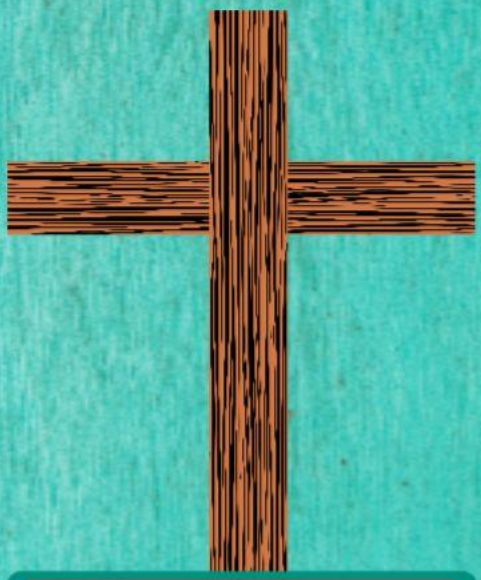


EARLY STEPS IN CHRISTIANITY

What You Need to Know About the Christian Faith

Daniel Olatunji

Early Steps in Christianity

What You Need to Know About the Christian Faith

By

DANIEL OLATUNJI

Copyright Page

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (AMPC) are taken from the Amplified Bible, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. lockman.org

Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) printed in this book are accurate as at time of publication and are offered as a resource to you. These are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement on the part of the author, nor does the author vouch for the content of these sites or permanence for the life of this book.

Copyright © 2024 by Daniel Olatunji. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations for reviews.

For rights and permissions, please contact:

danielolatunjiministry@gmail.com

The cover page was designed using an asset from Freepik.com. The Image was by fwstudio.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: SALVATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- 1.1 The Gospel of Salvation
- SALVATION PRAYER
  - 1.1.1 Detour: Discussion on Repentance
- 1.1 Return to Discussing the Gospel of Salvation
  - 1.1.2 Salvation does not Depend on our Works of the Flesh
- 1.2 What are We Saved From?
  - 1.2.1 Jesus Christ Saved Us from the Judgment of God
    - 1.2.1.1 Detour: The Basic Meaning of Death
  - 1.2.2 The Difference Between Redemption (Salvation) and Deliverance from the devil
- 1.3 The Kingdom Mandate: God's Intention and Purpose for Saving Us
  - 1.3.1 The Mandate to Rule/Have Dominion
  - 1.3.2 Restoration of Our Likeness
    - 1.3.2.1 Detour: Jesus Christ, Fully Man and Fully God, and How He Overcame Sin by the Holy Spirit
  - 1.3.3 The Mandate to be Fruitful
  - 1.3.4 The Mandate to Multiply
  - 1.3.5 The Kingdom Mindset
- Conclusion

CHAPTER TWO: BAPTISM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.1 Baptism as a Fundamental Practice in Christianity
- 2.2 Examples of Baptism from Scripture
- 2.3 Significance of Baptism
  - 2.3.1 Baptism Signifies Rebirth
  - 2.3.2 Baptism Unites Us With Jesus Christ
  - 2.3.3 Baptism Signifies Cleansing

Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE: THE HOLY SPIRIT

3.1 Who is the Holy Spirit and What is Our Involvement with Him?
3.2 The Promise of the Holy Spirit/Baptism in the Holy Spirit
3.3 Receiving the Holy Spirit
3.3.1 Ask for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
3.3.2 Grow in the Word and Faith to Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
3.3.3 OBEDIENCE is Key to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
Conclusion
3.4 The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
3.4.1 The Holy Spirit and Sanctification
3.4.2 The Holy Spirit's Job to Comfort and Give Hope, Peace and Joy etc.
3.4.3 The Holy Spirit Facilitates Wisdom, Knowledge and Understanding
3.4.4 The Holy Spirit Helps in Intercession and Prayer
3.4.4.1 One Major Purpose of a Believer is to Pray
3.4.4.2 Basic Understand of Prayer
3.4.4.3 The Spiritual Implication of Prayer
3.4.4.4 The Holy Spirit Helps Us to Pray
3.4.5 The Holy Spirit's Ministry in Spiritual Warfare

CHAPTER FOUR: THE INHERITANCE OF A BELIEVER

4.1 Healing Belongs to Us
4.2 Daily Provision
4.3 Protection and Deliverance
4.4 We Each Have At Least One Spiritual Gift or Ability
4.5 Eternal Life

CHAPTER FIVE: LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, THE HEARTBEAT OF CHRISTIANITY

5.1 What is Love?

5.1.1 Love is a CHOICE

5.1.1.1 Why there was Choice in the Garden of Eden

5.1.1.2 Why there is Good and Evil in the World Even Though God is Good

5.1.2 Love Entails SACRIFICE

5.2 Relationship, the Expression of True Christianity

5.3 How Relationships Work in Christianity

5.3.1 Relationship with God

5.3.1.1 The SACRIFICE of Time to Build Relationship with God

5.3.1.2 How Giving Can Impact Your Relationship with God

5.3.1.3 Become Sensitive to God's Feelings

5.3.1.4 The Fear of the Lord is Foundational for a Relationship With God

5.3.2 Relationship with Fellow Believers/Relationship in the Church

5.3.2.1 Unity in the Church

5.3.2.2 Building Proper Interpersonal Relationships in the Church

5.3.3 Relationship With Unbelievers

CHAPTER SIX: TAKING COMMUNION

6.1 The Practice of Taking Communion

6.2 Passover or Easter, Which is It?

6.3 The Significance of Communion

6.3.1 The Connection of Communion to Passover

6.3.2 Taking Communion is Linked to Healing

6.3.3 There is Life in the Blood

6.3.4 The Blood Speaks

6.3.5 There is Deliverance from the devil by the Blood of Jesus

CHAPTER SEVEN: DYING TO SELF AND THE SIN NATURE

7.1 The Human Makeup: Body, Spirit and Soul

7.1.1 The Chaos in Man

7.1.2 The Restoration of Some Sensibility to Man

7.2 The Flesh is Utterly Corrupt and Incapable of Doing Good by God's Standards.

7.3 Distinguishing Between Works of the Flesh and Works of Faith

7.3.1 The Work of the Spirit, or Work of Faith, CANNOT be Self-Centred

7.4 Not by Works

Conclusion

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LIFE OF FAITH

8.1 What faith isn't

8.2 What faith is

8.3 Faith in Action

CONCLUSION

WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION

This material is intended to be a reference material and early discipleship resource tool for new converts to the Christian faith. It is assumed that the reader recently committed their life to Jesus Christ, and they are trying to get their bearing on what it means to be a follower of Christ (i.e. Christian), and understand their amazing experience of coming to faith.

This is also a material for seasoned Christians to revisit the Biblical foundations of their faith. It is amazing the depths of truth found in Scripture, and I'm certain that even a whole lifetime is not going to be sufficient to uncover it all. So I can guarantee Christians reading this that you will learn a tonne from it, and there are certain areas I address to the Church which requires your attention. So this will tremendously bless you as well.

Even though it is assumed that the reader is a Christian by virtue of the fact that they've accepted and believed the Gospel message, I'll play it safe by dedicating the first chapter to talking a bit more about Salvation, and providing an opportunity for others who may not be saved to understand the Scriptural premise behind the Gospel (i.e. Good News) of salvation, and hopefully consider heeding to the call of the Gospel.

So this project is going to serve as a resource to introduce an individual to some of the basics of Christianity, and guide them through some of the fundamental steps that would enable them to have a fruitful journey in Christ Jesus.

It is also the aim of this project to encourage individuals in the study of Scripture, so that they can begin their journey on the foundation of God's Word and sustain it in the same vain, and not just the interpretations of men, which on many occasions account for the shortfalls, or discrepancies from the amazing experiences of the early Church, as recorded in the Bible and Church history, in comparison with

the daily experiences of the average Christian today. So for that reason I've taken great pains to quote and cite a plethora of Scriptures. I'll advice that this is not a book you try to finish quickly, but rather take your time, study the Scriptural justifications for whatever ideas that are presented, and internalize the Passages.

For the e-version of this book the Bible citations are links to the Passages, which you can either access via a web browser or the YouVersion Bible App by Life.Church. I'll recommend having the app opened like a pop-up and resizing the window to your liking, for smooth transitions between the app and book. The option of having the Scripture open in the pop up window depends on the app you're using to read the book. Some apps open the scripture as an embedded instance of the Bible app, or via an embedded browser. You can find the Bible app in your respective app stores to enjoy an offline study experience of this book. That said let's get right into it.

CHAPTER ONE: SALVATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Here are the topics we are going to explore in this chapter:

- The Gospel of Salvation
- What are we SAVED from? Or Why do we need Salvation?
- The Kingdom Mandate: God's intention and purpose for Saving us

1.1 The Gospel of Salvation

Gospel literally means Good News. So what's the Good News? The Good News is that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to suffer and die for the sins of the world, so that those who repent, believe and look to Him as Lord and Saviour would escape the eternal condemnation of death, and receive eternal life in Christ Jesus. Just as Christ was raised to life after the third day from His death and burial, so also would He raise to life ALL who put their faith in Him (please read – **John 6:39-40**).

So the very first step in Christianity is receiving the free gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ by faith. It is really simple with respect to what you have to do; all that is required of you is to repent and receive forgiveness for your sins through Jesus Christ, and then confess Him as your Lord and Saviour.

Luke 24:45-47

45. Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

46. He told them, "This is what is written: ***The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day****,*

*47. **and REPENTANCE for the FORGIVENESS of sins will be preached in His Name to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. NIV*

Acts 2:37-42

*37. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "**Brothers, what shall we do?**"*

*38. Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** 39. The Promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

*40. With many other words he **warned** them; and he **pleaded** with them, "**SAVE yourselves from this corrupt generation**." 41. **Those who accepted his message were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

*42. **They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship**, to the breaking of bread **and to prayer**. NIV*

***Note:** We'll still discuss on baptism in the next chapter, and subsequently we'll also talk about the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 10:9-13

*9. If you **DECLARE with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and BELIEVE in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved**.*

*10. **For it is with your HEART that you BELIEVE and are JUSTIFIED, and it is with your MOUTH that you PROFESS YOUR FAITH and are SAVED**.*

11. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame."

*12. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—**the same Lord is Lord of all AND RICHLY BLESSES ALL WHO CALL ON HIM**,*

*13. for, "**EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.**" NIV*

If you haven't done so yet, or having studied subsequent topics in this write-up, you've come to the decision to be a follower of Christ Jesus and receive His Salvation, it would be my privilege to usher you to Christ

Jesus. Pray this from your heart and talk to Jesus Christ like He is right there with you:

SALVATION PRAYER

Lord Jesus,

I've come to realise that I am a sinner, prone to do things that hurt me, others and also displeases Father, God.

I confess my sins:

(take a moment to tell Jesus whatever sin/sins that come to mind that weighs you down with guilt and regret)

And I repent of them.

I ask for forgiveness on account of what You did for me and all mankind. You paid the price for sin by dying on the cross, but on the third day you arose from the grave.

*So please forgive me from all my sins and cleanse me from a guilty conscience (**Ps 51:14**, **Heb 10:19-24**).*

I want to also commit my life to You, for You to guide and help me by Your Holy spirit. Please empower me by the Holy Spirit so that I can fulfil the good plans God has for me.

Thank You for forgiveness, thank You for salvation, and thank You for the Holy Spirit, and His empowerment for me to live a fulfilled life.

*(Feel free to drop this book for a while to talk with Jesus some more. And try to be sensitive, as He generally communicates back to your heart, and rarely so often your ears. Listen instead for the new found inner voice, and a supernatural perception that gives you great insight, wisdom and direction (**Isaiah 30:21**, **Prov 2:6-12**). Also note that sometimes He may send people your way to answer the very thoughts you shared with Him; or who knows you may come across a book like this to help you along with your walk and communication with Him. So talk with Him and grow in relationship)*

In Jesus' Name I pray

AMEN!

Congratulation, you are saved, and you're now in the Family of God. It is really that simple. Rejoice and be glad, do a dance, or just shout "Hallelujah I'm saved."

After you're done with all that, let's get on with learning a bit deeper into the prayer you just made and what the Christian life is all about.

In addition to faith, one key aspect of Salvation that requires a change from us is REPENTANCE, so let's begin there so that you can truly understand what it means to REPENT.

1.1.1 Detour: Discussion on Repentance

By the way, the Greek word for "REPENT" is "*metanoia",* which literally means to change one's mind or thinking. Hence repentance from sin is first of all the act of changing your mind with respect to sin.

So practically speaking, if you once thought it acceptable to lie or steal in the past, when you have a change of mind and develop a new conviction (REPENT), you'll now recognize that lying and stealing are unacceptable behaviors for you. And by effect if your mind considers them unacceptable, your actions would not manifest such deeds, and this reflects a picture of true REPENTANCE (**Matt 3:8**, **Acts 26:20**, **2 Tim 2:19**); and if at rare moments of weakness you manifest such sinful deeds, then at least you would be remorseful from the heart about such deeds, and turn back to God for forgiveness (**2 Cor 7:8-11**, **1 John 2:1-2**). But if after coming to Christ those deeds don't unsettle you, and you still feel comfortable doing them, then it means there is no true REPENTANCE, and such an individual is still a slave to sin, instead of being a slave to Christ and righteousness (**Rom 6:11-23**, **Acts 8:18-23**, **2 Peter 2:18-22**, **1 John 3:4-10**).

So in effect REPENTANCE begins in the mind, but it is made manifest in one's sincere actions. I put emphasis on the word sincere because it is possible for people to pretentiously manifest actions that look like they

have indeed come to repentance, but in their hearts they still hold dearly to things that God considers sin, and they try to manifest them in secret. This is a stressful kind of life that may fool men, but NOT God (**Gal 6:7-8**). The Christian lifestyle isn't meant to be endured, it is meant to be enjoyed in righteousness. If it feels like you are just trying to endure doing the right things that come with the faith, then it means you need to have an honest conversation with God, and probably get rid of certain things that may be luring you to sin. And also it would be important to evaluate your fellowship with the Holy Spirit, because the Christian lifestyle is only possible through Him (**Rom 8:7-9**, **2 Cor 13:5**, **14**); I'll explain more on that in subsequent chapters.

God prefers for you to be honest about your shortfalls, and come to Him asking for help, rather than pretending to be on fire for Him when there is nothing but smoke (**Rev 3:15-18**, **Matt 15:8-9**, **Isaiah 58**). Don't pretend with God, if your mind is not in the right place (**Rom 8:5-8**), humbly ask Him for help (**James 1:5-8**), and He is able to grant you a truly REPENTANT heart that would be moved to turn away from sin, but turn towards Him (**Ezekiel 11:18-21**, **36:25-29**, **Acts 11:18**, **2 Tim 2:25**, **Rom 12:2**).

In this way you will be able to enjoy God, worship and fellowship, understanding fully well that God is not withholding anything good from you, as the devil and sinful pleasures try to insinuate (**Ps 84:11**). This was the very same trick the devil used on Eve, making her to think that by herself she could do something to be like God (**Gen 3:4-5**), whereas God had already created mankind in His Likeness (**Gen 1:26**). And when she bought into the first lie, she now internally justified her sinful intention by claiming that the forbidden tree was exceptionally good looking and appealing (**Gen 3:6**); whereas God made every other fruit bearing tree they could eat from both good looking, and appealing (**Gen 2:9**). The bottom-line is that don't entertain sinful thoughts, because they can quickly drag you away into a narrow focus, where it becomes difficult to see the far more better deal that God has to offer (**Ps 37:15**, **Prov 13:22**, **10:22**, **John 10:10**).

So don't be fooled by the devil, and more so don't settle for anything less than the kind of life God has ordained for His children, filled with peace and joy irrespective of what we face in the world (**John 14:27, 16:33**). The real deal is better, and feels so good, compared to faking it, and living a double life with sin. God makes available power for us to live above the power of sin, we just need to ask and obey Him (**1 Cor 10:13, 2 Peter 1:3-4, Luke 10:19**).

So make sure your REPENTANCE comes from the heart, because only then would you truly enjoy the Christian life. And for older believers, if your foundations have shifted, and your mind begins to bend a knee to accept or tolerate sin in your life, then be sincere with God in prayer, and study His Word to get restored to the truth, joy and peace in the Christian life. In other words, REPENT, thus having a change of mind, and use Scripture to guide you on the path to enjoy the fullness of God's will and plan for your life (**Rom 12:2**).

I repeat, don't settle for anything less than what God offers, which is inclusive of self-discipline/sound mind (**2 Tim 1:7 NIV/KJV, Gal 5:22-26, 2 Peter 1:5-9**), and freedom from sin and the power of sin (**Gal 5:1, 13, 1 Cor 15:56-57**).

The soundness of mind to recognize and resist, or turn away from sin, and towards God is the real meaning of REPENTANCE, because REPENTANCE begins in the mind (*metanoia*), and then it precipitates into our actions.

1.1 Return to Discussing the Gospel of Salvation

So before our detour, we said REPENTANCE and faith are the key ingredients to receiving salvation, and we have a small role to play to effect those virtues. In a subsequent chapter, we'll discuss the real meaning of faith which is essential not just for salvation, but also for every aspect of Christian life.

Now I'll like us to discuss another important point pertaining to Salvation, which is that you CANNOT work your way into getting it, you just have to receive it by faith. In other words, you shouldn't be like Eve who got convinced by the devil, that essentially if she would do something, i.e. eat the forbidden fruit, she could then be like God, whereas she could have just believed that God had already created mankind in His Likeness.

1.1.2 Salvation does not Depend on our Works of the Flesh

Straight up, I would like to state the important fact that salvation is not dependent on your goodness, or badness, and there is nothing you can do to earn it. It is a gift of God to be received by faith and nothing else (**Eph 2:8-9**). Any attempt to work for salvation, or try to be good enough for God to accept you, or forgive your sins on account of good deeds, is actually going to be viewed as an affront to God Who paid a great price by allowing His beloved Son to SUFFER unimaginable torture and shame, and then to die to make salvation for sinners, like you and me, possible and FREELY available.

Psalms 2:12

*12. **Kiss His Son, or He will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction**, for His wrath can flare up in a moment. **Blessed are all who take refuge in Him**. NIV*

Isaiah 64:6

*6. **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags**; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. NIV*

Isaiah 61:10

*10. I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For **He has clothed me** with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of **His righteousness**,*

as a bridegroom adorns His head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. NIV

Note: *Our righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight, so He is the One that has to provide for us the clothing of salvation and righteousness, as the Passages above illustrates. If we attempt to enter into salvation by our own righteousness, or clothing, He is forced to kick us out, because our efforts can never match up to His standards. How good or bad you are isn't what counts when it comes to being saved, what matters is you accepting and believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.*

Jesus Christ illustrates this point in the parable below, which also connects to the previous two Passages beautifully. You can read the whole parable, but I'll be quoting only an excerpt of it below:

Matthew 22:9-14

9. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'

10. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, ***THE BAD AS WELL AS THE GOOD, and the wedding hall was filled with guests****.*

11. "But when the king came in to see the guests, ***he noticed a man there who was NOT wearing wedding clothes****. 12. He asked, '****How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?****' The man was speechless.*

*13. "****Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness,*** *where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

14. "For many are invited, but few are chosen." NIV

Note: *It was customary in those times for the king or wealthy host of a banquet to provide guests with robes bearing their color or insignia. Also remember from the previous Passage that it says God is the One Who provides us with the garment of Salvation and Robe of Righteousness (****Isaiah 61:10*** *quoted previously - QP), hence it would appear that the man that was thrown out decided to dishonor the host by NOT putting on the clothing the host provided. Remember good and bad alike were all taken from the street, so it wasn't as if they had on their Sunday best when the servants came to compel them to attend the banquet (****Luke 14:23****). So the only plausible reason, also taking into account the culture of the time, the guy that was thrown out from the event,*

that the host desperately tried to get people to attend, was thrown out because he refused something that was FREELY accessible to everyone else.

let's highlight just four more Passages to buttress the fact that Salvation is a FREE gift

Romans 3:23-25

*23. **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**,*

*24. and all are **justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus**.*

*25. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His Blood—**to be received by faith**. He did this to demonstrate His Righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— NIV*

1 John 1:8-10

8. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

*9. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from ALL unrighteousness.***

10. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us. NIV

1 John 2:1-2

*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2. **He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins**, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. NIV*

Ephesians 2:3-5, 8-9

*All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4. But because of his great love for us, God, Who is rich in mercy, 5. made us alive with Christ** even when we were dead in transgressions—**it is by grace you have been saved**.*

…

*For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith—and this is NOT from yourselves, it is the GIFT of God—9. NOT BY WORKS, so that no one can boast**. NIV*

1.2 What are We Saved From?

So the Gospel is the Good News that Jesus Christ came to save mankind, but an intelligent question worth asking is, save us from what or who exactly? If you have no clue as to what you're being saved from, it is quite easy to scorn the rescue mission.

For instance, say you are walking down the street with your earpiece at full blast to your favourite song. Then out of nowhere someone violently pushes or jerks you from your path. A natural response maybe to want to turn around to engage in a fight to defend yourself. But if it turned out that the person was saving you from something harmful, like a projectile coming at you that you were unaware of, or a vehicle that lost control and was heading for you, then your feeling towards that person changes from anger to gratitude. The inconvenience of the push or jerk was justified because you were being saved from something that could severely injure, or cause a fatality (**Jude 1:22-23**).

