 1:1-18; Romans 9:5; II Peter 1:1; Luke 1:31-35; I Timothy 2:5; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 4:14, 15; I Corinthians. 15:1-8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; II Corinthians 5:14, 15; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:5; Hebrews 7:17-28; Isaiah. 9:6; Hebrews. 1:2; 11:3; Colossians 1:16-19; I John 2:1-2; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:34; Colossians. 1:27; I John 5:11, 12; Revelation 3:10; Matthew 24:29-31; Luke 1:32; Revelation 20:4; I Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 11:15)

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Third Person of the Trinity, designated the Holy Spirit who is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father and the Son, is an individual who was a co-agent in creation and the divine agent in the supernatural conception of the humanity of the Son. He became resident on the earth on the Day of Pentecost as a result of being sent by the Father and the Son. He is the co-witness with the believer concerning Christ. He convicts the unsaved of their need of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the agent in the production of the written Word of God, and He is also the agent of regeneration. He now baptizes, indwells, adopts and fills the believer. He is the earnest of our salvation, and is the distributor of Spiritual gifts.

(Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4; Hebrews 9:14; Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35; Job 26:13; John 14:26; 15:26; John 16:9-11; 16:13, 14; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; John 3:5-8; I Corinthians 6:19; 12:13; John 14:16, 17; Romans 8:9-14, 15; Ephesians 5:18; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30; I Corinthians 12:10-11)

The Doctrine of Creation

The universe, including the heavens and the earth, was created immediately and instantaneously by God apart from any evolutionary process. The six days of Genesis One are normal 24 hour days and are not to be taken as ages or aeons of evolution.

(Genesis 1:1-2:3; Exodus 20:11)

The Doctrine of Man

Adam and Eve were created immediately by God in His own image and likeness. They lived in sinlessness until Eve was tempted by the serpent, and being deceived, committed the first act of transgression. Subsequently Adam, who was not deceived, willfully committed an act of sin. The

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

guilt of Adam's sin was passed to all mankind, so that it can be said that all men have sinned "in Adam." Physical death as well as spiritual death are the result of Adam's transgression.

(Genesis 1:26, 27; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 3:14; Romans 5:12-17; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1)

The Doctrine of Sin and Unrighteousness

Man is unrighteous by nature and therefore commits acts of sin. Sin is an act of lawless, willful disobedience. Christians retain their unrighteous character, designated the sin principle or sin nature, and are therefore capable of committing sin of the same kind and to the same degree as the unbeliever.

(Romans 1:18-20; Romans 3:9-18; 1 John 3:4; James 1:14-15; 1 John 5:17; Romans 6:1-14; Romans 7:15-24)

The Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation is by grace through faith in the Gospel of salvation, apart from any human work, act, or request. Since a believer received salvation apart from any personal effort, he cannot lose that salvation by any personal act of unrighteousness. Salvation was executed and finished by the Son's work on the cross, which cannot be added to or subtracted from. The Gospel of Salvation consists exclusively of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead for our justification. Therefore, His death is substitutionary and produces complete satisfaction (propitiation) for God's requirement for the entire human race. As a result of the death of Christ mankind has been reconciled to God. Any change, either by substitution or elimination, of the facts of the gospel as presented in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 renders the convicting work of the Spirit inoperable, and a person cannot be saved by the presentation of such an errant gospel.

The sole ground of salvation is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He became personally separated from the Father when the Father made the Son's person an offering for sin. The Father's wrath against man's sinful state and acts was satisfied (propitiated). Christ's death was a sufficient redemption for all mankind. Since Christ's death was sufficient for all the world, the world is now reconciled to God positionally. God, therefore, invites all believers to be reconciled unto Him. At the point of faith, the believer is called, regenerated, forgiven all sin, justified, sanctified, made eternally secure, and endowed with every spiritual blessing. Positionally, the believer is glorified and seated in the heavenlies in Christ.

(Ephesians 2:8-10; Acts 16:31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; John 19:30; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:28-39; Romans 4:23-25; Romans 3:25; Romans 5:1; Isaiah 53:10; Romans 6:10; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:10,11; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19; Romans 3:24; 2 Peter 2:1; Ephesians 1:3, 13, 14; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 2:6, 7)

The Doctrine of the Church

The Church, which is the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost and extends until the rapture. It was to the church that Paul dispensed grace sometime after his salvation on the road to Damascus. It consists of its head, Jesus Christ our Lord, and of all believers who have been placed into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Each believer is a member of the Body of Christ ("in Christ") as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit and is endowed by Him with a

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

spiritual gift. Because of the universal presentation of spiritual gifts the ministry of the Body of Christ involves all believers. The local assembly is, as to its quality, “body of Christ.” It consists of all believers who purpose to fellowship with one another at a particular location on a regular basis and to partake of the Lord’s table.