But suppose the violent push was to save you from a falling leaf about to land on you, or something as ridiculous as that, you'll probably be annoyed with the individual, because the drastic effort and discomfort from that “save” wasn't justified because of the inconsequential leaf, or ridiculous other thing.

So we need to understand what Jesus Christ came to save us from, so that we can better appreciate His sacrifice, and secure and cherish the gracious gift of Salvation we have been given (**2 Peter 3:17-18**, **[Matt 13:19**, **Luke 8:12]**, **Phil 2:12-13**). In another book I elaborate more on the subject of what Jesus Christ Saved us from, but for this chapter I'll summarise it into the following topics:

1.2.1 Jesus Christ Saved Us from the Judgment of God

Indeed God loves us dearly as a Good Father, but at the same time He is also a Righteous Judge, not just upholding justice for mankind, but also for the eternal beings in the spiritual realm. If on account of His Love for us, He just let's us go scot-free without any consequences for our sin against Him and His creation, He would lose the moral standing to execute judgment on the Last Day against the devil and the demonic spirits that rebelled against Him, and caused Adam and Eve to as well rebel against God's command (**Jude 1:6**, **Rev 20:10**, **14**). For that reason He had to find a way to ensure that His Love for mankind doesn't contradict His obligation to uphold justice as a Righteous Judge. Hence He had to create an avenue for Salvation that would still satisfy the requirements of Justice.

And just so you know, before we move on, every sin you commit is ultimately a violation against God. This is because sin in all its forms inflicts damage on God's creation in one shape or form, meaning the sinner owes God damages. Which is why God had Laws to regulate how people interacted with Him, with each other (**Matt 22:37-40**), and even with animals and the natural world (**Deut 22:6-7**, **Lev 22:26-28**, **Deut 25:4**, **Prov 12:10**). So knowingly, or unknowingly, we all have damaged God's property, and by so doing we are ALREADY held liable to Him (**Lev 5:17**). And here is the thing, the verdict of God for everyone who sins against Him is DEATH, which basically means separation. This verdict applies both for humans, the devil, and other angels that rebelled.

My inclusion of the devil and demons may have some people scratching their heads, thinking how can spirits die? Well, the reason you may be asking that question is that you do not understand the fundamental meaning of death, so let's embark on a detour to explore the basic meaning of death.

1.2.1.1 Detour: The Basic Meaning of Death

Not to dwell too much on it, but let me briefly explain the meaning of death to bring a more appropriate understanding. Like I said death in its fundamental sense is separation. As human beings there is the possibility of experiencing two deaths: the first being when the spirit and soul gets separated from the body (**Eccl 12:6-7**, **Ps 146:3-4**, **Matt 10:28**), and the second being the condemnation to the lake of fire for those whose names are not written in the Lamb's (Jesus's) Book of Life (**Rev 20:11-15**), and this second death after the Judgment constitutes eternal separation from God.

So both the first and second death involve separation in one form. The Judgment of death, i.e. the eternal separation from God, was meant for the devil and his demons who rebelled; they were, and are, going to be the ones separated from God and dwelling in the eternal flame of torment (**Jude 1:6**, **Rev 20:10**). So though spirits have an eternal existence, yet an existence apart from God is death. So this is how spirits can die.

God NEVER intended for us, human beings, to die (**Eccl 3:11**), but since we foolishly chose the path of rebellion (**Gen 3:2-6**, **11-12**), we inevitably queued ourselves behind the path the devil paved for his own death, which was also as a result of rebellion against God (**Isaiah 14:12-15**).

The first death for us is INEVITABLE, because the human flesh is utterly corrupt, and God has no remedy for that, other than to give us a new body on the last day (**1 Cor 15:40**, **42-44**, **50-58**, **Phil 3:20-21**). Remember the flesh is of the earth (**Gen 2:7**, **3:19**), and the earth in its current state is cursed and defiled (**Isaiah 24:3-6**), not functioning as it was intended (**Gen 3:17-18**), hence everything about earth, and our flesh which is of earth, is doomed for destruction. But just as God is going to create a new earth (**Isaiah 65:17**, **2 Peter 3:9-15**, **Rev 21:1**), so also is He going to give us a new body (**Rom 8:19-25**).

I'll discuss more on the flesh and its fallen nature in a subsequent chapter. But it is important I stress the point here that the flesh is only due for destruction no matter our best efforts to preserve and fulfil all its desires, the first death is INEVITABLE, because the human flesh of earth is corrupt.

However there is hope and remedy for mankind with respect to the second death. Now there in lies the Good News: Jesus Christ came to pay the price of death for any, and everyone, who would accept and believe in Him (**John 11:25-26**, **Heb 2:9**, **14-15**), so that they wouldn't have to suffer the agony of separation from God. In other words, He experienced and endured death and separation from God (**Mark 15:33-34**), so that we DON'T have to. He stands as the Mediator between God and mankind to bring about reconciliation (**1 Tim 2:3-6**, **2 Cor 5:14-15**, **17-21**, **Col 1:19-23**). And with reconciliation achieved through Jesus Christ, there is no longer separation from God, hence no more death. However those who refuse this opportunity to reconcile with God, would have no choice but to face the judgment, and like I said the verdict ALREADY stands as death for everyone who sins against God. This is not me condemning anyone, it is simply what God has revealed in His Word so that people do what is necessary to escape the judgment that CANNOT change.

John 3:16-21, 35-36

*16. For **God so loved the world** that he gave His one and only Son, **that whoever believes in Him shall NOT perish but have eternal life**. 17. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.18. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, **but whoever does NOT believe stands condemned ALREADY because they have NOT believed in the Name of God's one and only Son**. 19. This is the verdict: **Light has come into the world**, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21. **But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God**.*

...

*35. **The Father LOVES the Son** and has placed EVERYTHING in His hands. 36. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, **but whoever REJECTS the Son will NOT see life, for God's wrath REMAINS on them**. NIV*

Romans 5:6-11

*6. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, **CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY**. 7. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8. **But God demonstrates HIS OWN LOVE FOR US in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

*9. Since we have now been justified by His Blood, how much more shall we be **SAVED FROM GOD'S WRATH THROUGH HIM!** 10. For if, **while we were God's enemies, we were RECONCILED to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been RECONCILED, shall we be SAVED through His life!** 11. Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through **our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received RECONCILIATION.** NIV*

Ephesians 2:3-5, 8-10

*3. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. **Like the rest, we were by nature DESERVING OF WRATH.** 4. But because of **HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US, God, Who is rich in mercy**, 5. **MADE US ALIVE with Christ even when WE WERE DEAD IN TRANSGRESSIONS—it is by grace you have been saved.***

...

*8. **For it is by GRACE you have been SAVED, through FAITH** —and this is not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God**—9. not by works, so that no one can boast. 10. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. NIV*

Ephesians 5:3-11

*3. **But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity**, or of greed, **because these are improper for God's holy people**. 4. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6. **LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU***

WITH EMPTY WORDS, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient**. 7. **THEREFORE DO NOT BE PARTNERS WITH THEM.

*8. **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT** 9. (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10. **and find out what pleases the Lord**. 11. **Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness**, but rather expose them.*
NIV

In summary, Jesus Christ came to save us from the wrath and Judgment of God, which would amount to death for those who CHOOSE NOT to accept His Saving effort. So it boils down to a CHOICE; and just in case you're wondering what God wants you to CHOOSE, well its really simple, He wants you to CHOOSE Life (**Deut 30:19**, **John 10:10** **NKJV**, **1 Tim 2:3-6**).

There is much more I can say on the subject matter of Jesus Christ saving us from the wrath and Judgment of God, but I believe the Passages above adequately do justice to the point; and besides I've addressed it more adequately in another project, so I'll leave it at this here. But I believe you get the point that Jesus Christ came to save us from God's righteous judgment.

1.2.2 The Difference Between Redemption (Salvation) and Deliverance from the devil

Now some folks may be wrestling with the thought that I've made no mention of Jesus Christ saving us from the devil. Well, the reason I haven't said that is because salvation, as accomplished by the Blood of Jesus Christ, which is also technically redemption (**Eph 1:7-8**, **1 Peter 1:18-19**, **Rom 5:9**), has absolutely nothing to do with the devil, Salvation only involves God, and you can search through ALL Scripture and you'll find that to be the case. In other words, the Blood of Jesus Christ was presented, or given, to God, the Father, and no one else (**Eph 5:1-2**, **Heb**

9:12-15). An understanding of the Trinity would make this a lot easier to comprehend, but it would take a lot more to properly uncover that subject as I've done in other projects, so I'll beg your indulgence for me to skip over it here.

So the question now is what about the devil? Well, the answer is Jesus Christ accomplished Salvation and redemption which involved God, but He achieved for us DELIVERANCE from the devil.

The difference is that redemption is a transaction with which Jesus Christ paid God with His Blood, thus experiencing death and separation to ransom us from God's judgment of death. Hence Scripture is clear that Jesus's Blood was presented to God the Father, and NOT the devil, as I've already cited (**Eph 5:1-2**, **Heb 9:12-15**). But unlike redemption, deliverance is NOT a transaction, it is more of a forceful confrontation in which the victor takes all (**Luke 11:20-23**). Which is why in Scripture every time that Jesus Christ delivered people from demons, it wasn't a negotiation or a transaction with the demons, it was simply a command demonstrating power and authority.

It should be noted that no one can be delivered, or captured, out of the Hands of God (**Isaiah 43:13**, **Job 9:12**, **John 10:27-30**), because NONE is stronger than He; hence by way of transaction people can only be redeemed or ransomed by the price He sets (**Ps 49:5-9**, **15**, N.B God sets and provides our ransom price (**Job 17:3**), just like the illustration where He provided the garment of Salvation – **[Matt 20:28**, **Isaiah 61:10]**).

On the other hand people can only be forcefully delivered from the captivity of the devil (**Col 1:13-14 NKJV**, **2 Tim 2:25-26**); and secondly, through a resolute stance with God, people can have the devil and his demons restrained from disturbing them (**Eph 6:10-13**, **James 4:7**, **Rom 16:20**, **1 Peter 5:8-11**, **John 17:11-12**, **15-19**). Either-way NOT one of these processes involves a negotiation with the devil or his demons, it is a show of power and authority.

It is pointless attempting to redeem people from him, which would entail a form of transaction: because first of all the devil absolutely

needs human beings so as to have some form of expression on the earth, otherwise he becomes totally ineffective without people to execute his will (**2 Tim 2:25-26**); secondly, the devil is naturally a liar (**John 8:44**) and a corrupt trader (**Ezek 28:15-18**), so it is foolish and pointless trying to trade with someone like this, and besides, you'll NEVER get a fair deal from him; in fact you will almost certainly walk away with a loss, and the situation much worst than it was in the beginning. No one who has ever transacted with the devil came out with a fair deal, NOT ONE.

All of this is very instructive to every Christian. You must understand first of all that the devil is very unwilling to release anyone he holds captive through sin and his various other devices like sickness, poverty etc. (**Luke 13:11-13, 16, Mal 3:10-11** NKJV). No negotiation or compromise would work. The only thing that can set you, or anyone else, free from the hold of the devil is superior power which comes through Jesus Christ (**Matt 10:7-8, Luke 10:18-20, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9**).

So the sooner you adopt the mentality of confronting the devil, rather than appeasing and negotiating with him, then the sooner you will experience victory and the kind of life Jesus Christ intends for us to have. Through deception and cunning the devil has held many Christians and non-Christians in needless bondage. We just need to exercise the wisdom, power and authority that Jesus Christ has given us, and the devil with all his little friends will flee, Because Jesus Christ has ALREADY defeated them thoroughly.

Colossians 2:15

*And **having DISARMED the powers and authorities**, He made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them by the cross**. NIV*

1 Cor. 2:6-8

*We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but NOT the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, **who are coming to NOTHING.** No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God*

destined for our glory before time began. ***NONE of the rulers of this age understood it, for IF they had, they would NOT have crucified the Lord of glory****. NIV*

Ephesians 1:18-22

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order ***that you may know the hope to which He has called you****, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and* ***HIS INCOMPARABLY GREAT POWER FOR US WHO BELIEVE.*** *That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right Hand in the heavenly realms,* ***FAR ABOVE ALL rule and authority, power and dominion****, and every name that is invoked, NOT ONLY in the present age BUT ALSO in the one to come. And* ***God placed all things under His feet*** *and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, NIV*

So I believe we've established what the Gospel message is, and why we need salvation, so I think it is time we address the last point in this chapter, which attempts to look from God's perspective in Scripture to identify why God would invest so much in saving us. In other words we are going to look at the purpose of salvation.

1.3 The Kingdom Mandate: God's Intention and Purpose for Saving Us

Humanity in general, and even a lot of us individually are very self-centred. I mean for the longest time in the past we were convinced that the earth was the center of everything, and everything else revolved around us, but now we know better. So it is often helpful to take a step back and attempt looking at the big picture from another perspective and vantage point, as this provides a more helpful insight than our natural perspective.

So in other to understand the purpose behind Salvation we must try to see things from God's perspective, and not our myopic self-centred view. In the grand scheme of things, the purpose of Salvation is tied to God's original purpose for creating mankind, which I'll henceforth refer to as the Genesis Mandate, the original Mandate, or the Mandate.

1.3.1 The Mandate to Rule/Have Dominion

David, the Psalmist, asks a very profound question in the Psalm below, which I can't answer, but he highlights a reality that captures the Genesis Mandate, which would be our launching pad to discover why God saved us.

Genesis 1:26, 28

*26. Then God said, "**Let Us make man in Our Image**, according to Our Likeness; **LET THEM HAVE DOMINION** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

...

*28. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be FRUITFUL and MULTIPLY**; fill the earth and subdue it; **have DOMINION** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." NKJV*

Psalm 8:3-9

*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your Fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, **what is mankind that You are mindful of them, human beings that You care for them?***

*You have made them a little lower than the angels **and crowned them with glory and honor**. **YOU MADE THEM RULERS OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS**; **You put EVERYTHING under their feet**: all flocks and herds, and the*

animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth! NIV

Now as we move on, I'll like you to keep it behind your mind that God's original purpose and Mandate for creating mankind, is the very same purpose He has sustained, and basically still His reason for saving us.

So in summary the Genesis mandate, according to the Passage above, was to be fruitful, multiply, and rule over God's creation on earth. This was God's intention before Adam and Eve sinned, and fell into the rebel state we all find ourselves in. And because we rebelled, there is somewhat of a disconnect and all of creation is out of course (**Gen 3:17-19**, **Rom 8:19-21**)

But Jesus Christ came to restore mankind to the Genesis dominion Mandate, and Scripture proves this in many ways, of which I would highlight a few to establish the point.

Remember David's Psalm which we quoted earlier on, well the writer of Hebrews amplifies on it to show that Jesus Christ fulfilled the dominion Mandate highlighted in Scripture. You need to read this closely otherwise you might miss it, but I'll follow it up with an explanation to try and ensure that you get it at all cost.

Hebrews 2:6-9

6. But there is a place where someone has testified:

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?

7. You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor 8. and put everything under their feet."

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. ***Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them****. 9.* ***BUT WE DO SEE***

JESUS, Who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor *because He suffered death, so that by the Grace of God He might taste death for everyone. NIV*

Note: *Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the dominion Mandate. And by linking up with Him, through faith and obedience, we as well can fulfil that Mandate (**1 John 4:17**, **John 14:12-14**).*

Now let's explore the Passage above. The writer of Hebrews highlighted the Psalm we quoted earlier on. In **v8** he highlighted the dominion Mandate, which we also identified in Genesis, but at the same time the writer observed that man wasn't practically having the kind of dominion described. But in **v9**, he switched gears to identify Jesus Christ as the Man, Who finally demonstrated the kind of dominion expressed in Scripture, and not just that, but He ushered us into the glory and honor that God crowned us with, according to the Psalm and Genesis mandate.

Now let's have a very brief exposition of how Jesus Christ demonstrated dominion over creation. One of my favourite was how He commanded the weather by calming the wind and raging sea. This demonstrated His dominion over nature (**Mark 4:35-41**).

Another fun example was Him walking on water, thus dominating the laws of physics, and then even inviting Peter, His disciple, to do the same (**Matt 14:25-33**). This invitation also proves that God intends for us to as well have dominion over creation as Jesus Christ did (**John 14:12-14**). What I also like from this example was that after He demonstrated dominion, His disciples worshiped Him (**v33**).

Another interesting demonstration was how He got fish to fill up Peter's fishing net on two different occasions, despite the fact that Peter and his companions toiled all night without success (**Luke 5:4-11**, **John 21:3-11**). This demonstrated His dominion over the fish of the sea, just as stated in the Genesis mandate (**Gen 1:26** NKJV).

Another instance worth mentioning was when He cursed the fig tree, which then withered by the next day (**Mark 11:13-14**, **20-25**). In case you don't know it, a blossoming tree doesn't just wither overnight on its own. So Jesus Christ demonstrated dominion over plant life and agriculture.

And lastly, I know some folks wouldn't want me to leave out this one, but I mention it sounding caution to such folks (**Eph 5:15-20**, **Gal 5:13**), Jesus Christ turned water to really good wine (**John 2:1-11**). This showed that He could alter the chemistry of substances.

So in short Jesus Christ exercised dominion OVER nature, the creatures, plant life, the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry etc.

So even while Jesus Christ walked the earth, He demonstrated power and authority over creation as was stated in Genesis, and He invited His disciples to do likewise. In fact, in the incidence of calming the raging sea, He was actually disappointed that His disciples came to wake Him from sleep to calm the sea, because He expected them to have enough faith to handle it themselves (**Mark 4:40**). I pray that you, as well as me, become very faithful and competent to do everything that God expects us to be able to do.

So Jesus Christ demonstrated the dominion Mandate, and ushered us into it. It encompasses much more than I've highlighted. The dominion Mandate is essentially a kingdom Mandate, because it involves ruling and reigning.

And in case you didn't know it the call to salvation was made in view of the coming Kingdom of God, which would establish its reign in the New Earth (*Kingdom Message* – [**Matt 3:1-2**, **4:17**, **10:5-7**, **Heb 12:28-29**, **Col 1:12-14**], *Kingdom dominion* – [**Luke 11:20**, **22:28-30**, **1 Peter 2:9**, **Rev 5:9-10**, **1 Cor 6:3**]).

Matt. 6:33

*But **SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and all these things will be given to you as well. NIV*

After reading the cited Passages, I believe you get one perspective showing how God restored us to the Genesis mandate through Jesus Christ. Meaning He didn't just save us to get us to Heaven, but rather He saved us to restore us to the original purpose for which we were created in Genesis. So salvation and redemption is the rescue mission, but dominion and Kingdom is the purpose.

I could leave it at this, and I believe my point would be sufficiently established, but remember the goal is to gain various perspectives and deeper understanding, so let's explore things a bit more from another dimension.

1.3.2 Restoration of Our Likeness

As I said earlier on, the summary of the Genesis mandate was that God created us in His Likeness, and He purposed for mankind to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion over all creation on earth (**Gen 1:28** NKJV).

Adam and Eve however sinned and ruined everything, the Likeness, the mandate to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion, and the consequence of their actions affected all of us. We all know that before Adam and Eve procreated they sinned, hence their sin was passed on to all of us like an STD, and it tarnished humanity with the sin nature (**Gen 3:9-20**, **Rom 5:12**); hence it was said that Adam's offspring was after his own likeness, his own image, in contrast to the fact that mankind was originally created in the Image, the Likeness of God (**Gen 5:1-3**).

So here was mankind, who was originally created in the Likeness of God (**Gen 1:26**), but now bearing the sin nature, which looks nothing like

God. And since they no longer perfectly represented God, they couldn't carry out the rest of the mandate as HE INTENDED, which was for them to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion. You'll understand what I mean shortly about the other mandates, but first let's address how God resolved our likeness issue.

So again here comes the Gospel, through Jesus Christ, God solved the problem of our image/likeness by conforming us to the Likeness of His Son, Who is Himself God

Romans 8:1-4, 29

*1. **There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do NOT walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.** 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3. For what the law could not do in that **it was weak through the flesh**, **GOD DID BY SENDING HIS OWN SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, on account of sin: HE CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH, 4. that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us** who do not walk according to the flesh **but according to the Spirit**.*

...

*29. For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. NKJV*

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

*47. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; **the second Man is the Lord from heaven**. 48. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; **and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.** 49. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, **we shall also bear the Image of the Heavenly Man**. NKJV*

Note: v47** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the One that came from Heaven, He is the Heavenly Man - **John 3:13**, **31**, **John 6:37-38

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

17. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, ***are being TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord****. NKJV*

1 John 3:1-3,5-10

1. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called ***children of God!*** *Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed,* ***WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, for we shall see Him as He is****. 3. And* ***everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure****.*

5. And you know that ***He was manifested to take away our sins****, and in Him there is no sin. 6. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*

7. Little children, ***LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous****. 8. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.* ***For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil****. 9. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*

10. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. NKJV

Now the process behind our conformity was that Jesus Christ entered into the world taking upon Himself our human flesh, which had the sin nature (**Phil 2:5-8**, **2 Cor 5:21**), and then after taking our nature, we are then ushered into taking His own nature (**Heb 2:14-18**, **1 Cor 15:49**). Hence we are confirmed to His Likeness.

I'll address the subject of the sin nature some more when we discuss about the flesh in another chapter, but note that the sin nature is not sin itself, it is just the propensity or inclination for someone to choose to sin, or be lured into sin by the devil or his demons. So someone with the

sin nature can CHOOSE not to sin, though it is a difficult choice that goes against that nature.

Just like the wild animal nature predicts that such animals in that category would likely behave wildly or violently, but yet we see exceptional footage of people having a playful relationship with grown lions, even those later reintroduced to the wild, and similarly other wild animals are found to do things contrary to their nature, especially how you find that most of them refrain from hurting infants and children in many instances.

So the point is that the sin nature is the thing present in all mankind that tries to lure us to sin, or the hooks the devil has lodged into mankind to tug them towards sin and rebellion, but it is possible to deny and reject such lures into sin as God tried to warn Cain (**Gen 4:6-7**).

So Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sinful likeness (**Rom 8:3**), but He NEVER yielded to it to make Him sin against God (**Heb 4:14-16**, **Heb 2:14-18**). Now having experienced ALL we experience, and looking like us, He now invites us to FOLLOW His example to look like Him, by overcoming sin and the power of the devil **through the Holy Spirit** (**Gal 5:16**, **1 John 3:8-9**, **Rom 8:1-2**), and in so doing He restores our Image/Likeness to God, which is free from sin and rebellion. Remember, to be a Christian literally means to be a "follower of Christ". So in every way we are to follow His examples when faced with any situation ([**John 15:13-14**, **1 John 3:16-18**], **1 John 3:3**, **1 Cor 11:1**, **1 Peter 2:20-25**, **1:13-16**).

1.3.2.1 Detour: Jesus Christ, Fully Man and Fully God, and How He Overcame Sin by the Holy Spirit

Now I jumped right into a vital point, which we'll still discuss in another chapter, but I must begin to touch on it now, and it concerns **the Holy Spirit**.

So Jesus Christ did not just overcome the sin nature by Himself as a mere Man. Remember He set aside His Divinity and came into the world as a Man, and not as God. If He came as God it would have been IMPOSSIBLE for Him to be tempted, because God cannot be tempted (**James 1:13**), but yet we see in Scripture that He suffered and was tempted, but He consciously decided NOT to sin (**Matt 4:1**, **Heb 2:18**, **4:15**).

So Jesus Christ was FULLY Man in the sense that He possessed flesh, the very sin nature that we have. But I'm guessing that you might have also heard from preachers and theologians that Jesus Christ was also FULLY God while He walked the face of the earth. The duality almost wants to sound like a contradiction, to be Man and God at the same time, but it really isn't.

You might have already known that Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:34-35**), Who is part of the Trinity, and is Himself FULLY God; and then subsequently, Jesus Christ was completely filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit after His baptism in the Jordan (**Matt 3:16-17**). The point is that right from the beginning the Holy Spirit was with Jesus Christ.

Now unlike Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit did NOT leave His Divinity in Heaven when He came to be with Jesus Christ, hence He remained FULLY God. So the presence of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ accounts for why it is said that He was FULLY Man, and simultaneously FULLY God.

Now in modelling this combination between humanity and the Divine nature (the Holy Spirit), Jesus Christ was able to effectively show how to overcome sin and the devil. And the key aspect of the example He laid for us was that He did NOTHING of significance by His human self and will, but rather He clearly told us that it was the Father with Him working and speaking (**John 8:28**, **7:16-17**, **12:49-50**, **14:31**); note that the Father and the Spirit are One (**1 John 3:24**, **4:12-13**). So Jesus Christ submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in so doing He had access to the thoughts and words of the Father in Heaven.

This is to be a similar reality for us if we are to succeed as He did, we need the Father working and speaking through us by the Holy Spirit (**1 Peter 4:11**, **Matt 10:19-20**). Which was why Jesus Christ asserted that we as well can do NOTHING without Him (**John 15:4-8**); and by this He was referring to the fact that NOTHING of significance can be achieved without the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit essentially operates in the stead of Jesus Christ (**John 16:12-15**, **Gal 4:6**, **Rom 8:9**). So by this inference offered by the cited Passages, indeed, we can do NOTHING without Jesus Christ, working and manifesting Himself to us through the Holy Spirit. And by receiving the Holy Spirit, we essentially adopt the nature of Jesus Christ. In other words, we get conformed to His Likeness.

So Jesus Christ modelled the lifestyle of submitting the human will to the Divine nature of the Holy Spirit, and He charges us with the same lifestyle. He isn't asking of us something He was unwilling to do. Right from Jesus's baptism we saw that it was the Holy Spirit that moved Him to go to the wilderness, and He obeyed, despite the fact that it certainly wasn't a comfortable thing to do (**Luke 4:1-2**).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was in anguish knowing the kind of suffering He was going to face, He expressed His natural human will, like any of us, that would rather not want to suffer like that, but He also expressed willingness to set aside His will and do the will of the Father, as expressed through Scripture (**Matt 26:36-44**, **52-54**); and just in case you don't know it Scripture, which reflects the Father's will, was inspired by the Holy Spirit (**[2 Peter 1:20-21**, **1 Peter 1:10-12]**, **2 Tim 3:16**, **[2 Samuel 23:1-4**, **Acts 1:16]**); hence through His obedience to Scripture, Jesus Christ was working by the direction of the Holy Spirit, and this partnership with the Spirit is the model I'm trying to emphasize.

So everything concerning His life was a manifestation of His partnership with the Holy Spirit. So I repeat, Jesus Christ modelled the new lifestyle which showed how human beings could partner with the Divine nature (the Holy Spirit) to overcome sin and live for God. Even Salvation reflects this idea of man partnering WITH the Divine. Remember, we are born

again by the Spirit (**John 3:5-6**), Who we have established to be God, hence Salvation is only made possible by the collaboration WITH God.

Matthew 19:25-26

*25. When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "**Who then can be SAVED?**"*

*26. But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is IMPOSSIBLE, **but WITH GOD all things are possible**." NKJV*

So in effect Jesus Christ took on our likeness, and by the Holy Spirit He also had the Divine nature, through which He overcame sin and still looked like God. So God decided to also give us the Divine nature, so that if we live like Jesus Christ did, i.e. in Obedience to the Holy Spirit, even when it is uncomfortable, we could also overcome sin and the yearnings of the sin nature, and in so doing we once again would look like God, Who is sinless. But if we should sin at any point along the way, the Blood was made available to wash us clean when we confess and REPENT (**1 John 1:9, 2:1-2**), so that we can be restored to the Likeness of God.

So here we see that God restores us to His Likeness by conforming us to the Son through His Blood and the Holy Spirit. And just so you know this model of humanity combined with the Holy Spirit, as afforded by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by definition makes such an individual a new creation of God (**2 Cor 5:17, *Eph 4:22-24, 30***). The singular difference between a Christian and an unbeliever is the Holy Spirit. Both the Christian and unbeliever possess the sin nature, but only a Christian has access to the Divine Nature, which consists of the Holy Spirit and His power (**2 Peter 1:3-4**).

Like I said I'll discuss about the flesh some more in a subsequent chapter; but for my Theological friends out there, just so that I don't lose you in the first chapter as some may want to argue that the sin nature (flesh) isn't present in a Christian, I'll encourage you to read the

following Passages addressed to Christians, which clearly shows the inner turmoil between the flesh (sin nature) and newly introduced Divine Nature, and the charge for each of us to subdue and crucify the desires of the flesh so that the sin nature finds no expression: **Gala 5:16-18, 5:24-25, Rom 13:14, Eph 4:22-24, 1 Peter 2:11-12.**

Now having restored our Likeness to the Genesis mandate through Jesus Christ, let us also see how, through Jesus Christ, God restored the fruitful, and multiply part, but no need to once again discuss the dominion aspect.

1.3.3 The Mandate to be Fruitful

It is easy to conflate fruitfulness with multiplication, or increasing in number, which has to do with procreation, but in the context of the Genesis mandate, and as I'll prove through Scripture, these two things mean something different. Indeed, there is a context in Scripture where being fruitful can be directly associated with procreation, but that definition does not apply in the context of our discussion.

In the New Testament fruitfulness is often associated with spiritual virtues of righteousness. Now diligently read the following Passages to understand and verify the statement I just made, and the fact that in this context of fruitfulness it is not a question of procreation: **John 15:1-5, 7-8, 16-17, [Luke 6:43-45, Matt 12:33-35], *Phil 1:9-11*, Eph 5:8-10, Col 1:9-10, Rom 7:4-6, *Gal 5:22-23***

So the kind of fruit God seeks from mankind are fruits that generally pertain to love, goodness and righteousness, just to summarise the list. But after man fell into sin, the human heart became so corrupt and inclined to wickedness that God could find no good fruit (**Gen 6:5, Jer 17:9-10 NKJV**), except for in Enoch and Noah at that time (**Gen 5:24, Gen 6:8**).

To buttress the fact that the kind of fruit God seeks from us has to do with righteousness, God, Himself, expressed this sentiment when dealing with the rebellious nation of Israel, at that time, through the prophets.

Isaiah 5:1-4, 7

I will sing for the one I love a song about His vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. ***Then He looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit****.*

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, ***judge between Me and My vineyard****.* ***What more could have been done for My vineyard than I have done for it?*** ***When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?***

...

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines He delighted in. And ***HE LOOKED FOR JUSTICE, but saw bloodshed****;* ***FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, but heard cries of distress****. NIV*

Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. ***And what does the Lord REQUIRE of you?*** ***To ACT JUSTLY and to LOVE MERCY and to WALK HUMBLY WITH your God****. NIV*

Now let's get to the Good News part of how God restored us to the fruitful part of the original mandate. If you read the Passages earlier cited you would've seen in **John 15:1-5, 7-8, 16-17**, where Jesus Christ makes it clear that it is only THROUGH Him (**Phil 1:11**), and remaining in His Words, that we can hope to bear fruit. Now let's process that a bit to understand what it practically means for us, but the quick answer is that it all gravitates to the Holy Spirit.

We know from Scripture that the Words of Jesus Christ are not just natural words, but instead they convey the Spirit (**John 6:63**). And if

anyone is to receive His Words and OBEY them, which in essence is receiving and OBEYING the Holy Spirit because His Words convey the Spirit (**John 7:37-39**, **Acts 5:31-32**, **Rom 10:17**), then such a person would invariably produce the fruit of the Spirit, which consists of Love, Joy, Peace, Forbearance, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control according to **Gal 5:22-23** (read also **v24-25**).

So through the teachings of Jesus Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit in an individual, such a person can bear the kind of fruit that God desires from mankind. Hence such an individual experiences the restoration to the original God given mandate to be fruitful.

1.3.4 The Mandate to Multiply

Now to the question of multiplying, which unarguably referred to procreation in the original mandate, how does it now translate for us in the New Testament? Certainly, Jesus Christ did NOT give His followers a sex driven mandate to populate the earth with Christian children; so how does He actually restore us to this mandate of multiplication like we saw for the other ones?

Essentially, it also ties back to the fruitful mandate in a sense. So before mankind sinned, God intended for Adam and Eve to be fruitful themselves (i.e. righteous and godly), and to in turn produce godly and fruitful offsprings (**Gen 2:24**, **Mal 2:15** **AMPC**). But of course they sinned before having their first offspring, and in so doing every child after them was born into sin (**Rom 5:12**, **18-19**); hence every product of procreation was by nature inclined to sin and ungodliness, meaning they must be taught to do otherwise. I mean even supposedly innocent children tend to manifest unwholesome traits due to the fact that they are as well born with the sin nature, and they need to be trained otherwise (**Gen 18:18-19**, **Prov 22:6**, **15** **NKJV**, **Prov 13:24**, **19:18** , **23:13-14**, **29:15**, **17**).

So natural procreation did not capture the original essence of multiplication as God intended, which was to bring forth Godly offspring (**Mal 2:15 AMPC**). In the sinful state, procreation was more of an avenue to multiply wickedness upon the earth, instead of godliness as was the original intent.

But once again let us look at the Good News, and the remedy to the issue of multiplication. So Jesus Christ came and made a way for mankind to be BORN AGAIN by the renewal of the Spirit (**John 3:5-6**), and NOT a product of the will and passion of a husband and wife, which is mere procreation (**John 1:12-13**). This new birth by the Spirit captures God's original intent, because such an individual has the ability to truly be fruitful by the Spirit, and by the Spirit they could resist sin like Jesus Christ, hence they can be described as Godly offspring (**Mal 2:15 AMPC**). And as each and everyone of us faithfully carries out the Great Commission of preaching the Gospel and getting people to believe and obey Jesus Christ (**Matt 28:18-20**), thus becoming born again, we are in effect multiplying in fulfilment to the original mandate. So in preaching and demonstrating the Gospel we each have the ability to multiply in accordance to the original mandate.

And speaking of the Great Commission, there is mention of Baptism, which is the subject for the next chapter, but I'll like to highlight one of its symbolisms here. So baptism symbolises a number of things, one of which includes the new birth (**Titus 3:5**). So just as a baby breaks out into life from the womb of its mother filled with water, so also when an individual is submerged in water and brought out, it symbolises them breaking forth into new life, hence being born again, similar to their first birth from their mother's womb which involved water.

So we see again that Jesus Christ facilitates us back to fulfilling the original mandate. Seeing all these we can easily understand that He didn't just come to only save us, but the purpose of salvation was also to remove the hurdle that prevented us from fulfilling what God originally intended for us. God's plans cannot be thwarted (**Job 42:2**, **Psalm**

33:11), He always finds a way to work out things for good (Rom 8:28-30).

So I'm going to drive at one last point in an attempt to get you to embrace the Kingdom Mandate to which you have been called, which involves fulfilling the original will and purpose of God for creating all mankind, which I should remind you involves dominion, just in case you've forgotten.

1.3.5 The Kingdom Mindset

It is important to have the Kingdom mindset, because what I've found is that many Christians, for the most part, have only the salvation mindset, which only has them focusing on going to heaven and escaping the judgment of hell. But Jesus Christ made it clear from the very beginning of His ministry that He was introducing a Kingdom, and Kingdom infers Government (Isaiah 9:6-7), and last I checked governments are known for making and executing policies, and not just idly sitting by waiting for things to happen.

In the Kingdom of our God we are Kings and priests (Rev 5:9-10 **NKJV**), and while here on earth we are ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20-21**,** Eph 6:19-20), representing and extending the will of God to be done here on earth (Matt 6:9-10). IF we fail to recognise our kingly and priestly IDENTITY and the responsibilities thereof in the Kingdom of God, and likewise our earthly responsibility to extend the frontiers of Heaven to have the will of God done here on earth as it is in Heaven, then we would have wasted our destiny and the purpose for which we were saved; and depending on the severity of our departure from purpose and destiny, we may also lose the kingly crown and position set apart for us in the Kingdom of God (2 Tim 4:7-8**,** 1 Peter 5:4**,** 1 Cor 9:24-27).

In other words, if we use the kingdom resources for purposes other than executing the will of God (Matt 7:21-23), or we all together forget that

we are to represent and look like God (**Eph 4:22-24**), but instead wallow back in sin and deception (**Heb 10:26-31**, **2 Peter 3:17-18**, **1 Tim 1:18-19**, **Rev 2:14-16**), we risk losing our crown and place in the Kingdom when we return to settle accounts with the King (**2 Cor 5:9-10**, **Matt 24:24-25**, [**2 Peter 2:1-3**, **19-21**], **Rev 2:4-5**, **3:11**). So I can't say it enough how important it is to maintain a kingdom mindset while we are here on earth. It would save us from distractions, deception and sin, and keep us focused on executing the will of our King here on earth as is expected of us, just like Jesus Christ demonstrated (**John 4:34**, **14:31**, **Matt 26:39**).

And just to be clear, when I say we are kings in God's Kingdom it should not be misunderstood to think that there is going to be some sort of power struggle or confusion. There are many domains in God's Kingdom and it would be quite easy to assign each of us rulership over these domains, while Jesus Christ is the overall Administrator, being King of kings, meaning He is our King (**Rev 17:14**, **19:16**).

Just to make it even more clear, when Jesus Christ is referred to as the King of kings, the "kings" there doesn't refer to the pagan kings of the world, whom He would fight against and destroy, because they stand against Him (**Rev 19:15-16**, **19-21**). If it did it would mean that after He destroyed them His title would have to be revised to simply being "King", because all other “kings” would be dead or in the lake of fire. But in contrast we are the "kings" spoken of, because we will live forever with Him, and He remains our King, and together we shall rule and reign (**Rev 5:9-10** **NKJV**).

Now there are many activities associated with Kingdom living which involve passing out decrees, enforcing such decrees, and maintaining a military stance to defend the kingdom's territory from enemies (**Eph 6:10-18**, **2 Tim 2:3-5**), or advance the kingdom's borders through evangelism and expanding the reign of righteousness. A lot of this is accomplished through prayer (**Acts 6:4**, **1 Thess 5:16-19**, **2 Thess 3:1-5**), righteous living (**1 Peter 2:11-17**, **3:8-9**, **15-16**, **Col 1:10-11**, **4:5-6**), and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the unleashing of His mighty power (**1 Cor 2:4-5**, **4:20**).

I'm not going to touch on all the activities of the Kingdom, because they are many and we each have personalised roles that I can't possibly address all. So instead I'm going to only briefly focus on establishing the point that we were saved for a purpose. Once I establish this point, it now rests on you to discover the specific role God has for you to play in His kingdom. Discovering one's purpose is dependent on intimacy with God through the Holy Spirit; and there isn't much I can teach there right now than for you to make time and visit with God in the inner chamber of heartfelt worship, prayer and study of the Word, there is NO shortcut. The Holy Spirit will then uncover the will and mind of God concerning you, and what has been made available for you to execute your calling (***1 Cor 2:9-16***).

So to wrap up this chapter, let's read a couple of Passages that show that indeed salvation is not the end, but a launching pad to help us accomplish what God has purposed for us.

Ephesians 2:8-10

*8. **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9. not by works, so that no one can boast. 10. **For we are God's handiwork, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS TO DO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED IN ADVANCE FOR US TO DO**. NIV*

Titus 2:11-15

*11. **For the GRACE of God has appeared that offers SALVATION to all people**. 12. **IT TEACHES US to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age**, 13. while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14. **Who gave Himself for us to redeem us** from all wickedness and **TO PURIFY FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE THAT ARE HIS VERY OWN, EAGER TO DO WHAT IS GOOD**.*

*15. **These, then, are the things you should teach.** Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. NIV*

Titus 3:1-2, 8, 14

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, ***TO BE READY TO DO WHATEVER IS GOOD****, 2. to slander no one, to be PEACEABLE and CONSIDERATE, and* ***always to be gentle toward EVERYONE.***

...

8. This is a trustworthy saying. ***AND I WANT YOU TO STRESS THESE THINGS, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to DEVOTE themselves to doing what is good****. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

...

14. ***Our people must learn to DEVOTE themselves to doing what is good****, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. NIV*

Matthew 5:13-16

*13. "****YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH****. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

*14. "****YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD****. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16.* ***In the same way, let your light shine before others, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN****. NIV*

1 Peter 2:12,15-16

12. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, ***THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY GOD ON THE DAY HE VISITS US.***

15. ***FOR IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT BY DOING GOOD YOU SHOULD SILENCE THE IGNORANT TALK OF FOOLISH PEOPLE****. 16. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil;* ***live as God's slaves.*** *NIV*

1 Peter 3:15-18

15. ***But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. ALWAYS BE PREPARED to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with GENTLENESS and RESPECT****, 16. keeping a clear*

*conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against **YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST** may be ashamed of their slander. 17. **For it is better, IF it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil**. 18. For **Christ ALSO suffered once for sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, TO BRING YOU TO GOD**. He was put to death in the Body but made alive in the Spirit. NIV*

So in short there is work to do in the Kingdom of God, so let us get galvanised to do what we've been saved for.

John 5:17

*17. In His defense Jesus said to them, "**My Father is ALWAYS at His work to this very day, AND I TOO AM WORKING**." NIV*

John 20:21

*21. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! **As the Father has sent me, I AM SENDING YOU**." NIV*

2 Corinthians 6:1

***As God's CO-WORKERS we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain**. NIV*

1 Corinthians 3:8-9

*8. The one who plants and the one who waters have one **PURPOSE**, **and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.** 9. For **we are CO-WORKERS in God's service**; you are God's field, God's building. NIV*

1 Corinthians 15:58

*58. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, **STAND FIRM**. Let nothing move you. **Always give yourselves FULLY to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is NOT in vain**. NIV*

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

*2. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3. We remember before our God and Father **your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ**. NIV*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

*11. With this in mind, **we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling**, and that **BY HIS POWER He may bring to FRUITION your every DESIRE for goodness and your every DEED PROMPTED BY FAITH**. 12. We pray this **so that the Name of our Lord Jesus may be GLORIFIED in you, and you in Him**, according to the **GRACE** of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. NIV*

Conclusion

There is a lot more to Salvation that I haven't discussed for you to appreciate the depth and beauty of what Jesus Christ accomplished for us, but I've tried to smuggle as much as possible into this chapter. With this and the ample amount of Scriptures used to justify each point I hope you are able to see the Love, consistency, and faithfulness of God, and at the same time understand His justice and righteousness. Throughout this book I'll continue to highlight aspects of God's justice system, so that we get to understand and see things from God's perspective.