(Ephesians 1:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:15-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 12:11-14; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:25-27; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 John 1:7)

The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts

Personal ministry is by virtue of each believer’s being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ at the time of salvation. As a member of the Body of Christ, each believer is endowed by the Holy Spirit with a spiritual gift. At the time of the writing of the New Testament, 19 spiritual gifts (or charismatic gifts) were given by Jesus Christ to the church. Upon completion of the written canon, the “miraculous gifts” are no longer being presented to believers. Only the following spiritual gifts are being presented to members of the Body of Christ: pastor-teacher, exhortation, evangelist, administration, organization, helps, mercy, giving, and service.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:19,20; Ephesians 4:7-14; 1 Peter 4:10,11)

The Doctrine of Spirit Beings

Spirit beings are classified as cherubim, seraphim, and angels (Hebrew = *malachim*). Unfallen, or elect, angels (1 Tim. 5:21) are led by an archangel, Michael, and are ministering spirits. Satan is a fallen cherub who led myriad of other spirit beings in rebellion against God. Both elect and fallen spirit beings (called demons) are further classified as thrones, dominions, principalities and powers (KJV).

(Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2; Hebrews 1:14; Daniel 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7; Ezekiel 28:14; Revelation 12:9; Colossians 1:16; Colossians 2:10; Colossians 2:15; Ephesians 1:21; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 6:12)

The Doctrine of Last Things

The ultimate destinies of Israel, the Gentile nations, and the Church are distinguished in Scripture. Israel’s destiny lies in the establishment of the Davidic Kingdom by the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming. This kingdom will be realized on the old earth for one thousand years (the Millennium) and will occupy the new earth for eternity. The ultimate destiny of the gentile nations will be determined by the “sheep and goat” judgment by Christ at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week (the so-called “great tribulation”). Believing Gentiles will enter the Millennial state, and unbelieving Gentiles will be cast into outer darkness. It is the destiny of the Church to be resurrected (raptured) prior to Daniel’s seventieth week and to enjoy its heavenly position in reality. The Church will reign with Christ, judge the angels, and spend eternity with God in the new heaven.

(Daniel 2:44, 45; Daniel 12:1-2; Revelation 20:1-6; Revelation 21:3-4; Matthew 25:31-34, 41; Revelation 19:15; Revelation 21:24; 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

Outline Summary of Bible Doctrine

Notes

Does 1 John 3:9 Teach that a Christian Cannot Sin?

A Short Explanation of 1 John 3:9

by
Garland Shinn

Introduction

Some teach that 1 John 3:9 teaches that a Christian cannot sin. This view cannot be sustained by a close exegetical examination of the verse in question. It is important for the believer to have a grasp of his three spiritual enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The flesh, particularly must be considered with reference to the three enemies. The devil and the world system appeal to the old fallen nature, but their temptations do not *come from* the flesh. The only enemy whose temptations come from itself is the flesh, also referred to as the sin principle.

Before a person can correctly understand the fulness of the context in which we find 1 John 3:9, he must be aware of the preceding facts. The topic before us is not the flesh but the devil. When the devil attacks the believer, he attacks the old Adamic nature, not the new nature. Why? This is the question which 1 John 3:9 answers.

An Explanation of 1 John 3:9

Whoever has been born of God does not practice sin, for His seed remains in him; and it cannot sin, because it has been born of God.

In 1 John 3:9 the phrase I translated “it cannot sin” is usually translated “*he* cannot sin.” But the grammar of the original Greek makes it clear that it is the seed¹ that cannot sin, rather than the person. The teaching is that the new nature, the seed which is born from God, cannot sin. Note the following statement by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

The source of sin is, then, the sin nature,² rather than the new divine nature. This important truth is pointed out in the same Epistle (1 John) in a passage which primarily teaches that the Christian does not now practice sin as he did before he received the new divine nature, but which also teaches that sin cannot be traced to the divine nature as its source. ‘Not anyone that has been begotten of God practices sin, because his seed [the divine nature] in him abides, and he [with particular reference to the “seed”] is not able to sin, because of God he [the “seed”] has been begotten (3:9, literal). It is evident that the new nature is that which has been begotten of God, and because of the presence of this nature, the one in whom it dwells does not now practice sin as he did before he was saved, nor can sin ever be produced by the new nature which is from God. The passage does not teach that Christians do not sin, or even that some Christians do not sin; for there is no class of Christians in view, and what is here said is true of all who have been ‘begotten of God.’³

¹ By metonymy the word “seed” refers to the nature born of God. When man is born physically, he was born of human seed with the principle of indwelling sin inhabiting his body. But when a Christian is regenerated, he is regenerated from a new “*sperma*,” that is, he is born with a new human nature. This new nature, this seed, cannot sin, because it is born not from a human source, but from God. It is for this reason that the phrases “the new nature” and “the old nature” (or sometimes “the sin nature”) are used by expositors to distinguish this truth.