Having read this so far, if you haven't given your life to Jesus Christ yet, and something deep down is tugging you to do so, I believe that is your spirit yearning for union with the Holy Spirit, so I'll encourage you to revisit the Salvation Prayer at the beginning of this chapter, and pray it from your heart and take your time with it.

Either-way keep reading, and at any point in your study of this material, or at whatever time in your life, when you come to the decision to give your life to Jesus Christ, you can always revisit **the Salvation Prayer**. And just note that it is not about the words but the meaning they convey from your heart to the Lord, and recognizing what Scripture has said about the subject of Salvation.

Now let's proceed to discuss about water Baptism, which in my opinion is between the first, or at least second, step for a new convert after receiving Salvation, and I'll prove why I've said that. Let's go!

CHAPTER TWO: BAPTISM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

In this chapter we are going to explore the following topics:

- Baptism as a Fundamental Practice in Christianity
- Example of Baptisms from Scripture
- Significance of Baptism

2.1 Baptism as a Fundamental Practice in Christianity

It is an unarguable fact that baptism is a core practice in Christianity. But for some strange reason this practice has been faced with some controversies in some Christian circles. I'm not going to spend any time debating the controversies here, but I'll rather focus on what the Bible says, and encourage new converts to stick to the Words of God as revealed in Scripture, rather than the ideas of men. It is God through His Son and Spirit that you have been saved, not any man. So listen to what God says when faced with diverging views of people. That said, let's forge ahead.

I'll pick up our discussion from the Great Commission:

Matthew 28:18-20

18. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19. ***Therefore go and make disciples of ALL nations, BAPTIZING them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy***

***Spirit**, 20. **and teaching them to OBEY EVERYTHING I have commanded you**.*
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV

Just after Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to make other "*disciples of ALL nations*", the immediate instruction that followed was to baptize them and then teach them to OBEY His commands. So it would stand to reason that after accepting the gift of Salvation, the very next step in the journey of OBEDIENCE as a follower of Jesus Christ (i.e. Christian) is to be baptized.

Not to cast any slur on any minister of the Gospel, but some of my brothers and sisters who are Salvation-centric sometimes argue that one is not saved by baptism, so some of them don't give it the importance it deserves, because they believe it doesn't get one into Heaven; and others outrightly ignore baptism all together. But whether or not their argument is correct, that baptism doesn't have a direct effect on Salvation, it nevertheless remains a command of Jesus Christ, hence it must be given adequate priority as we'll see demonstrated in Scripture.

Besides we've also explored in the previous chapter that though Salvation is very important, it wasn't the sole purpose for Jesus Christ's coming. Part of His mission was to restore us to the Image, the Likeness, of God, which was achieved by conforming us to His Image. And if we are to be like Him, meaning we FOLLOW His examples, then it shouldn't be hard to see that we need to be baptized just as He was at the beginning of His ministry (**Matt 3:13-17**). He didn't have to subject Himself to the practice judging by John the Baptist's reluctance, but yet He did, and now He commands us to as well be baptized, so I think that settles it, and there shouldn't be any needless arguments.

So the bottom-line is that every follower of Jesus Christ ought to be baptized. That being established, the next question is how is one supposed to be baptized? And I'll pick the answer from the first point and say, we are to be baptized the way Jesus Christ was baptized, which was by submersion. Location doesn't matter, as the practice of Baptism occurred in several places, but the common denominator was that it

was all by submersion, so I don't think there is any need to reinvent the wheel on this one by introducing something else like "sprinkling". Baptism by "sprinkling" doesn't encapsulate the various significance of Baptism to put it briefly, but you'll better understand what I mean in a subsequent topic in this chapter.

The last question is, when should a new convert get baptized? The answer is, immediately if possible, just like the various examples in Scripture which we would look at shortly.

Again not to cast any slur on my brothers and sisters in ministry, or the practice of some congregations, but the stipulation that new converts go through about a month of baptismal classes before being deemed qualified to be baptized is not a justified Biblical practice to put it bluntly. This practice puts discipleship teaching before baptism, whereas the Biblical practice was baptism before discipleship teaching. Like I said we'll cite many examples in Scripture that show that immediately the Gospel was preached and received, the next consequential step was baptism, and NOT a month of lectures to get the convert to understand why they needed to be baptized, and understand the significance of baptism.

So if you are a new convert reading this, my sincere advice to you from a Biblical perspective is that if you haven't already being baptized, then see to it that you get water baptized by submersion as soon as possible. Let your journey in Christ be marked with OBEDIENCE, and this is one of the very first ways you can prove your OBEDIENCE.

Moving on I'll highlight examples from Scripture concerning baptism, and prove that baptism took place immediately after people got saved. After that we'll conclude this chapter by discussing the various significance of Baptism.

2.2 Examples of Baptism from Scripture

Obviously, I would have to start with Jesus Christ. As we already know He set the example for us to follow (**Matt 3:13-17**). And still speaking about setting the example He, Himself, as well as the apostles baptized people as demonstrated in the early part of their ministry (**John 3:22, 26, 4:1-2**).

The apostles made sure to continue the practice of Baptism as Jesus Christ commanded through the Great Commission. In their first opportunity to publicly preach the Gospel at Pentecost, after the ascension of Jesus Christ, when the listeners asked what they needed to do, Peter simply replied that they should REPENT, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:37-39**), and everyone who accepted the message were baptized that very same day (**Acts 2:40-41**).

The practice of Baptism wasn't limited to the apostles, because Scripture showed that Philip, one of those appointed to see to the welfare of the early Church (**Acts 6:5**), went out preaching the Gospel, and he as well baptized the new converts in water (**Acts 8:12-13**).

I'll also like to highlight that one of the people Philip was led to preach the Gospel to was an Ethiopian Eunuch, who was on a journey back to his land after coming to worship at Jerusalem. Philip joined him in his chariot and shared the Gospel as they went along. While on that journey the Eunuch accepted the Gospel message and immediately demanded to be baptized. So they got down from the chariot, went to a body of water, and right there he was baptized (**Acts 8:26-39**). Just imagine that, in the middle of a journey, everything was stopped to baptise a new convert. This is one example that buttresses the point I made that baptism should occur immediately.

Another example of immediate baptism was that of Saul, who became known as Paul, the writer of a lot of the Epistles (Letters to the churches) in the New Testament. Saul encountered Jesus Christ, and he was blinded by the light of the glorious encounter. After the encounter

he spent three days fasting, without food or drink. Jesus Christ then sent Ananias to restore his sight and get him filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately this was done, Saul got up and was baptized, before he refreshed himself with a meal and got strengthened (**Acts 9:3-6**, **8-12**, **17-19**). Remember he was on a completely dry fast, which can really sap one's strength. But despite his physical weakness, baptism was deemed more important, that food could wait. I think we ought to do the same by giving baptism the same kind of importance.

Another example of immediate baptism was what happened with the Gentile Cornelius and his household. While Peter preached the Gospel to them, they received the Holy Spirit, and Peter, who was initially reluctant to go and minister to the Gentile, issued the command to baptize them with water (**Acts 10:43-44**, **47-48**).

Though Paul said, when addressing a sectarian issue in the Corinthian Church, that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the Gospel (**1 Cor 1:17**), he wasn't in any way diminishing the importance of Baptism, even as we saw his own person experience where he prioritised being baptized before breaking his fast. In other words, Paul baptized people (**1 Cor 1:14** , **16**, **Acts 18:8**, **16:13-15**).

One instance of note, to buttress the immediate nature of being baptized after coming to Salvation, was the example of the prison guard in Philippi. Paul and Silas were arrested and severely beaten to the point of being wounded (**Acts 16:22-24**). About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prison was miraculously shaken by a violent earthquake which threw the doors open and loosed everyone's chain. You can read the rest of what happened in **Acts 16:25-28**.

The part I'm rushing to was when the jailer asked what he needed to do to be saved and the apostles ministered to him the Gospel. We are told that at that hour, which was around midnight, or just past midnight, the jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, and then he and his household got baptized, before a meal was presented to Paul and Silas (**Acts 16:29-34**). Now imagine the time of the day, imagine the pain and

discomfort Paul and Silas were under after being beaten and wounded with rods, and also imagine the additional discomfort of letting your fresh wounds come in contact with water during the process of baptizing the jailer and ALL his household; yet baptism was so important that it couldn't wait till morning, or until the apostles adequately recovered from their wounds. Just ponder that for a while.

I believe these are sufficient examples to prove the point that baptism is important, and it shouldn't be delayed after one accepts the Gospel and turns to Jesus Christ.

For the new converts reading this, I'll encourage you to get baptized, and INSIST on baptism by submersion where you go totally under the water, you'll understand more about why as we look at the next topic dealing with the significance of Baptism.

And for those who have been Christians for a while, but haven't yet been baptized by SUBMERSION, I'll encourage you that it is not too late to register your OBEDIENCE to this command of Jesus Christ. Get baptized today.

Now let's move on to the last topic of this chapter dealing with the significance of baptism.

2.3 Significance of Baptism

Let me highlight the various significance of Baptism before we briefly discuss some of them:

- It signifies rebirth
- It signifies Union with Jesus Christ

• Because of the two points above, it also signifies unity in the Church because we all are born into One Family united in Jesus Christ (**Eph 4:3-6**, **1 Cor 12:13**, **Gal 3:26-29**).

• And it signifies cleansing

2.3.1 Baptism Signifies Rebirth

We've already discussed about the rebirth to an extent, when we talked about the mandate of multiplication and being born again in the first chapter, so I won't spend too much time discussing it here, apart from highlighting a few Passages and making a point or two.

When Jesus Christ spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, He stated that this rebirth involved water and the Spirit (**John 3:5**). The water aspect has to do with baptism, and I've already shown its similarity to the natural birth of a baby from its mother's womb, which is full of water.

Paul also makes the point that our Salvation involved "*the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*" (**Titus 3:5** NIV). "*The washing of rebirth*" refers to baptism and highlights one of its significance. So I guess in someway water baptism is involved in salvation after all, judging by Paul's statement in the cited Passage.

The point I'll like to make from this aspect of rebirth, to buttress the fact that baptism ought to be by submersion, is that only baptism by submersion is able to convey the significance of rebirth. "Sprinkling" in no way conveys the significance of rebirth. So given the significance of rebirth is one major reason why I say INSIST on baptism by submersion.

2.3.2 Baptism Unites Us With Jesus Christ

The second significance of baptism is that it in effect brings us into union with Christ in very important ways.

First of all, as we've established Jesus Christ was baptized, and He commands us to follow in His footstep, so that in itself creates a connection between He and us.

But in deeper ways than that, baptism connects us to Jesus Christ. One Passage says baptism clothes us with Christ, and that in effect makes us one Family in Christ Jesus, because we all alike are clothed with Christ (**Gal 3:26-29**).

This union with Christ through baptism also implies Union with Him in His death, burial and resurrection (**Rom 6:3-9**). This is vitally important because on account of our union with His death, the price for our sins was paid, because "*the wages of sin is death*" (**Rom 6:23**); or to put it more clearly, the original verdict God gave Adam and Eve from the very beginning as the punishment for the sin of eating the forbidden fruit was death (**Gen 2:17**). Hence the price for disobeying and rebelling against God is death, which as you know is separation from Him. Now since God must uphold justice, sin must be paid for by death; hence when we are united with Jesus Christ in His death, the price for sin is paid. And if we remain crucified with Him and united in His death, sin would have no room in our life (**Gal 5:24-25, [Rom 6:6-7, 11-14, 1 Peter 4:1-2], Rom 7:4-6**).

But not only are we united in His death, we are also united with Him in His burial through baptism. The beauty in all this however is that our union with Christ doesn't break at the grave, meaning that when He resurrected from the grave, we also arose with Him. Hence we have the Promise of life eternal just like Him (**John 6:39-40, 14:19**).

So we see that baptism symbolises a lot of things. And for the symbols to be properly conveyed, baptism needs to be by submersion. For

instance, the part about union in His burial, I can't think of any burial that occurred by “sprinkling” dirt over the dead body. Typically a grave is dug 6ft deep, and the body is covered or submerged by earth; alternatively the body is enclosed in a tomb, just like submersion encloses one in the womb of water. The point is that the body is totally covered or surrounded. So I reiterate, baptism ought to be by submersion, because that's the means through which the many symbols of the act gets fulfilled.

Now I'll skip the point about the significance of baptism having to do with unity in the Church because it has been sufficiently explained by the cited Passage at the beginning (**Eph 4:3-6**, **1 Cor 12:13**, **Gal 3:26-29**), and other points discussed, so I'll just go on to the last point having to do with cleansing.

2.3.3 Baptism Signifies Cleansing

I'll keep this last point very brief as I can only think of at least two or three Passages to convey the point, which anyway is sufficient to establish a matter (**2 Cor 13:1**). In **Heb 6:1-2**, the writer speaks of a couple of things that are considered fundamentals or foundational to the faith, among which is mentioned "*cleansing rites*" which the footnote of my NIV Bible connects to baptism. And lastly, I'll quote the following Passages to conclude the chapter:

Acts 22:16

*[16] And now **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?** Get up, **be BAPTIZED and WASH your sins away, calling on His Name**.’ NIV*

Heb. 10:22

let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, ***having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and HAVING OUR BODIES WASHED with pure water****. NIV*

Conclusion

So baptism is a very important fundamental Christian practice, that every believer should endeavour to undertake. It takes merely a few seconds, and you only need to do it once, but it carries with it a lot of spiritual meaning that we shouldn't miss out on.

The next chapter deals with another important subject matter, which is quite broad, having to do with the Holy Spirit. Since this is going to be a material on the fundamentals, I'll do my best to keep it brief and simple.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HOLY SPIRIT

If you've prayed and committed your life to Jesus Christ, either before coming across this write-up, or by following the Salvation prayer in the first chapter, then you have received a deposit of the Holy Spirit, and this dimension has to do with Salvation and guaranteeing eternal life in God's Kingdom (**2 Cor 1:21-22**, **5:5**).

But it doesn't end there, because there is also the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which has to do with empowerment to fulfil what God has ordained for us to fulfil. Remember we discussed in chapter one that God didn't just save us to take us to Heaven, He saved us so that we can truly fulfil what He predestined us for; and I've already began to discuss how we need the Holy Spirit for that.

But I'm sure that some of you reading this, especially those who have been Christians for a while may be a bit confused because I've just highlighted two distinct encounters a believer needs to have with the Holy Spirit: the first for Salvation and eternal life, and the second for empowerment to do the will of God. I've discussed this more thoroughly in another write-up, so I'll try and keep it brief here.

3.1 Who is the Holy Spirit and What is Our Involvement with Him?

Acts 19:1-2

*[1] While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples [2] and asked them, "**DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN YOU BELIEVED?**" They answered, "**NO, WE HAVE NOT EVEN HEARD THAT THERE IS A HOLY SPIRIT.**" NIV*

So let me try to introduce you to the Holy Spirit and His workings in believers. Some of you already know, or have at least heard, about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which in short espouses that God has chosen to reveal Himself in Three Persons that is: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but the Three distinct Personalities are at the same time United, and hence One, thus the term Trinity. Think of it spiritually and not by mere earthly logic.

A spiritual example that God has given, to help us view things from His perspective, is how marriage involves a man and a woman, two distinct individuals, but yet God has somehow made them one (**Gen 2:24**, **Matt 19:4-6**). Again I would love to go deeper into the proof of the doctrine of Trinity using both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, but that would take us on a rather long detour.

I must say however that the doctrine of Trinity, though well established, is still elementary in trying to understand and explain the reality of God, but it does a good job in getting us started in a broad sense. However the fact of the matter is that every Member of the Trinity is yet multidimensional, and in some ways their essence and roles intertwines with each other, which also speaks of their Oneness.

For instance, the many Names of God the Father portrays different dimensions of His person, likewise the Son, and we find in Scripture that the One Holy Spirit of God has seven major dimensions (**Rev 4:5**, **5:6** – **Note:** NIV footnote says Sevenfold Spirit, which I believe better captures the essence of the Oneness of the Holy Spirit), and I postulate further that those dimensions each have various expressions, which again I've thoroughly explored in another write-up.

Just to briefly illustrate what I mean about the dimensions of the Trinity and their interconnectedness with Each Other, we recognize Jesus Christ as God the Son, born into the world. Well, an Old Testament prophecy that paints this picture of Jesus Christ, the Son, at the same time calls that Son "*Mighty God"* and also *"everlasting Father*" (**Isaiah 9:6-7**), so we clearly see a connection between God the Father and God the Son. So no wonder Jesus Christ unambiguously said He and the Father are

One, because there is such a deep connection between their Persons (**John 10:30, 38, 14:9-11**).

Another Illustration is how Jesus Christ is referred to as the Word (**John 1:1-5, 14**), but we also find that the Spirit is associated to the Word as well (**John 6:63 NKJV, Eph 6:17**); and in turn Jesus Christ is associated with the Spirit, or at least the role we expect from the Spirit (**John 14:15-17, Gal 4:6, [1 Cor 8:6, 2 Cor 3:14-18], [Rom 8:9, 2 Cor 13:5]**).

Similarly, Jesus Christ lives to intercede for us in Heaven (**Heb 7:24-25**), just like the Holy Spirit does, interceding for us from here on earth (**Rom 8:26-27**); so we see them carrying out similar responsibilities. So the Trinity is indeed One and very interconnected in responsibility and function.

But to stay on track, we were talking about the Holy Spirit, and the point of everything above is to highlight the multidimensional nature of the Holy Spirit. The point of this is that at the moment of salvation certain dimensions of the Spirit are involved, because we become born of the Spirit (**John 1:12-13**, **John 3:5-6**). But then when it comes to doing what God has purposed for each person, various other dimensions may be at work, and we all may not have access to the same measure of the Spirit, depending on our function and responsibility, or maturity. But keep in mind it is still ONE Spirit at work in all of us, expressing Himself in various ways (**1 Cor 12:4, 7-11**).

For instance, Moses had the Holy Spirit, but it was also said that the Holy Spirit was the One Who empowered the craftsmen (**Exodus 35:30-35**), and also the elders who helped to relieve Moses' work (**Num 11:16-17, 24-26**). But yet even though these sets of people had the Same Holy Spirit on them, they certainly did not have the Same measure of the Spirit that Moses had (**Num 12:5-8**). In fact in the latter example of the elders it was said that they only received a portion of the Spirit that was on Moses to enable them carry out their assignment.

I believe the more we understand the Person of the Holy Spirit and the role He plays the easier it would be for us to interact with Him, so hang

in there as we try to explore some more, especially with respect to the roles the Holy Spirit plays in new believers.

So in other for you to understand the two encounters a believer has with the Holy Spirit as I earlier highlighted, I'll give three illustrations to make the point.

To begin with, we know that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit: so His conception illustrates the first encounter (**Luke 1:34-35**). But when it was time for Him to begin His ministry, He went to John to be water baptized, and after that the Holy Spirit came on Him (**Matt 3:13-17**): this second encounter is what I'll like to refer to as baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Now contrast Jesus Christ with John the Baptist. John also was filled with the Holy Spirit right from the womb (**Luke 1:15**). But he testified that Jesus Christ, Who was to come after him, would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and Fire (**Matt 3:11**). So when Jesus Christ came to Him to be baptized, he instead wanted Jesus, the One Who had the authority to baptize in the Holy Spirit, to baptize him (**Matt 3:14**). But mind you that this was the same John who was filled with the Spirit from the womb (**Luke 1:15**), but yet he sought to be baptized with the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ. His desire tells us that other than the first birth by the Holy Spirit, which ushers us into the Kingdom of God, there is yet another encounter with the Spirit, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and this empowers us for our supernatural, miraculous service to God here on earth.

Sadly, there is no record of him ever being baptized by the Holy Spirit, hence John the Baptist never performed any miracle (**John 10:40-41**). I believe his lack of Holy Spirit baptism could explain why Jesus Christ said that, prior to John the Baptist there was none born of a woman greater than him, but yet the least in the Kingdom of God would be greater than him (**Matt 11:11**). I believe the reason for that statement was that John was greater than those prior to him because of the nature of his task as a forerunner to Christ, AND the nature of his birth, i.e. being filled by the Holy Spirit right from the womb. But because he never got the second

encounter with the Holy Spirit, i.e. the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he would essentially be the least in the Kingdom compared to us who experience both the rebirth by the Holy Spirit, and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I think with this elaborate explanation you get the point of the two encounters with the Holy Spirit. The first encounter is to get you born again, that is saved, and if you remember Jesus Christ said we're born again by the Spirit and water (**John 3:5-6**). Now the second encounter is the exciting part, because it is not just something that happens internally, but rather it overflows in the manifestation of the supernatural (**John 7:37-39**, **Acts 1:4-5**, **8**).

Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and as a result He had great wisdom, and He lived righteously (**Luke 2:46-47**, **52**); but there was no miraculous manifestation in His life until He received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We know this because Jesus's first miracle occurred at the wedding in Cana, at which time He had already been baptized and had at least some disciples (**John 2:1-3**, **9-11**). So it goes without saying that we really need the baptism of the Holy Spirit, if we hope to live a meaningful, supernatural, and fulfilling life.

3.2 The Promise of the Holy Spirit/Baptism in the Holy Spirit

I would say that next to Salvation, baptism in the Holy Spirit is the next most important thing for a believer. Like I've highlighted severally, both of this involve the Holy Spirit, but there are also distinct encounters. The point of the earlier topic was to give you some understanding about the Holy Spirit, and also to get you not to settle for just the first encounter, which is wonderful in itself, because that encounter brings newness, Love, joy, and peace. But you need to know that there is more to the

Holy Spirit than the dimensions that have to do with the rebirth, you need to be open to the other dimensions of the Spirit. The aspect of the other dimensions of the Spirit constitutes the major things that God long Promised to make available to His people.

Remember God did not just save us to take us into Heaven, He saved us to get us into His Kingdom and into His SERVICE. And the fact of the matter is that because God is so Holy, and human flesh is so corrupt, it is impossible to render any acceptable service to God by the flesh (**Acts 17:24-25**, **Isaiah 64:6**). So the only remedy was for God to send His Holy Spirit to live and work through us, hence our service to God is a product of the Grace and Strength He provides (**1 Cor 15:9-10**, **1 Peter 4:9-11**).

So in His kingdom we are kings and priests (**Rev 5:10** **NKJV**), and the thing about kings and priests in the Old Testament was that they needed to be anointed with oil. And this anointing with oil marked them to be baptized by the Holy Spirit (**Exodus 30:30**, **1 Samuel 10:1**, **9-10**, **16:13**). Note that those in the Old Testament experienced the second encounter with the Holy Spirit, which came with empowerment, but they couldn't experience the first encounter of rebirth because of the issue of sin (**Heb 10:1-4**, **8-10**, **14**).

It is important I also point out that the idea of God having His people as a kingdom of priests was long expressed in the Old Testament (**Exodus 19:5-6**). However His chosen nation Israel at the time we're "*stiff-necked*" and stubborn (**Deut 9:5-6**), hence God relegated the priesthood to one tribe, and one family line from that tribe, which is the line of Aaron (**1 Chron 23:13**).

So in other for God to realize His intention of having a Kingdom of priests, He knew that He had to change the hearts of His people, give them a new Spirit (**Ezekiel 11:19-21**, **36:25-29**), and Personally teach them His ways (**Isaiah 54:13**, **Jer 31:31**, **33-34**).

All these was achieved in the New Testament. When we repent, i.e. *metanoia* – have a change of mind, our heart and ways are changed (**Rom 12:1-2**), and besides that, our heart also gets circumcised as

Promised for returning to the Lord (**Deut 30:1-3**, **6**, **Rom 2:28-29**). We have been given a new Spirit, the Holy Spirit; and one of the major responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to teach us (**John 14:25-26**, **16:12-13**, **1 John 2:20**, **27**); hence fulfilling Scripture that said we would be taught by God, basically by His Spirit (**Isaiah 54:13**, **59:20-21**).

Moses' desire was for God to allow His Spirit to rest on all the Israelites so that they could be prophets (**Num 11:29**), thus having their eyes, ears and heart opened to God, but it appeared that God was unwilling to fulfil that then because of their stubbornness and rebellious nature (**Deut 29:2-4**). But now God is willing to pour out His Spirit on all people so that they may prophesy (**Acts 2:16-18**), have better spiritual perception (**Eph 1:17-18**, **Col 1:9-13**), and have hearts pliable and secured by His Holy Spirit (**Prov 4:20-23**, **2 Tim 1:11-14**, **Ezekiel 36:26-27**).

So the point is that God had long been hinting of the time when His Spirit would come on His people (**Ezekiel 39:29**, **Joel 2:28-29**, **Isaiah 59:20-21**, **54:13**, **Jer 31:31**, **33-34**). And through Jesus Christ we are recipients of that Promise (**Acts 1:4-5**, **2:38-39**).

And just so you know, you are part of that Promise God made to His people, the Israelites, because the rest of us who are Gentiles (non-Israelites by birth) are grafted into His nation (***Isaiah 49:6***, **Isaiah 42:6-7**, **Matt 8:7-13**, **Acts 15:7-11**, **13-17**), and we share in the faith and Promise God made to Abraham to bless ALL nations through his Offspring, Jesus Christ (**Rom 4:16-17**, **22-25**, **Gal 3:7**, **9**, **14**, **16**). So basically as a Christian you are part of the heritage of Israel, and there is no other way to see it, except you choose to be conceited and outrightly deny Scripture, which is a reckless path to take (**Rom 11:17-27**).

Regarding Israel and anti-Semitism, the brief and simple advice I'll give to any Christian is, whatever you do, make sure you are not vindictive towards those who by natural descent are Israeli, because despite their shortfalls as a people, God still has a plan for them (**Jer 29:11-14**, **Lev 26:40, 45**, **Deut 30:1-10**); and as we've already seen, God is Faithful to His plans, just as we see Him restore us to the original mandate for

mankind through Jesus Christ. Let God be the One to judge them, but if you are wise don't be one who tramples on them, because due to God's Covenant with their ancestors, even the promise Covenant with Abraham of which we currently benefit from (**Gal 3:7-9, 14**), He would invariably have to strike such a person back (**Gen 12:3, Exodus 23:22, Zech 1:14-16, Amos 1:9-15, Isaiah 10:5-7, 12-19**).

I'm going to leave it at this, but I really need to stress it so that you can understand that the Promise and purposes of God are NOT arbitrary, they have a longstanding foundation that flows from the Old Testament right through to the New Testament. This should help you understand that God is Faithful, so we shouldn't expect Him to break His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (a.k.a. Israel). And since we can count on God to be Faithful, then we can be rest assured that He would not easily change His Mind about His purposes and plans for our life, even when we fall short and miss the mark.

Now I'll conclude this topic by quoting two Passages to focus on the Promise of the Holy Spirit, and the effect of this baptism:

Acts 1:4-5, 8

*[4] On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, **but wait for the gift My Father PROMISED, which you have heard Me speak about**. [5] For John baptized with water, **but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit**."*

*[8] **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you**; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." NIV*

Acts 2:1-4, 16-18, 37-39

*[1] When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. [2] Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. [4] **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.***

...

[16] No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: [17] " ***'In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on ALL PEOPLE. Your SONS AND DAUGHTERS will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams****. [18] Even on My servants,* ***BOTH MEN AND WOMEN****,* ***I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.***

...

[37] When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] Peter replied, "REPENT and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. ***And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*** *[39]* ***The PROMISE is for you and your children and for ALL who are FAR OFF —for ALL whom the Lord our God will call****." NIV*

Now let's explore how you can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

3.3 Receiving the Holy Spirit

It has been established that the Holy Spirit is a Person among the Trinity, hence He is God. It is important to always remember this to help inform your interaction with Him when He comes to take residence in you. If you lack this mindset, you may end up grieving Him, and that is not a good position to be in (**Isaiah 63:9-10**, **Eph 4:29-32**, **Mark 3:28-29**). It should be noted that though the Holy Spirit does a host of things for you, some of which I'll highlight in the next chapter, yet He is NOT your Servant, He is Lord. Hence you must submit to Him, obey Him and Honour Him, because that is His due.

I'm starting things this way with this solemn reminder so that after you receive the Holy Spirit, you are careful enough to steward a healthy relationship with Him, and not fall away like Saul, who persisted in disobedience (**1 Samuel 10:1**, **6-10**, **13:7-14**, **15:1-35**). If at all you

stumble, be like David and humbly repent so that fellowship with the Spirit is not lost (**Psalm 51:1-17** ***v11***).

Now note that the points I'll be highlighting to guide you to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit are things that should be done concurrently; meaning you don't just pick on one point and then neglect the others; but rather you need all of them working together.

Also it should be noted that baptism in the Holy Spirit is subject to the sovereign will and move of God. But it is important to assert that through Scripture we know that God is favorably disposed to pouring out His Spirit on all those who turn to His Son (**Joel 2:28-29**).

I feel the need to highlight the Sovereign nature of things to help you understand that if God really purposes for you to receive the baptism of His Spirit, He may skip over certain protocols, just like He did for the two elders who didn't assemble at the specified location (**Num 11:16-17, 25-26**), or how God sovereignly chose to baptize Cornelius and His whole household (**Acts 10:43-48, 11:15-17, Acts 15:7-11**), instead of going through the protocol of the laying on of hands by the apostle Peter (**Acts 8:14-17**), who was quite hesitant to interact with the Gentiles had the Holy Spirit not compel Him (**Acts 10:10-20, 28**). It is good you know this, so that you are open to God's sovereign move. And it is also important to recognize the flipside, because God can refrain from gifting a believer whose heart is not right with Him, like Simon the Sorcerer, who became a believer, but whose heart still entertained sinful ideas (**Acts 8:18-24**).

So if you go through the points I'll be highlighting, and faithfully practice them, but fail to receive the baptism and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, then humbly seek God to reveal what the problem is, and do what He tells you. God is more interested in you being baptized in the Holy Spirit than you are, the only thing is that He isn't going to compromise by subjecting His Spirit to the distress of dwelling in an individual who may be disobedient, malicious, or sinful at heart (**Genl 6:3, 5-6, Eph 4:29-32**).

All that said, let's explore the Biblical guides to help you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

3.3.1 Ask for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The first step I would say is for you to simply ask God for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. God is really generous, and you need to understand this so that you can approach Him in confidence and faith (**Eph 3:11-12**, **Heb 4:16**).

Luke 11:9-13

*[9] "So I say to you: **Ask and it will be given to you**; **seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you**. [10] **For everyone who asks receives**; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. [11] "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? [12] Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**" NIV*

James 1:5-8

*[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, **you should ASK God, WHO GIVES GENEROUSLY TO ALL WITHOUT FINDING FAULT, and it will be given to you**. [6] But when you ask, **YOU MUST BELIEVE and NOT doubt,** because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. [7] **That person should NOT expect to receive anything from the Lord**. [8] **Such a person is double-minded and UNSTABLE in ALL they do.** NIV*

So approach God and ask Him for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and be steadfast with your request, no matter how long it takes (**Daniel 10:2-3**, **12-14**). Sooner or later you'll get a response, and this could be either that you get what you're looking for, or God would give you directions, or have you address certain issues that may be a hindrance. Either-way,

the best way to start, and also continue is to ask and maintain communication with God.

3.3.2 Grow in the Word and Faith to Receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

It is important to get into the habit of studying the Word of God, because you are actually seeking God to come and live and work with you through His Spirit (**1 John 3:24**, **1 Cor 6:19-20**, **3:9**), so it would be very helpful to get to know more about Him through His Word, so that you can have a good working and living relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that I've gone the extra mile to extensively quote and cite Scriptures, to begin to introduce you to the study of Scripture, so that you can be an excellent work man or woman (**2 Tim 2:15 KJV, 2 Tim 3:16-17**).

Furthermore, it is in the study of the Word that proper faith is generated. I emphasized "proper faith' because there is a kind of faith that I would describe as wishful thinking or blind faith, which is outrightly delusional, but proper faith is anchored on the Word of God (**Rom 10:17 NKJV**), or on a revelation He gives you (**Gen 15:4-6**). I'll discuss more on faith in a subsequent chapter, but for here I'll focus on faith anchored on the Word of God revealed in Scripture, because this provides a sufficient platform to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is vital to have the combination of Word and faith. Word alone brings understanding, but faith transforms that understanding to conviction (**Heb 4:2, Rom 9:30-32**), and conviction which dwells in the heart directs the whole course of an individual (**Prov 4:23**, **Luke 6:45**). If true faith is present, then it means the heart is aligned; and if the heart is aligned, then the individual receives justification from God (**Rom 10:10**, **8:30**, **Acts 15:8-9**); and justified folks tend to work splendidly well with God (**Rom 3:26-31**), so God is inclined to release His Spirit on such people.

We know that Abraham was justified by faith (**Rom 4:1-5**); but what we also know of him is that God Personally referred to him as a prophet (**Gen 20:7**). It is impossible to be a prophet of God without the Holy Spirit. Hence by inference Abraham, who was justified by faith and His OBEDIENCE to God's Word (**Gen 22:2-3, 11-12, 16-18**), was also baptized by the Spirit of God, and as a result he was a prophet of God.

Speaking of prophecy and the Holy Spirit, one of the first things that happens to most people who the Holy Spirit comes upon is that they prophesy (**Num 11:25-27, 1 Samuel 10:10-11, 19:19-24, Acts 19:6**). And we are further told in the New Testament that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (**Rev 19:10 NKJV**); hence it is possible for every New Testament believer to prophesy on account of receiving justification by faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit on them (**1 Cor 14:1, 5, 39**). However note that merely being able to prophesy doesn't make you a prophet. The office or responsibility of a prophet transcends just being able to prophesy, it is much more than I have liberty to delve into right now.

Another important reason for the consistent study of the Word is that, often times it is important for that seed of understanding to be sown and nurtured before one can expect a harvest of any supernatural blessing. God is a God of faith (**Heb 11:1-3, 6, 1 Cor 13:13**), and faith is connected to His Word (**Rom 10:17 NKJV**).

For instance, if there is no Word (**Rom 10:14-15**), or understanding of the Word (**Matt 13:19, Luke 8:12**), then salvation is impossible. In a similar fashion, if people don't know or understand about the person of the Holy Spirit, they are not inclined to receive Him (**John 14:15-17**). Practically, we see that to be the case for the twelve believers Paul encountered at Ephesus. Paul had to first quickly enlighten them about the Holy Spirit before he proceeded to lay hands on them so that they could receive Him (**Acts 19:1-7**). So the brief word generated enough faith for them to be open to receive the One they previously knew nothing about.

And if you check it, every other account of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that I can think of originated with the Word and some degree of understanding:

For the disciples, Jesus Christ told them right from time, and built in them expectation to receive the Holy Spirit (**John 14:26-27**, **15:26-27**, **16:7**, **13-15**, **Acts 1:4-5, 8**); so Pentecost did not come as too much of a surprise to them, because they were expecting the Holy Spirit sooner or later after Jesus's ascension.

For the early Church, Peter also told them about the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38-39**), and he also made mention of the Spirit in his defence at the Sanhedrin (**Acts 5:31-32**).

For Paul, Ananias also clearly highlighted that he was sent so that Paul could receive his sight and the Holy Spirit (**Acts 9:17-19**).

For Cornelius and his household, while Peter preached the Word to them, and at least there was a mere mention of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 10:38**), God used that as sufficient grounds to baptize them in the Spirit (**Acts 10:43-48**), because judging by Peter's surprise and those Jews who came with him they weren't expecting it, hence Peter probably wouldn't have preached to them about the possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit. I'll discuss a bit more about the example of Cornelius and his household, because it provides a good model for how to receive the Holy Spirit.

The point of all these examples is to show the importance of the Word, or at least the mention of the Holy Spirit, as a precursor to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we receive the Word, faith is simultaneously generated and this is the pleasing kind of environment that God likes (**Heb 11:6**), so He is delighted to send His Spirit to such a person.

So if you want to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, anchor yourself to the Word of God, grow in faith and conviction that aligns you to please Him, and He will sovereignly send His Spirit to empower you and help you to be more effective on the path you have chosen to walk with Him.

That's another thing, the Holy Spirit comes to HELP us (John 14:26 **NKJV**). But if we are not doing anything, then tell me what is He going to come and HELP us with? If you have no interest in getting to know more about God so that you can be pleasing to Him (Eph 5:10, Rom 12:1-2), then the Holy Spirit cannot come and HELP you in one of His most natural roles, which is to teach us (John 14:26 **NKJV,** 1 John 2:20**,** 27-29, Luke 12:12**,** Col 3:16**,** Psalms 143:10). In other words, if you have no interest in the Book from which He is going to teach from and provide the needed insight for your daily life, there is no point for Him to come. If you have no DESIRE to obey the commands of God, or desire to do what is good in HIS SIGHT, then there is no point sending the Holy Spirit to empower you (2 Thess 1:11-12).

I repeat the Holy Spirit comes to empower and facilitate us to fulfil the plans and purposes of God, but He doesn't come to force us to do anything, we remain in control (1 Cor 14:32). It is evil spirits that come into an individual and try to force their will and ways on the person (Luke 11:24-26), but not so with God and the Holy Spirit (Rev 3:20**,** Eph 4:29-30).

So if you don't have a true conviction, and the proper foundation of faith in the Word of God, then the Holy Spirit has no business coming to empower you. He may save you and get you to Heaven, but you would have done no meaningful work for God, hence you would have NO rewards in Heaven (1 Cor 3:11-15, 2 Cor 5:10-11), because meaningful work for God can only be done by the Holy Spirit (Phi 3:3), and not the best efforts and intentions of the flesh (Isaiah 64:6**,** Acts 17:24-25, Rom 8:5-8).

Like I illustrated in passing much earlier, God has had experience of anointing a man with His Holy Spirit, and this man, in the person of king Saul, turned out to cause God regret because he lacked character (1 Samuel 15:10-11**,** 19-24). This resulted in God seeking for his replacement, David, whom He described as a man after His heart (1 Samuel 13:13-14**,** Acts 13:22).

From the illustration with Saul, it should be noted that the Holy Spirit cannot HELP or change someone who isn't willing or yielded to Him from their heart. But if a person truly yields to the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit can do amazing things with them despite their shortcomings, just as was the case with David and practically everyone else, including us (**Romans 5:5-11**). You don't have to be perfect, you just have to be yielded and OBEDIENT to the Holy Spirit.

So it is important that after Salvation, you build love and character in the Word of God and faith, before receiving empowerment by the Spirit to enter into service for God (**1 Timothy 3:1**, **6**). Even after receiving empowerment by the Holy Spirit, still ensure to take time apart with Him to study the Word and build character (**Galatians 1:15-18**); and also submit yourself for constant review (**Psalms 139:23-24**, **4:4**, **2 Corinthians 13:5**, **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**), so that you don't miss the way, or abuse His power, and then at the end of it all find out that your service was not in accordance to the will of God (**Matthew 7:21-23**, **Galatians 2:1-2**).

That said let's move to the next point.

3.3.3 OBEDIENCE is Key to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Obedience is tied to the previous point, but I feel it is so important, so I decided to discuss it separately for good reasons.

So basically if you receive the Word, have faith, generate conviction in the heart, then obedience would naturally spring forth in the direction of your conviction (**Luke 6:45**). In other words, conviction naturally produces obedience or compliance to that which one believes.

Now the fact of the matter is that, it doesn't matter who or where a person is from, God is eagerly looking for people who have an obedient heart inclined to His ways. They may not even have a revelation of His

Word, but when they do what is right in His sight, He gravitates to such people (**Rom 2:13-16**). Such people are described as being circumcised in the heart, in contrast to Jews who may only be circumcised in the flesh (**Rom 2:26-29**, **Deut 30:6**). And by the way those who turn to Jesus Christ are themselves circumcised in the heart, making them eligible to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (**Col 2:11**, **Phil 3:3**).

Yet, still speaking of those who do NOT know Christ, but notwithstanding do things that are expected of one who obeys God, then you'll find that God would do everything possible to get His message to such a person, and come along side them by His Spirit.

This was what happened in the case of Cornelius. We know he was a Gentile and most likely a pagan worshiper, because if he were a convert to Judaism, Peter would not have any apprehension to enter his house (**Acts 10:27-28**, **Gal 2:11-13**), because we know that Peter had no problem preaching and baptizing converts to Judaism at his sermon on Pentecost (**Acts 2:11**). So though in ignorance, Cornelius might have been a pagan worshiper (**Acts 17:29-31**), yet his sincerity and acts of kindness were more in line with what obedience to God would look like (**Acts 10:1-5**, **Prov 19:17**, **2 Chron 16:9** **NKJV**), than they were to the characteristics of the demons associated with pagan worship (**1 Cor 10:19-22**, **Psalms 106:36-40**). So God saw in him an OBEDIENT man, and for that reason He compelled Peter to go and win him over to His kingdom. Hence OBEDIENCE is a prerequisite to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Remember God isn't looking forward to have His Spirit come into a man who would not yield to Him (**Gen 6:3**, **Zech 6:7-8**).

Acts 5:29, 31-32

*[29] Peter and the other apostles replied: "**WE MUST OBEY GOD** rather than human beings!*

…

*[31] God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might bring Israel to **REPENTANCE** and **forgive their sins**. [32] We are witnesses of*

*these things, and so is **the Holy Spirit, Whom God has given to those who OBEY Him**." NIV*

Acts 10:34-35

*[34] Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that **God does NOT show favoritism** [35] **but ACCEPTS FROM EVERY NATION the one who fears Him AND DOES WHAT IS RIGHT**. NIV*

OBEDIENCE is a big deal for God, and He even admires this characteristic in people who demonstrate obedience to others apart from Him. An example of this is in the story of the Rekabites. This family clan strictly OBEYED the instruction of their ancestor, and this got the attention of God, Who was finding it difficult to get His people the Israelites to OBEY Him. So God acknowledged and rewarded the Rekabites for their character in OBEDIENCE, even though they were just obeying their ancestor, and not a command of God (**Jer 35:1-19**).

So God is really interested in people who possess the trait of OBEDIENCE, and deep conviction (**Ruth 1:3-5**, **14**, **16-18**, **2:8-12**, **3:1-*5***, **Ruth 4:13-*17***). It is arguably the reason why He apprehended Paul (**Gal 1:13-16**, **Phil 3:4-14**), who was vigorously following his conviction in ignorance (**1 Tim 1:12-17**). I mean Jesus Christ went as far as first of all making a Personal appearance to Paul, before He sent His reluctant messenger to go and finish up the job of ushering Paul into His Kingdom and service (**Acts 9:3-6**, **10-18**).

We see a similar situation in the Muslim world. Like Paul, a lot of Muslims possess a deep conviction, and OBEDIENCE to the tenets of their faith. And like a similar situation with Ananias who was reluctant to minister to Paul, most Christians are apprehensive to preach to Muslims, because of the threat of persecution, imprisonment, or even death, especially in Muslim nations, just like Paul did to the early Church (**Acts 9:1-2**, **Acts 22:2-5**, **20**).

But just in a similar fashion, Jesus Christ is appearing to many Muslims in dreams and visions to usher them into His Kingdom, just like He did to

Paul (**Acts 9:3-6**), because He admires their remarkable trait of OBEDIENCE, even though it is done in ignorance (**John 16:1-3**).

So if you are serious about receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then settle in your heart to be an OBEDIENT individual. There is not much more that God likes from an individual than OBEDIENCE (**1 Samuel 15:22-23**, **Prov 21:3**, **Isaiah 1:13-*19***, **Jeremiah 7:22-23**, **Mark 12:33**). So He is inclined to come along side such a person to make available His power through the Holy Spirit, because He knows that such a person would NOT abuse His power, but use it as He directs. The thing is that there is also the possibility for people to abuse the gift and power He gives, meaning they use it in ways contrary to His will (**Matthew 7:21-23**, ***10:8***, **2 Corinthians 2:17**, **Acts 20:32-35**, **1 Timothy 6:3-7**), which is why I believe it takes a while before God baptizes some people with His Holy Spirit. I believe this "delay period" is the necessary time needed to purge them of pride, self-centeredness, unforgiveness, and whatever it may be, so that they don't follow the path of abusing God's power (**Luke 9:53-56 NKJV**), revelation (**2 Corinthians 12:6-10**), and calling (**Mark 8:31-33**).

For instance, Balaam gave accurate prophecies when he only spoke the words that God GAVE him (**Numbers 23:5**, **16**). Yet, despite his knowledge about God's Word, and God's desire to bless the Israelites, he still abused his knowledge and sought for a way to have the Israelites destroyed so that he could receive payment from those who hired him to curse Israel (**Numbers 22:4-6**, **15-17**, **2 Peter 2:15-16**). And indeed he almost succeeded to get God to destroy Israel by luring them to sin (**Numbers 25:1-9**, **16-18**, **31:16**). So it is possible for someone to abuse something that God gives them.

Nevertheless, God is a God of faith, so even when faced with the possibility that we may fail and forsake Him, yet He proceeds to bless us with every good gift, with the hope that we would choose to fulfil His purposes. God is Love (**1 John 4:8**), and Love always hopes (**1 Corinthians 13:6-7**). However, before He bestows His Spirit on a person, He must certainly see that such a person, at the time, possesses the

necessary traits, and they show the possibility of going the distance with Him, because He wouldn't recklessly submit His Spirit to be grievously treated by a rebellious individual (**Genesis 6:3**, **Ephesians 4:29-30**).

So one step at a time; but securing a humble and OBEDIENT heart is very attractive to God, and to such people He bestows His Spirit, so that they can be even more productive and effective (**John 15:1-2**).

So the long and short of it is learn to be OBEDIENT like Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 5:7-10**, **Romans 6:16-18**). And you can begin your journey at OBEDIENCE by studying the Word of God, learning what pleases God (**Ephesians 5:10**, **Isaiah 1:17**, **Hebrews 5:14**), and living your life in OBEDIENCE to what you learnt (**1 Corinthians 15:3-4**, **Acts 26:19-20**, **Ephesians 4:20-32**). When you demonstrate this you set up yourself to be drafted into the service of God by the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

In the subject of the Holy Spirit, I've barely scratched the surface, but I believe what has been presented is sufficient to get anyone going on the right path with Him.

Just to recap a little bit: every believer encounters the Holy Spirit to receive Salvation and become born again. This represents the first encounter. However it is important for believers not to settle at this stage of infancy, because Jesus Christ did more than just to come and save us.

We must all strive to grow unto maturity (**Colossians 1:28-29**, **Ephesians 4:15-*16***, **James 1:4**). And a step to maturity is understanding that as part of the Kingdom of God, there is some responsibility assigned to us, and we can only fulfil that responsibility by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:8**, **1 Corinthians 2:4-5**, **2 Corinthians 4:7**, **1 Peter 4:10-11**, **1 Corinthians 12:4-14**, **Romans 12:3-13**). This understanding should then cause you to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so that you can

get empowered, and as a result you can move on to doing the work God predestined you for (**Ephesians 2:10**); because let's face it, the Kingdom of God is about power (**1 Corinthians 4:20**), and that power comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is the second encounter. So whatever you do, don't just settle for the first encounter, but be matured and responsible to seek the second encounter so that you can be of service to God, and a blessing to the Church, and world at large (**Galatians 6:7-10**, **Titus 3:8**, **Rom 8:19**).

But if you choose to settle and remain with the first encounter with the Spirit, understand that indeed you'll be saved and go to heaven, but you will fail to receive rewards when you get there (**1 Corinthians 3:11-17**), and your life on earth would be less than par from what your actual inheritance in Christ entails (**Mark 10:29-30**, **Galatians 4:1-3**, **Ecclesiastes 10:7**). In the next chapter I'll discuss on our inheritance in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and show you what you'll be missing out on if you fail to mature in your walk of faith and receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

And if that isn't enough motivation, then I think it is necessary to remind you that there is still a devil warring against all who hold to the commands of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (**Rev 12:17**, **1 Peter 5:7-9**). And it is helpful to know that the devil has no pity for the whining of a "child" who refuses to grow up, he only responds to power. Hence we must RESIST him (**James 4:7**), and stand FIRM, cladded in the armour of God (**Eph 6:10-18**). You can't do all these without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And the devil cannot be easily fooled by people who lack substance (**Acts 19:13-16**), so it is better to be the real deal. And just so you know, being the real deal is MUCH EASIER than faking it (**1 John 5:1-5**, **2 Peter 1:3-4**). And besides, children don't put on armour, only the matured do, and the matured are those who understand and take up the responsibility of things pertaining to the Kingdom.

And if you have decided to go on to maturity to seek the second encounter with the Holy Spirit to be empowered for service, then do the following as we discussed:

- Simply ask for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and do not waver in unbelief until you get a response, which could be either what you asked for, or insight and direction on what you need to do.
- It is also important to maintain a habit of studying the Word to better understand your living and working Partner, the Holy Spirit. And also to grow in faith and have a general picture of what God wants to do. Note, when the Holy Spirit comes to empower you He will fill you in on your specific role to facilitate the general purpose of God (**Galatians 2:8**, **Acts 16:6-10**).
- And it is also important to posture yourself in humility and OBEDIENCE, because these are traits that God absolutely loves in people (**Psalms 25:7-15**, **18:25-30**, **149:4**).

Lastly, it is common to have the impartation of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. But at the same time it is possible for it to happen by the sovereign will and intervention of God (**Acts 2:1-4**, **Acts 10:44-48**). Which ever way it happens, all praise to God, but you need not feel like it must happen in a certain way.

My Testimony

For me, it was at university when I was outside in a soccer field close to my hostel at night, listening to a former student who visited to preach to us. I can't remember what he preached, but I know there was mention of the Holy Spirit, and for the first time I was willing to receive Him.

I came from a church background that didn't recognize the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so I had always shunned the subject matter ever since from secondary school when I heard people try to talk to me about Him.

But that night I was open and willing to receive the Holy Spirit, so oil was put in my hand, and I laid my hand on my head while the preacher prayed; and the Holy Spirit came on me with the evidence of speaking in

tongues (**Acts 2:4**, **10:46**, **19:6**), which I couldn't stop until I fell asleep that night; but with quite an effort I tried to mask it by not being too audible to hide it from some of my friends who were there, because I didn't know exactly what was going on even though it felt so good.

Anyway the next morning I felt great and the journey has been interesting ever since then. Interesting not to mean like things have been a bed of roses for me, but interesting that God is with me, and it is amazing to watch Him in action up close and personal in every situation, good and bad alike.

3.4 The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

In terms of the Christian practical lifestyle, the Holy Spirit is the central Figure (**Rom 8:9-17**). If you ever try to do "Christian life" without the Holy Spirit, I can guarantee you that it would be boring, stressful and far from enjoyable. I can say this confidently because I've experienced both worlds, having been born in a Christian household and a church that sincerely loved God, but had no room or understanding of the Holy Spirit in my formative years (**Acts 19:1-2**, **2 Tim 3:5**).

But I can assure you that with the Holy Spirit the Christian lifestyle is both doable and fun to put it simply. I have never been a fan of reading, but with the Holy Spirit I've studied the whole Bible with interest and wonder. And it doesn't matter how many times I read through It, as in fact I've actually lost count, but the Words are alive and I find PRACTICAL application for It in my life, all because the Holy Spirit helps me in the study of Scripture. But prior to Him, the Bible didn't make much sense and it was quite frankly boring and confusing to read (**1 Cor 2:12-14**). If you want It to make sense, then ask the Holy Spirit.

Another area that wasn't much fun for me was praying. But now I find it a privilege to pray, and sometimes I even lose track of time, because prayer is like gisting and hanging out with God and the Heavenly host. Its

a two way conversation that refreshes and blesses you with Heavenly insight and help.

And I can go on and on, about how certain aspects of the Christian life have been made much easier for me. One that I'll quickly mention is forgiveness. It is not so much that forgiving people who hurt me has become really easy, even with the help of the Holy Spirit, but every time He highlights to me that I need to forgive someone, I am more willing, because I don't want to lose fellowship with Him. In other words, I weigh the surpassing value of His presence and help in my life, and then all of a sudden the hurt from that person doesn't measure up or deserve my anger or displeasure. And of course, I cannot minimize the fact that the Holy Spirit actually does the work of releasing or removing the person from the hold of my heart, when I become WILLING to forgive, and yielded to Him to do the work in me.

So the simple truth is that every aspect of Christian life is impossible without the Holy Spirit. Any attempt at the Christian lifestyle without the Holy Spirit will end up in frustration and hypocrisy (i.e. metaphorically having two faces).

3.4.1 The Holy Spirit and Sanctification

Sanctification simply means to be made holy. And holiness basically means to be set apart, or different from others. You may not want to believe that the definition of holiness is this simple, but I assure you it is the truth.

Every Christian is called to be holy, and to live a holy life (**Col 1:9-10**, **1 Peter 1:16**, **2 Timothy 1:9-10**). But what most Christians don't understand is that they think they can be holy all by themselves and through their efforts. But what ends up being the case is that they come up with rules that just makes them needlessly miserable.

Don't get me wrong, when the Holy Spirit comes to live in you, He sets up His government in you, and this will DEFINITELY come with rules and specific guiding principles for each individual. The Holy Spirit is not lawless, He is our Advocate petitioning God, the Righteous Judge, on our behalf (**Rom 8:1-2**, **26-27**, **1 Cor 9:21**, **John 14:16-17**). So expect that there will be certain things that He would not allow you to do, and certain things He would compel you to do (**Acts 16:6-10**, **N.B** – Paul eventually preached in Asia [**2 Cor 1:8-11**], so this initial restrain was because of the urgent need at Macedonia).

Now the difference between man-made rules and those of the Holy Spirit is that when you submit to the rules of the Holy Spirit, they are usually uncomfortable initially, but at the end you'll appreciate the wisdom of His rules, and attest to the fact that they produce results that far outweigh the initial discomfort. But the rules of men, start off being uncomfortable; they continue being uncomfortable, and worst off they yield no true benefit or incentive for one to continue in them (**Col 2:18-23**, **2 Tim 3:5**). So it ends up being a total disaster, making people unnecessarily miserable.

The first and most important idea of holiness is that it DOES NOT originate from us, it must come from God. God is the One Who makes a person or thing holy (**Lev 20:8**, **Hebrews 13:12**, **10:10**, **14**, **Eph 5:25-27**).

Let's take for instance the Tabernacle in Moses' day. The artisans, who fashioned everything that God instructed through Moses, were free to handle and touch the Ark of the Covenant, the golden Lamp stand, the Table of Presence etc. and nothing would happen to them. But the moment God set it apart as holy (**Exodus 29:37**), only the Levites and priests, whom God had as well set apart as holy (**Lev 21:7-8**, **Num 8:5-14**), could interact with the holy articles without the consequence of death (**1 Chron 13:9-10**). The point is that a person, or thing, can first of all be made holy by God.

Now for us as believers, Jesus Christ is in Heaven, and through Him we are made holy to access the Father in Heaven (**Eph 3:11-12**, **Hebrews**

4:16, **7:25**, **10:19-22**). Without holiness it is impossible to meet God, because He is Himself Holy (**Hebrews 12:14-15**, **1 Peter 1:15-16**).

Let me make the quick point that you must personally take advantage of your granted access to God, and you do this often through prayer; don't buy into the idea of someone else accessing God on your behalf, whereas you yourself never go to meet with Him by faith (**Heb 11:6**). That would be disregarding the Great Price Jesus Christ paid to make available that access for you.

So Jesus Christ has paved the way for us to appear before God as holy, because we come into God's presence through Him, and our requests are granted through Him (**John 14:13-14**, **16:23-27**, **1 John 5:14-15**). Remember when we talked about baptism, a Passage we highlighted said we are clothed with Christ (**Gal 3:26-27**), and more than that we are seated with Christ in heavenly realms (**Eph 2:6**), and our life is hidden in Him (**Col 3:3**), so we have a profound union with Him. What this means is that when we appear before God, God sees us as if we were His beloved Son Jesus Christ, and He is able to fellowship with us on that grounds. This is similar to how Isaac perceived Jacob to be Esau, and proceeded to give him the blessing due Esau (**Gen 27:22-27**).

So in Heaven we are made holy through Jesus Christ, and this is instantly effective the moment we pray or approach God (**Eph 2:6**, **1:3**). However on earth we are progressively made holy by the Holy Spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit that sets us apart from the world, so that though we are still in the world, we do not behave as though we were of the world (**John 17:15-19**, **15:18-19**, **Rom 13:11-14**, * **Gal 5:16-17***).

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a progressive work (**2 Thess 2:13-14**, **1 Peter 1:2**). And the more we yield to Him to effect the process, and stick to truly being set apart, we make ourselves more suitable as access points or channels for the heavenly realm to manifest its will upon the earth.

What you need to understand is that God gave the earth realm to mankind. If you remember we discussed about the dominion Mandate

(Gen 1:26, Ps 115:16). But when mankind sinned by rebelling against God's command in favor of the devil, mankind became exceptionally wicked (Gen 6:5, Jer 17:9 **NKJV**), and they were basically instruments to manifest the will of the devil on earth (Rom 6:19-21, John 8:44, 2 Tim 2:25-26). All of us at one point played into the hands and game plan of the devil, before we REPENTED and decided we wanted to follow God (Eph 2:1-9, Titus 3:3-7, Col 3:5-10).

So now what God desires is that through us His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven (Matt 6:9-10), hence we are to become instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom 6:12-13**,** 18). But for that to happen, we need to be set apart from the ways of the world, i.e. made holy, and this process involves chipping away aspects of our flesh, i.e. the sin nature, that inclines us to fall into the temptations of the devil.

So the process to make us holy on earth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is done to set us apart from sin, and when this is done, we are no longer instruments to further the agenda and will of the devil in our God given domain, but rather we become effective vessels through which the Holy God and His holy angels can manifest the will of the Heavenly kingdom on this earthly realm.

Now if you approach holiness by trying to follow man-made rules to stay away from sin, it sounds like a good idea, but it is NOT sustainable because you will be doing it by the power of the flesh, meanwhile the devil and his demons are ancient spirits that operate with spiritual power (Eph 6:10-12). If you do not combat spiritual power with Spiritual power, you will end up being exhausted, because whether you like it or not our current human state was created less than the angelic in terms of strength (Ps 8:5).

So the way forward is to put on the Amor that God provides (Eph 6:13-17), use the authority of Jesus Christ (Luke 10:19), and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). And while all this is happening the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us so that we do not allow sin to take hold of us, which would give the devil a foothold to pull us down (Eph 4:26-27).

Now being that we were born into sin, and lived for a while satisfying our sinful desires (**Titus 3:3**, **Eph 2:1-3**), when the Holy Spirit starts tugging us to become set apart, i.e. holy, we experience an initial difficulty, sort of like withdrawal sickness when abstaining from an addictive substance or habit. However, if we submit to the Holy Spirit to continue His sanctifying work, after a while the devil would lose grounds to hold us in that area of our life; and with the devil's influence removed from that area of our life, God then has more grounds to effect His will through our life; and when the will of God is done in and through our life, His blessings flow in a tangible and meaningful way; when any sensible person tastes of the blessing of God, the sacrifice of letting go of sin pales in comparison; and this blessing and joy sustains the Christian to continue on the path of holiness.

So there in lies the difference of a Christian trying to be holy, or live a holy sin free life by their efforts, and a Christian who yields to the Holy Spirit's power and sanctifying work. As long as the other Christian remains yielded and submitted to the Holy Spirit, they would truly enjoy the victory and blessings of the Christian lifestyle (**2 Peter 1:3-11**). But the Christian who has but a facade of holiness, without true power, will live a miserable existence under the constant torment, or pounding on the door by the devil. And the devil wouldn't stop, knowing fully well that they have no spiritual power or authority to marshal against him.

So having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it becomes our immediate responsibility to yield and submit to Him for the process of Sanctification, so that we can live holy lives that afford us the opportunity of doing the will of God here on earth, and the power to resist the devil and ensure that he no longer has any influence in our life. If we fail to submit to Sanctification, it means we'll end up mingling with sin, and even though we have access to forgiveness (**1 John 1:9**), we would become utterly ineffective to do God's will, because through sin we would be freelancing for the devil hurting ourselves, others and all creation at large.

So be deliberate and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's work of Sanctification.

3.4.2 The Holy Spirit's Job to Comfort and Give Hope, Peace and Joy etc.

When we become born again we assume a new identity as Children of God (John 1:11-13, 1 John 3:1), and we become citizens of Heaven (Phil 3:20). However, though we are citizens of Heaven, and the Almighty God is our Father, we are made to live on earth to serve our Father's purpose (John 17:15-19), before we are taken into Heaven to enjoy the glories of being royalty (John 14:1-3, Rev 3:21-22, Rom 8:18, 2 Cor 4:17-18).

At times it can be overwhelming for us to face the earthly realities that don't match our Heavenly identity. At those times we need comfort and encouragement to persevere and continue doing the will of God. Even Jesus Christ was faced with times when He needed Heavenly encouragement (Matt 4:11, Luke 22:42-44). So it goes without saying that while on earth we need similar support and encouragement to keep us pressing on the path God has set for us.

The peace… oh the peace… is one major thing I'm grateful for (John 14:27, Phil 4:7, Col 3:15-16). I don't have enough words to express how much I appreciate the peace of God, through the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-26). And it doesn't stop at the peace, because there is comfort, love, joy and much more in circumstances where it is unnatural to manifest such traits (Matt 5:10-12, John 16:33, Acts 5:40-42, 2 Cor 1:3-11).

Understand that believers are not exempted from the storms of life, the storms come on both believers and unbelievers (Matt 7:24-27). Nevertheless, believers have been equipped with everything necessary to navigate the storms that may come.

The key is to ALLOW the Holy Spirit to minister the necessary form of comfort. This usually may require a little bit of our participation.

First of all we must know that we have access to this kind of ministry of the Spirit, and in effect we can ask for Him to give us peace, or flood our heart with love, or joy, or whatever is needed.

Secondly, we must yield to His direction to make this possible, like I said often times this ministry of the Spirit requires a little participation from us.

For instance, you may be going through a deep hurt or trauma from the misdeeds of people against you. This can easily rob you of your peace, joy and love. If you get to a point when you get tired of living with that hurt, and decide that you prefer to have love, peace and joy overflowing from your heart, instead of hate and vengeance, then you may approach the Holy Spirit to release the virtues that are natural to His person (**Gal 5:22-26**). But before He does that, He may require that you forgive them first of all.

In another instance, you may be in a difficult situation, and you're full of anxiety and worry. The Holy Spirit may guide you to sing a song of praise to God, or read a portion of Scripture, and then all of a sudden the anxiety is swept away, and a sense of peace, joy and hope just floods your heart. I've experienced this one several times, even two weeks prior to me writing this very point I experienced it. My singing was lacklustre, and I was just randomly flipping through Scripture, but I can't describe the peace that came over me. Up to the point that I literally tried to analyze the situation the same way I did that produced anxiety, but I could feel no anxiousness, just peace, and the peace hasn't left me, whereas that situation has been resolved to the Glory of God as I write this.