² Dr. Chafer, along with many older theologians, uses the phrase “the sin nature.” This is perhaps unfortunate, as it implies that the old nature is inherently sinful. In fact, it is an Adamic nature. When Adam sinned, to his human nature was added the problem of indwelling sin, the sin principle. It was this fallen human nature that he passed on to his off-spring, and with which human beings are born today. It is probably better, therefore, to refer to the old nature as being a sinful nature, rather than “the sin nature.” While the difference is slight, it does emphasize the source of the old nature as being Adam’s human nature that God created and which became sinful by Adam’s act.

³ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He that is Spiritual*, pg 116.

Does 1 John 3:9 Teach that a Christian Cannot Sin?

Dr. Chafer is correct in his conclusions. However, he, unfortunately, continues to translate the phrase “it cannot sin” as “he cannot sin.” Let’s look more carefully at the Greek text. As all first year Greek students learn, the subject pronoun is not a separate word, but indicated in the ending of the verb. The verb in question before us is *dunatai* (can). It has the word *ou* (not) immediately preceding it. The ending is *-tai*, the third person singular ending which can be translated either he, she, or it, depending on the context.

Again, we must understand how these “pronominal suffixes” work. The understood pronoun, whichever it may be, must be determined by its antecedent. The antecedent is the word to which the pronoun refers, and in this case, we must look back to the preceding clause to determine whether the pronoun should be translated as a masculine (he), a feminine (she), or a neuter (it).

What then, is the antecedent of the pronominal suffix? The rule of antecedence is simple. A pronoun (or pronominal suffix, as here) must refer back to the first *noun* to which it can refer. Working back to the previous clause, we find only one noun to which the pronoun can refer, the word translated “seed.” Now this word in Greek is *sperma*, and it is a neuter noun. Therefore, the pronominal suffix of *dunatai* (*-tai*) must be translated “it.” Hence, the correct understanding is that the seed that cannot sin.

This view is consistent with the teaching of the New Testament, including 1 John, where it is clearly possible for the Christian to sin. However, that act of sin comes from the old Adamic nature as to its source, it does not come from the new nature, expressed in the word “seed.” It, the new nature, cannot sin.

This is confirmed by the first clause in verse nine (Whoever has been born of God does not practice sin). The key here is the word I have translated “practice.” Other versions translate it “does,” or “performs,” or even “keeps on doing.” The Greek word is *poieo*, and it has several possible nuances in the original language. In this context it is present tense, undoubtedly signifying an on-going activity. It is included here by John to avoid using the *verb* for sin. Rather, he uses the noun for sin, and makes it the object of the verb “practices.” John does not say, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin,” as some versions have it. He says, if we may expand our translation to include the concept of the continuative present, that the individual who has been born from God does not continually practice sin.

Conclusion

Contextually, 1 John 3:9 is explaining why Satan’s appeal is to the old nature. Verse 8 states:

The one who practices sin is out of the devil, because from the beginning the devil has sinned. For this reason the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

John does not mean that the temptations of the devil have been wiped out, nor does he mean that the devil is today impotent. The word translated “destroy” means simply eliminate. Dr. Hiebert correctly states,

The aorist verb “might destroy” (λύση) implies a decisive occurrence and seems naturally to refer to Christ’s victory over the devil on the cross (John 12:31; Heb 2:14). The verb does not mean “to annihilate” but variously means “to loose, untie, break up, give release,” as when the disciples loosed the colt in Matthew 21:2.⁴

Satan’s “works” continue, though provision was made by Christ on the cross to defeat them. One element of that provision is the new nature. Satan cannot attack it, because it cannot sin. So he attacks the old nature. But using the grace provision to defeat the devil (the armor of God in Ephesians 5) the believer can be victorious of even the personal enemy, the devil himself.

⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert, “An Exposition of 1 John 2:29-3:12.” *Biblioteca Sacra*, Vol. 146 #582. April, 1989.