There are many other ways the Holy Spirit can step into various situations to release comfort and joy, but we just need to ask Him and yield to the direction He gives. I can tell you from experience that some of His directions may not make much sense to the natural mind, but they are very efficacious to produce the results we desire. So trust the Holy Spirit, and take the necessary leaps of faith.

A key point in this is that you must learn to truly converse with the Holy Spirit, which is also a form of prayer. Be honest and open in your conversation, and then with that He can highlight what you need to know or do that would afford Him the opportunity to release His virtues into your heart.

It also helps to know Scripture, because this gives us the general picture of the likely responses and path the Holy Spirit may lead us on in various situations, and what we can expect as outcomes (**Ps 119:140**). And Scripture also helps us to discern if the conversation we're having is with the Holy Spirit, or it is just a construct of our mind, or the deceptive voice of the enemy. The Holy Spirit CANNOT, and would NOT violate certain tenets of Scripture, and there is usually precedence in Scripture to whatever He would tell you. This is one other thing that makes reading Scripture fun, because it supplies the pieces of the puzzle that the Holy Spirit would use to communicate with you on contemporary issues in your life. It's just like how "Bumble Bee" communicates with his Internet radio tuner in the "Transformer" movies.

But to wrap it up, understand that you can always ask the Holy Spirit to manifest the virtues of love, peace, joy, comfort etc. in any situation you're going through, good or bad, so that you can always be found in a state of rejoicing (**Phil 4:4-7**). But become ready to submit in OBEDIENCE to His voice and guidance.

3.4.3 The Holy Spirit Facilitates Wisdom, Knowledge and Understanding

James 1:5

[5] ***If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God****, Who gives generously to ALL without finding fault,* ***and it will be given to you****. NIV*

Ephesians 1:8-10, 17-19

*[8] … **With all wisdom and understanding**, [9] **HE MADE KNOWN to us the mystery of His will according to His GOOD pleasure**, which He purposed in Christ, [10] to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring **unity** to all things in heaven and on earth **under Christ**.*

…

*[17] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, **may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better**. [18] I pray that **the EYES of your HEART may be enlightened** in order that you may **know the hope** to which He has called you, **the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, [19] and HIS INCOMPARABLY GREAT POWER FOR US WHO BELIEVE**. … NIV*

Colossians 1:9

*[9] For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with **the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding THAT THE SPIRIT GIVES**, NIV*

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

*[12] What we have received is not the spirit of the world, **but the Spirit Who is from God, SO THAT WE MAY UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD HAS FREELY GIVEN US**. [13] This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in **words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words**. [14] **The person WITHOUT the Spirit does NOT accept the things that come from the Spirit of God** but considers them foolishness, and CANNOT understand them because **THEY ARE DISCERNED ONLY THROUGH THE SPIRIT**. NIV*

Again in the subject of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, our source is the Holy Spirit.

It would interest you to know that the Holy Spirit doesn't just give us spiritual wisdom and understanding, which quite frankly is more profitable **(**1 Tim 4:8**),** but He also gives us wisdom applicable to our daily endeavors. I can cite the example of Daniel and his companions (Daniel 1:17-20), as well as Joseph (Gen 39:20-23, 41:15-16**,** 33-40).

And it goes without saying that I have personal experience of asking and being helped by the Holy Spirit to supply wisdom and knowledge

pertaining to my secular endeavors. I can cite and relate to the example of Late. Dr Ravi Zacharias, who said that he was literally at the bottom in terms of academic performance, and this made him suicidal. But after he gave his life to Jesus Christ and received the Holy Spirit, his academic performance turned around. I'll admit that I haven't had much exposure, but he is one of the best speakers I've ever listened to. His command of the English language, poetic speaking style, and his ability to quote vast literature from memory is absolutely mesmerising.

Another example is Dr Ben Carson, who had a similar story of being academically backwards, but things got miraculously turned around, that he became one of the most renowned neuro-surgeon of our time. He credits God for the wisdom he applied in his practice, and this is a similar situation for many scientists both current, and those from history.

God's Spirit can effectively influence the artistic and craftsmanship world (**Exodus 35:30-35**); His Spirit can supply wisdom in realm of architecture and construction (**Gen 6:14-19**, **Exodus 26:30**, ***1 Chron 28:11-19***); His Spirit can influence the information and technological world (**Isaiah 28:24-29**, **Daniel 12:4**); His Spirit can supply wisdom in the political realm of influence to offer practical administrative guidance, like He did for Daniel (**Daniel 6:1-5**); and of course we've mentioned the academic realm (**Daniel 1:17-20**), but more than that His Spirit can make an unschooled fellow confound those in the world who possess academic certification (**1 Cor 1:26-31**, **Acts 4:13**). His Spirit can also provide wisdom in dietary and medical applications (**Daniel 1:8-17**, **Isaiah 38:21**, **[Exodus 12:8**, **Psalms 105:37 NKJV]**, **1 Tim 5:23**). And you can just study **the Book of Proverbs** in the Bible and you'll gain practical wisdom to navigate relationships, guide your work life, and your general affairs.

To put it simply the wisdom of God, supplied by the Holy Spirit, is effective in every sphere of human endeavor. You need to just ask Him.

My Testimony

I've had the Holy Spirit guide me in programming, data analysis, database management, Web development, graphics design, 3D modelling, and on top of all that, He helped me secure a degree in Physics and Solar Energy. I can tell you for a fact that I'm NOT that clever, I've just been tremendously helped by God.

In the past I would study really hard to do well in exams, and I did excel, but with severe migraines that could last a week or more after exams. But from university, when I developed a friendship with the Holy Spirit, I could go to sleep and see the exam questions in some cases; in other cases, I somehow knew exactly what I needed to study, so I hardly ever had to study all the notes for any given course. And in a number of remarkable cases where I had two tough courses on the same day, I literally went into exam halls having studied nothing for one of the courses, yet I was guided to answer the questions correctly. I would leave such exams, and I'll practically have no recollection of the questions asked or the answers I supplied, when I briefly stood among friends who were comparing their answers to the various questions. Since I would have nothing to say, I often didn't stick around too long for such conversations, but instead hurried to the hostel to sleep, so that perhaps I could get insights into the next exam, or be rested enough to study effectively.

And speaking of studying, the Holy Spirit taught me the study technique that applied specifically to me. I would love to elaborate on it here, but it may yield little fruit for some of you so I won't go into it, but encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit what methods of doing things in general work for you. I remember Dr. Ben Carson said in medical school he discovered that he wasn't gaining much from sitting in classes, so he had someone record and take notes in the class, and then on his own he was better able to process and decode everything. But for me sitting and listening to the lecture is more valuable, because I'm able to recollect what the lecturer said when I'm reading on my own, so I'm able to know what to focus on and apply what was said. So different methods apply to

different people, it rests on you to seek the Holy Spirit to discover what works for you. I don't believe anyone is naturally dull, it is either they haven't discovered what works for them, or there may be a spiritual hindrance, either-way the Holy Spirit can provide the solution (**James 1:5**).

I tell you all this, with all sincerity, that it isn't that I'm clever, I'm tremendously helped by the Holy Spirit, and I want you to be able to access that help as well. Do not limit the Holy Spirit, He does much more than just help us to understand Scripture, pray, prophesy and speak in tongues. You can access His help for everything pertaining to life. Believe it or not I even solicit His help to carry out my chores, and often times I gain wisdom to execute them faster and better, or I enjoy His fellowship while I do the chore, which sometimes makes chores an appealing thing to do. So make it a habit to ASK the Holy Spirit for help and wisdom in everything you do. And give God glory for the success that results from it (**Deut 8:17-18**).

That said, I spent significant time highlighting how the Holy Spirit can supply wisdom to help us with our secular endeavors, because most people don't understand this aspect, hence they needlessly strive alone, frustrated in their place of work, family and other aspects of their life, which they feel isn't spiritual or needing of spiritual intervention. So I felt the need to offer this education and testimony, so that people can experience the joys of being victorious by the help of the Holy Spirit.

But I must make it absolutely clear that we need His help more for spiritual wisdom, than we do for earthly things. The fact of the matter is that we ALL have Heavenly responsibilities, so we cannot afford to give all our attention to earthly matters (**Col 3:2**, **2 Cor 4:18**).

God has been pleased to use mankind as the instrument to enact judgment on the heavenly beings that rebelled against Him (**Psalms 149:4-9**, **Eph 6:12**, **3:10-11**, **1 Cor 15:24-26**, **Rom 16:20**, **Luke 10:18-19**). This is a deep profound mystery that I can't fully address here.

But I need you to understand that, similar to the lesson on Sanctification, which in effect causes the devil to lose ground, the reason why God is also interested in prospering and making you successful in the work place and family, is not just to make you happy and to cause you to have a bunch of money in the bank, but rather it is because in these areas the tentacles of dark spiritual forces are heavily intertwined, and God needs to unseat them so that the hearts of men can turn to Him (**Matt 6:21**).

If people prosper by lying and corruption in the workplace, they enthrone the devil over that place, and the devil will ensure to sow his seed of discord, hatred, conniving, backstabbing, depression, discouragement etc. in that workplace. But if you go into that space by the Spirit and wisdom of God, showing ways to be more effective and successful, without corruption, while spreading love and kindness, people would take note, and before long they would gravitate to you, and then you can use that opportunity to introduce them to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (**Eph 5:15-17**, **Col 4:5-6**, **1 Peter 3:15-17**, **1 Thess 4:11-12**).

This unseats the devil, and slowly, but surely, if you remain faithful, then righteousness can come into that workplace, and the fruit of the Spirit would overflow in joy, Truth, fulfilment and peace. And as such God gets enthroned in that place, and His ways get adopted, hence His will is done.

One man can make the difference, just explore the life of Daniel in the Bible. The demonstration of his wisdom and insight given to him by God, caused the different administrations of the world leaders to denounce all other gods, but elevate and acknowledge the God of Daniel (**Daniel 2:47**, **4:34-37**, **6:26-27**). In a similar fashion, your righteous alignment to God can cause unbelievers to acknowledge your God, and be open to submit to His ways.

And in the Family sphere, we know that God made the two one, so as to bring forth Godly offspring (**Mal 2:15** **AMPC**). But the devil has played quite a number on many families, leaving them in shambles. But with

the wisdom of the Holy Spirit husbands and wives can get peculiar insight to manage their unique relationship with their spouse, because only the Holy Spirit truly and deeply knows the heart and desires of each person (**1 Cor 2:10-11**, **Mark 2:8**, **Prov 20:27**).

And not just for the relationship with the couple, but the children as well. These days the devil has inundated the media and Internet with terrible things that affords young impressionable minds the "wisdom" to do all sorts of evils without having their parents know. They can have a secret app masked as a calculator, but actually it serves as a secret folder where they can hide indecent files, apps, alternative social media accounts and pornography. They have clever ways of accessing drugs and alcohol, or "hooking up" to do no good. It would take Divine wisdom to counter the "wisdom" that kids of these days operate with.

So with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit families can be secure in Christ and under the government of righteousness. And this in turn affects society, because the family unit is the building block of society. Hence if the block is strong, we can expect to build a strong society. But if the family unit is broken by the design of the devil, then society would be unstable as well, and eventually crumble.

It is important to maintain the Divine perspective, and understand why God does what He does, and why we have been given the Holy Spirit. Ignorance will make you live a life below the expectation and provision of God. God has made provisions for us to live above sin, to always have His Love and peace in our heart (**Rom 5:5**), to have wisdom (**Eph 5:15-16**), to have provision for our daily needs (**Matt 6:11**), and much more. And all these are made available by the Holy Spirit. Don't be like the elder brother of the prodigal son, who didn't know he had access to all his father's property, so he practically lived like any of the other slaves (**Luke 15:28-29**, **31**, **Gal 4:1**).

3.4.4 The Holy Spirit Helps in Intercession and Prayer

The subject of prayer is very important that it deserves to be treated in a standalone book of its own. There are many things we do as Christians, but the fact of the matter is that prayer is one of the CORE purposes of the New Testament believer. Let me briefly elaborate on why prayer is our principal responsibility, and then I'll try and shed some insight on what prayer is, before I go on to highlight how the Holy Spirit helps us to effectively pray.

3.4.4.1 One Major Purpose of a Believer is to Pray

Immediately Solomon finished constructing the Temple, the first thing he did was dedicate the Temple by prayer. And the content of his prayer was that God should hear all sorts of prayers that emanate from the Temple, both for foreigners (**2 Chron 6:32-33**) and Israelites (**2 Chron 6:12-13**, **20-21**), and God answered his prayer (**2 Chron 7:1-4**, **12**, **14-16**). Essentially, Solomon set out the primary purpose of the Temple, which is why the Temple is identified as a House of Prayer (**Isaiah 56:7**, **Mark 11:15-17**). So the take away point is that God's Temple is to be a House of Prayer.

Now the revelation we have in the New Testament is that we ourselves are the Temple of God, wherein the Holy Spirit dwells (**1 Cor 3:16**, **6:19-20**). Hence since we are now the Temple of God, and we know that God's Temple is to be a House of prayer, it then means that we are expected to carry out Temple business in our vessels, by offering up praise and Prayer to God. Hence one of our primary responsibilities is to PRAY.

3.4.4.2 Basic Understand of Prayer

Now prayer is not just you going through a list of wants, even though that is certainly one form of prayer. But in reality there are many forms of prayer, and each one serves a different purpose, and is effective for different situations. It is important to understand the main context of prayer, and its various forms, so that you can engage with it in a meaningful and successful manner.

So first off, prayer is communication with God and the Heavenly/spiritual realm. And given the fact that God gave mankind legal dominion over the earth realm (**Genesis 1:26**, **Ps 115:16**), prayer is a means to give earthly permission for heavenly interference. You need to understand that God is very legal in His operations, even as we saw in the case of salvation, where though as our Loving Father He wanted to spare us from the Judgment of death (**Genesis 2:16-17**, **3:19**, **Rom 6:23**), yet He had to uphold justice at the same time, hence He allowed Jesus Christ to pay the price for our sin by dying, so that we can be given eternal life. In a similar manner, God has given the legal pronouncement that mankind is the ruling authority over earth, hence for Him (**John 4:24**), and any other spiritual being to be able to legitimately operate in the earth realm they would need a human being to partner with. Prayer is that legal transaction of partnership with the spiritual realm.

I'm going to try not to go too deep on the guiding principle and meaning of prayer here as I've done in another material, but I think you may profit from just knowing a little bit to get you going.

The earth realm and spiritual realm are in constant interaction. The spiritual realm consist of the Kingdom of God in the Third Heaven (**2 Cor 12:2**), and the kingdom of the devil in the second heaven. I'm not going to go into the plurality of the Heavens (**Gen 1:1**, **Psalms 68:32-35**, **115:15-16**), but just know that both spiritual kingdoms operate from the heavenly realm, and the operate by similar principles, or I should say laws enacted by God. Hence just as the Kingdom of God would not violate the decree that man is the authority on earth through which they

must go through to have any impact on the earth realm, so also the kingdom of the devil CANNOT violate that decree. Hence, even though God knows what we need before we ask Him, He still expects us to ask Him, thus authorizing Him to act (Matt 6:8). Is almost as if Heaven is anxiously waiting for us to release a word of prayer before they move (Daniel 9:20-23 – **N.B** immediately Daniel opened his mouth to pray, God already gave a response, meaning God already knew the entire content of Daniel's prayer before he finished).

3.4.4.3 The Spiritual Implication of Prayer

Now a fundamental principle for the earth realm to gain the attention of the spiritual realm in other to make a binding transaction to solicit the powers of the spiritual realm is by means of sacrifice. The varying degrees of sacrifice would determine the degree of power that can be released. That is why you find littered in the Old Testament instances of animal sacrifice that gained the attention and intervention of God (1 Samuel 7:8-13, 1 Kings 3:4-15). And similarly, you find that the dark kingdom also solicited sacrifices from those who hoped to gain their influence, so you find people sacrificing animals as well, and even their children to idols (Psalms 106:36-38), so as to gain demonic assistance (2 Kings 3:11-13, 26-27).

It is important to note that the spiritual entity one seeks to enter into agreement with to gain their help, is the one that sets the required sacrifice (Gen 15:9). When the conditions are met, then the spiritual entity can avail their power to do what the person solicited them for.

It is also important to note that once that transaction is done, a lingering bond is initiated between the person and that spiritual entity, even after the terms of the agreement have been executed. For a lack of words, it is like a marriage, which is why God interacted with Israel as though she were His bride, because of the various covenants struck (Jer 3:14, 20). But when Israel started sacrificing to other gods by way of idolatry, God

charged Israel with adultery and prostitution (**Ezekiel 16:30-36, 38**). When Israel sacrificed to other gods, they did so believing they could get favors from those deities like protection, provision, or escape from death (**Isaiah 28:14-15, 18**).

Anyway fast forward to the New Testament and you'll also find that we who follow Christ are referred to as the Bride of Christ (**John 3:28-30, Eph 5:25-27, 32-33, Rev 19:7-8**), this tells you that we are in a similar Covenant relationship founded on sacrifice, just like the one between God and Israel in the Old Testament. Now this leads me to the next point.

When sacrifice is made, and the spiritual entity accepts that sacrifice, the next protocol is for the one who made the sacrifice to place a demand on the spiritual entity they attracted, in other words the person prays or communicates their desire to the spiritual entity. An example of this protocol can be well illustrated by Solomon (**1 Kings 3:4-15**).

You may not be very spiritually aware, but people like me in Africa understand this principle very well, and shockingly very similar things are portrayed in some Hollywood movies, but most people just ignore it as mere “entertainment”. In Africa it is common for people to visit witch doctors to gain wealth, have their enemies harmed or killed, get power to influence or manipulate others, get “healing” from ailments and all sorts of things. The witch doctor, who is a medium for the spirits that are sought to carry out the contract, stipulates the sacrifice that the spirits require. Once those sacrifices are met, the spirits are then obligated to carry out the prayer of the people.

Now what do we have in the New Testament. Jesus Christ died for us, making the ultimate SACRIFICE. He took His Blood into Heaven to present it to God, the Spirit (**Eph 5:1-2, Hebrews 9:11-12, 14-15, 10:19-22**), with Whom we come into Covenant with (**Matt 26:27-28**). And note that Jesus’s Blood is spotless and blameless (**1 Peter 1:18-19**), this is an important point that I'll explain on shortly. So Jesus Christ created a path for a Covenant with God by His Blood. And for us to be a part of that Covenant, we of course are called to put our faith in Him and everything

we discussed in the Salvation process, but more practically Jesus Christ tells us to drink His Blood. That's right, I repeat drink His blood. And this is made possible by the Christian ritual of Communion, which we would discuss in a subsequent chapter (**John 6:53-56, Matt 26:27-28**).

Now putting everything together:

- We are the Temple of God (**1 Cor 6:19-20**)
- The Sacrifice we offer to God, that is acceptable and pleasing to Him is the Blood of Jesus, which we offer by taking Communion.
- And then having offered the required Sacrifice, what is expected of us is that we pray to solicit the help and intervention of God and His angels in His Kingdom.
- Hence we are the Temple of God, and a legitimate House of prayer.

The path has been paved and all we need to do now is pray, but for some reason people don't take advantage of the expensive path paved for them through the SACRIFICE of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, those who patronise the dark kingdom go to great lengths to gain the attention of the wicked spirits in that kingdom, by even offering up their family members. And as soon as they get those wicked spirits attention, they don't hesitate to make their request. But we on the other hand freely have God's attention, but we don't pray.

And when things go wrong in the world we blame God in our ignorance (**Prov 25:26, 19:3**), meanwhile He has given earth to mankind; and it just so happens that those men who engage the services of dark spirits are effectively carrying out their own priesthood, by offering sacrifices and praying, and those dark spirits are given legitimacy to operate on the earth and make things go wrong. But remember God has called us to be kings and priests (**Rev 5:9-10 NKJV**), hence we mustn't neglect our priestly responsibility if we truly hope to rule as kings and see righteousness done on earth (**Psalms 89:14-16**).

And it isn't as if the kingdom of darkness is more powerful than God's Kingdom, to account for their widespread influence. It is that the vast majority of mankind, who have authority over the earth, have seeded their spheres of influence to the kingdom of darkness. Even those who don't go all out to make gruesome sacrifices to the devil, still attract demonic influence by their CHOICE and PRACTICE of sin. So sadly, even the comparatively few Christians who are supposed to be aligned with the Kingdom of God, instead yield themselves to allow the influence of the devil by engaging in sin, being malicious and unforgiving etc. Hence God's legitimate influence upon the earth, based upon the people who submit to righteousness, is quite limited to effect His good plans. The free access He has as Judge of ALL is to execute judgment, which deep down He DOESN'T WANT to do, and would rather have a man pray to avert it (**Ezekiel 22:26-31, 18:30-32**). You'll understand more on this in Chapter Five. Jesus Christ said we are light of the world and the salt of the earth. But if we lose saltiness we are good for nothing but to be thrown in the streets and trampled upon by men (**Matt 5:13**).

The fact of the matter is that the people of God are really not salty enough, which is why we see the trampling we experience. Our lives are not aligned and exemplary of what God describes; and even our conversations are not great, especially with those who we ought to influence (**Col 4:5-6**, **Jer 15:19**). You should know that the spiritual realm pays attention to EVERY WORD that we utter, and each Kingdom can record and use them as forms of prayer (**Mal 3:16-18, Prov 18:21**). If you check the words that come out of your mouth, even your jokes (**Eph 5:3-7**), you might find that they may be the very reason why you are sick, your children are stubborn and stupid, your city, country and leaders are performing poorly, because the devil and the demons can partner with the terrible things you say, while God is forced to sit at the side-lines, because we yielded our authority. Speaking of which, this is why it is very important to pray for leaders, so as to limit the influence of the dark spirits on their life and their decisions (**1 Tim 2:1-4**, **Jer 29:7**).

In terms of power, if engaged, the Kingdom of God is by far more powerful than the kingdom of darkness. And the sacrifice in the

Kingdom of God, which is the blameless righteous Blood of Jesus Christ, is far Superior than any sacrifice that can be offered in the kingdom of darkness. Remember I said that the degree of sacrifice, influences the degree of power that can be unleashed from the spiritual realm, hence the Kingdom of God is more portent, because Jesus's sacrifice CANNOT be matched by anyone. The problem as I've said is that the Kingdom of God isn't well engaged with by mankind, and even the people who are supposed to be children of light, i.e. Christians (**John 12:36, Eph 5:8-12**), occasionally mess around with darkness, so the light of God is not sufficiently seen upon the earth, and most of them don't even know how to properly engage in prayer.

For this reason, God's children, who choose to mature and walk the path of righteousness (**Heb 5:13-14**), and understand their divine responsibility to have the will of God done here on earth as it is in Heaven (**Matt 6:9-10**), for those people He baptizes them with His Holy Spirit and empowers them to do great things.

Understand that it is matured children of God that get empowered, because these ones are ready for service and they are truly Kingdom minded. An infant in the Kingdom of God doesn't get FULL access to Kingdom resources, except for the basic necessities, because we all know what you can expect from a child who is given tremendous power (**Gal 4:1-3**). However, just to be clear the basic necessities for one in the Kingdom of God is also very great, maybe that explains why many Christians settle with just being infants. But like I said you can't entrust a child with tremendous power, chances are they would want to use it to satisfy some foolish childish fantasy (**James 4:1-5, Luke 9:53-56 NKJV**).

But someone, like a matured good parent, would first of all spend their resources to take care of their children, pay taxes to ensure that essential services like security and other general welfare are available for his family and others, before they think of doing something for themselves. By the way, God knows that you need stuffs, but what He asks is that like a matured and responsible child of His, you should focus

FIRST on His Kingdom and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and then He will personally take care of your desires (**Matt 6:31-33**).

So to the matured who understand righteousness and their responsibility, He empowers with His Holy Spirit. And then you'll find that one of the first and most common gift that the Holy Spirit bestows on people who receive His baptism is the gift of speaking in tongues, which is a gift of prayer that offers direct communication with God (**1 Cor 14:2, 14**), and even the angelic beings (**1 Cor 13:1**). This tells you the importance of PRAYER.

3.4.4.4 The Holy Spirit Helps Us to Pray

The gift of praying in tongues, or praying in the Spirit (**Jude 1:20, 1 Cor 14:2, 15**), is a gift that God gives us, because He knows that most of us don't have sufficient understanding to pray as is required. But the Spirit intercedes for us, or I should say prays through us according to the perfect will of God (**Rom 8:26-28**).

Like I said earlier on, there are different types of prayer. We are generally familiar of praying for our needs, or the needs of others and our community. This kind of prayer can simply be you talking to God, as one would making a request of their father. It is informal and very direct.

But like I've also said God is not just your Father, He is also the Righteous Judge upholding justice for the earth and heavenly realm. So there is also the formal kind of prayer, where you petition God as the Righteous Judge (**Phil 4:4-7**).

To an extent we can carry this out by presenting legal arguments using His Word and promises to obtain a verdict from Him (**Daniel 9:2-3, 20-23, 2 Cor 1:20**). But then again there are spiritual legalities where we may have little to no understanding of, or to even know the charges that

satan may present to God against us (**Zech 3:1**, **Rev 12:10-11**), and our lack of understanding may mean that we are unable to pray effectively.

But then the Holy Spirit rises up as our ADVOCATE (**John 14:16-17**), and He effectively pleads our case before God, or the case of our nation, or whatever Kingdom agenda that He prays through us, and He secures a favorable verdict. When we pray in tongues our minds don't always know what we are praying for, though sometimes we are given understanding (**1 Cor 14:2**, **13-15**); so we could be praying for our self or some Kingdom agenda when we pray in tongues. The matured in Christ will be willing to spend hours praying in tongues, even though that prayer may not pertain to them directly, but they do it for the sake of the Kingdom, knowing fully well that God would take care of them.

I think it is also important to make mention that Jesus Christ called the Holy Spirit "another Advocate" (**John 14:16-17**), because He Himself is our Advocate in Heaven interceding on our behalf (**Hebrews 7:24-26**). As you know an advocate is a lawyer, whose primary place of operation is in the courtroom before a judge. It is also important to state that the term satan, means adversary, which is the person who brings legal charges against others in the court. The devil CANNOT execute anything on earth without securing the verdict of God. So he presents before God the sins of mankind, or the legal contracts that men enter into with him, and these provides grounds to prove that the people want to secure his influence. So if the people don't REPENT of their sins (**1 John 1:9**), or renounce their contracts with the devil, God is legally obligated to allow the devil to operate, because the people have chosen him (**2 Chron 12:8**, **Deut 28:47-48**).

But for instance, if we as Christians sin, and the devil brings charges against us to God. The Holy Spirit tugs in our heart to CONVICT us of our sin, so that we can REPENT of it and plead the Blood of Jesus Christ, so that we can receive forgiveness (**John 16:7-8**, **1 John 1:9**). And once we are forgiven, the handwriting of iniquity is blotted out, hence the case against us is struck out, and the devil is TOTALLY disarmed, unable to inflict harm against us (**Col 2:13-15**).

But if we fail to REPENT and appear before God's court, the verdict will go in favor of the devil, and he will be able to do some wicked things to us, irrespective of the fact that we are Christians. So it is better NOT to sin, but to instead live righteously by the help of the Holy Spirit; however, if we do sin, and are convicted of it (**Lev 5:17**), we should quickly REPENT and RECEIVE forgiveness (**1 John 1:9**, **2:1-2**).

The RECEIVING forgiveness part is also very important, because if we fail to believe and receive the forgiveness of God, the devil, who is a soar loser, will attempt to trouble our conscience with our shortfalls, which have already been blotted out, with the case already tossed out, that even God has chosen to forget about the case file (**Psalms 25:7**, **103:8-14**, **32:1-2**); but you will be weighed down by a heavy conscience, and this can affect your prayer life (**Hebrews 9:14**, **10:22**, **1 John 3:19-22**). And if your prayer life is affected, your effectiveness in the Kingdom of God is also affected. So even though the devil loses a case, and as a result he can't unleash his power to effect his will, he still attempts to deceive us by guilt tripping us, so that we become ineffective in the Kingdom of God, which would mean less trouble for him.

Apart from our sins, the devil may find grounds for influence in the life of an individual through the sins, or covenants of their ancestors. The spiritual realm recognizes ancestral covenants, or I should say covenants struck with an ancestor can be effective through subsequent descendants (**[Gen 17:1-2**, **7-13**, **Gen 22:15-18]**, **Lev 26:40-42**, **Acts 3:25**, **Gal 3:7-9**, **14**, **16-18**). So if your ancestor had a covenant with the devil, or his demons, there might still exist legal grounds for those covenants to find expression, even in the life of a Christian. This is a common situation especially in Africa, and I believe maybe Asia, where Christians still participate in their native cultures of ancestral worship and veneration (**Isaiah 8:19-20**). In such a case, we may be ignorant of the steps needed to break access points that the devil exploits, but the Holy Spirit is well equipped to know how to plead our case, and direct us on what to do, or not do, to secure our freedom.

Now this may sound like a theological quagmire, because the natural expectation is that when a Christian gets into Covenant with God then all other covenants ought to get automatically broken. Most do, but practically speaking not all get broken without you actually renouncing them and asking God to annul them. So it is possible for concurrent covenants to be running. I mean for instance, every human being and creature on earth is a beneficiary of the Covenant God made with Noah, and the evidence of that covenant is still visible in the rainbow till date (**Gen 8:20-22, 9:8-17, Matt 5:45**). So a person becoming a Christian does not annul that Covenant with Noah, both Covenants run concurrently. In a similar vain demonic covenants, or behavioral traits not renounced, broken or REPENTED of, can still be avenues the devil can use to find expression in the life of believers (**Acts 5:1-11, *v3***).

Suppose two unbelievers enter into a marriage covenant, but subsequently one of them becomes a believer. The New Covenant for the one who is a believer doesn't automatically annul their marriage covenant. Indeed, it may be challenging for them in the relationship given that mindsets and values have changed (**2 Cor 6:14-15**), but the believer isn't given a free pass to break that marriage covenant, except the other person seeks a divorce, or is unfaithful in the marriage (**1 Cor 7:12-16, Matt 19:9**).

In a similar fashion, there may be covenants with demonic entities that may find expression in the life of a Christian, if those covenants don't get broken or renounced. So you may find familiar patterns of sickness that follow the family line, unexplained negative traits and behavioural patterns (anger, lust, substance abuse, hatred, gossip etc.), poverty and misfortune etc. All these kinds of "patterns" should not be ignored, but rather they can, and should, be broken, and often times this entails renouncing ancestral covenants which has given the devil and his demons occasion to perpetrate such patterns in a family-line. And of course the Holy Spirit would be instrumental in helping you dislodge the enemy from whatever grounds he holds in your life.

So we desperately need the Holy Spirit to prosecute the Intercession and prayer ministry through us, for our benefit and the benefit of the Kingdom of God. And like everything else we must yield to Him, glean from His wisdom and spiritual understanding, and OBEY His directives. We all know that in the court of law it is important for the client to yield to their lawyers advice and directives, because even a simple act of speaking out of turn or addressing the court, or judge, inappropriately can cause the client to be held in contempt and suffer needless punishment.

So we can pray with our understanding, both informal prayers that leverage our relationship with God as our Father, and formal prayers, petitioning His court using His word and promises in Scripture, including those promises He gives to you Personally (**2 Cor 1:20**). But in ADDITION to the prayers we offer with our understanding, we MUST also yield to allow the Holy Spirit pray through us. This is one of His important ministries while here on earth with us.

So let us all endeavor to PRAY, learning different forms of prayer, and praying for the sake of the Kingdom (**Matt 6:31-33**). It is God's WILL for us to CONTINUALLY PRAY (**1 Thess 5:16-18**). And matured children of God are interested in doing the Father's will.

3.4.5 The Holy Spirit's Ministry in Spiritual Warfare

In our previous discussion, we've already began to see how the Holy Spirit engages in spiritual warfare through PRAYER, but I want to highlight the subject of spiritual warfare even further.

A lot of believers are ignorant of the fact that the devil has decided to engage in a fruitless unrelenting battle with us (**Rev 12:17**). Fruitless, because our victory is already announced and secured (**Rev 12:11**). But the devil has little time and nothing else to do, so in anger he is fighting against the whole earth (**Rev 12:12**), which God loves (**John 3:16**), and

he is especially pissed with us (**Rev 12:17**, **John 15:18-19**). If you play the ignorant card, the devil will get away with doing things he is not supposed to do because you allowed him.

When Jesus Christ healed, or I should say, delivered a woman bent over by a spirit of infirmity, Jesus made the case that the woman was a daughter of Abraham (**Luke 13:10-17** **NKJV**). This means that legally the woman had the right to freedom as a daughter of Abraham, but for some reason she had allowed a spirit to bind and limit her. We must not allow the enemy to bind and limit us.

Now we must understand that our warfare is spiritual (**Eph 6:12**). And with this understanding we must be critically aware that we cannot fight it by any natural means.

Sometimes I find some ignorant people pick up a revelation from the Word of God, and they run with it without submitting it to the Holy Spirit for Him to guide them on how to properly appropriate it. So they us their natural logic to talk all sorts of things, and justify it with a portion of Scripture, but things end up backfiring, and it becomes clear that demons gain the upper hand over them and deal with them (**Acts 19:13-17**, **2 Peter 2:10-15**, **Jude 1:8-12**). They then become disillusioned and think that God doesn't work (**Prov 19:3**), meanwhile the problem was that they didn't understand the legalities of God, didn't submit to the Holy Spirit and they approached everything with their natural logic and mind. You can't fight a supernatural battle naturally.

Now let me show you an illustration of how it is supposed to be done, through the example of Jesus Christ. After He got baptized, the Holy Spirit lead Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (**Matt 4:1**).

The first lesson of spiritual warfare, DON'T initiate a direct confrontation of spiritual forces by yourself, let God GUIDE you by His Holy Spirit to initiate any confrontation. In other words, don't go out looking for trouble when God hasn't sent you. You cannot coarse God to do things at your own time, and by your design. God is KING, NOT your servant. He certainly wants to destroy the works of the devil, and He is pleased

to do that through us (Ps 149:4-9, Rom 16:20), but sometimes He has set times and parameters to meet before He can execute judgment on natural and spiritual entities (Gen 15:16, Rev 2:20-21). So if you decide to ride out emotionally, without God's consent, and you think you would blackmail God with His Word, you'll find out in the most practical way that you do not have enough spiritual intelligence to blackmail God, just ask Job ([Job 13:3, 15, 19:5-6], [Job 38:1-3, 40:1-8, 42:1-6]); and secondly, if you escape the fight you started, you will come out unnecessarily bruised and battered (Num 14:39, 45, Acts 19:13-17). So step one in spiritual warfare is be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Step two, ought to be a no brainer, but since Adam and Eve fell for it we need to be cautious about it, and that is DO NOT LISTEN TO WHAT THE devil SAYS (Gen 3:1). Even, and especially, when it sounds good, just TUNE OUT the devil (Gen 3:4-5, Matt 4:3, 5-6, 8-9). And it is possible to tune out the devil by listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God revealed in Scripture ([Gen 2:16-17, 3:2-3], Matt 4:4, 7, 10). And it is possible to take captive those stray thoughts that the devil influences, whether they be your thoughts or the thoughts pervasive in corrupt society, and bring them into submission to Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5).

So in spiritual warfare your mind can be your most important asset, or greatest liability. You need the Holy Spirit to guard your heart and secure what God has said and entrusted to you (2 Tim 1:13-14); and He often does this by reminding you of things from your study (John 14:26), or from past experiences (Ps 42:5-6).

Step three, don't blindly interpret the Word of God. I started by highlighting how some people ignorantly handle the Word of God. Don't be like them, but instead rightly handle the Word of Truth, by the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 2:15 **KJV**), Who is also referred to as the Word of God (Eph 6:17, John 6:63). Remember, I said you shouldn't engage spiritual warfare with natural abilities. The devil is an ancient spirit compared to you. He is not ignorant of God's Word (James 2:18-19, [Matt 8:29, Jude 1:6, Rev 20:10]), as you know he tried to use it to tempt Jesus Christ (Matt 4:6).

No competent lawyer is ignorant of the laws of the land. And even though you may know aspects of the law, it is never advisable for you to plead your case against a competent lawyer, without having a lawyer of your own. Because even though you may be innocent, a competent lawyer can isolate aspects of the law to bring about your conviction.

The devil has corrupted his wisdom (**Ezekiel 28:16-19**), but don't be fooled to think that he is ignorant of God's Law. If he were he wouldn't be able to present accusations against us in God's court. So understand that the devil knows God's Word, even though he specializes at isolating and twisting it like you find some people do.

The devil tried to isolate aspects of God's Word, His Law, to trip up Jesus Christ, but in a typical legal argument fashion Jesus Christ presented a counter argument from the Law that won the day. Now we also have a competent Lawyer on our side, the Holy Spirit. And He is the One Who is capable of presenting appropriate arguments on our behalf based on the Law, and He can raise the appropriate counter arguments when the devil tries to use the Law to minister death to us on account of our sin (**Rom 7:4-6**).

And what I'll deduce to be the last step from our illustration, is for you to have a DEEP knowledge of your INHERITANCE, because the devil is a very skilful trader (**Ezekiel 28:16**), and he will do everything to get you to buy from him what you already have free access to in God.

He made Eve believe that in listening to him she could become like God, whereas God created mankind, both male and female, in His Likeness (**Gen 3:4-6**, **1:26**). He tried to make Jesus Christ trade worship to receive the kingdoms of the world (**Matt 4:8-10**), whereas to reign over the whole world was already Jesus's inheritance from God, as prophesied in Scripture (**Daniel 7:13-14**, **Isaiah 11:1-10**, **Matt 28:18**).

So don't let the devil dangle pleasure before you in exchange for your time, authority or dignity, you can get true joy and pleasure in the presence of the LORD (**Psalms 16:11**, **Rom 14:17**), and still keep everything else at no extra cost. So don't let him convince you to drown

your sorrows in alcohol, and in so doing you seal your downfall (Prov 31:6-7); instead get drunk in the Spirit, as some would say, and as the people perceived the apostles to be on Pentecost (Acts 2:4, 13, Eph 5:18-20). Don't let the devil make you believe he can prosper you. Whatever he gives comes at a far more costly price to you, so it is just NOT worth it. Meanwhile God can prosper you, and add no sorrow to it (Prov 10:22 **NKJV**), meaning you will actually enjoy the wealth (Eccl 5:19).

So if you are to prevail in spiritual warfare it is important to INTIMATELY know your INHERITANCE, and stick by it, no matter how long it takes for it to manifest. Do NOT sell out to the devil. And again yield to the Holy Spirit to rise up to your defence with the appropriate Scripture; and engage with Him to know both your natural and spiritual inheritance.

Most of the natural inheritance are common to all of us, but we each have unique spiritual inheritance. You can gain knowledge of your spiritual inheritance through a word of prophecy inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:6-7). You can then in turn use that prophecy and spiritual heritage as grounds to wage spiritual warfare (1 Tim 1:18-19, Isaiah 54:17).

For instance, Daniel used the prophecy of Jeremiah to direct his prayer, and that prayer was instrumental in the spiritual warfare involving the nations and the war in the angelic realm (Daniel 9:2-3, 20-23).

For you, you might have received a prophecy that you would do one thing or the other for the Kingdom of God. If things in your life make it seem as if you wouldn't fulfil the prophecy, or there is a hindrance, you can petition God using that prophecy as grounds for God to intervene to remove the hindrances, and facilitate the fulfillment of the prophecy. In this way you are using your spiritual heritage and prophecy as a means to fight spiritual warfare.

Even though our spiritual INHERITANCE are unique, yet our natural heritage is quite common to all, with respect to healing, provision,

protection and deliverance from the devil. We all have legitimate access to all these things.

So I'll briefly discuss on some of our COMMON inheritance in Jesus Christ, so that the enemy would NOT be able to take advantage of us due to our ignorance. Again I say the heritage I'll be discussing are available to ALL believers, even without having the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, with the baptism of the Holy Spirit some of the things we have as an inheritance gets significantly amplified and more potent, causing many more others to benefit instead of just us. Hence I'll once again encourage you to still seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

So let's move on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE INHERITANCE OF A BELIEVER

Galatians 4:1-3

*[1] What I am saying is that **as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate**. [2] The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. [3] **So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world**. NIV*

Note: It is possible to be a Christian, and have access to the great promises of God (**2 Cor 1:20**), but fail to experience them if you lack understanding of your inheritance. As we know Jesus Christ illustrated this in the parable of the prodigal son. The elder son who stayed at home, laboring to maintain his father's estate, had no understanding that everything else was his, because his younger brother had already taken his own share of the inheritance. And because he lacked understanding he didn't know he could take a goat, or even a fatten cow, to have a feast with his friends (**Luke 15:25-32**, ***v31***). So understanding and knowledge is vital in the Kingdom of Heaven, especially pertaining to what we have access to, and this kind of understanding is made available by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12

*[12] What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, **so that we may UNDERSTAND what God has FREELY GIVEN US**. NIV*

It is the goal of this chapter to furnish you with the basic understanding of the inheritance you have in Christ, so that you can live a fruitful life here on earth, successfully evade the deception of the devil, and at the end of your journey be welcomed into Heaven in Glory and amazing rewards (**Mark 10:28-31**, **2 Peter 1:5-8**, **10-11**).

I may not be able to cover the full scope of our inheritance, but I trust that as you fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He will bring to light everything else that you need (**John 14:26**, **John 16:12-13**).

4.1 Healing Belongs to Us

Indeed we live in a fallen world, our bodies (flesh) has been irredeemably corrupted, we do not embrace the principle of rest (**Exodus 20:8-10**); and more so in our time, food, which ought to sustain and naturally rejuvenate the body, has been terribly modified, both plants and animals, and a lot of what we eat now are artificial substances that our digestive system wasn't designed to handle. Not to mention of the terrible pollution of air, water and land, which also affects the yield and quality of crops, livestock and sea food. So even with our best efforts our bodies may sometimes succumb to sickness due to the overall environment.

Even though we are born again children of God with Heavenly identity, we are commissioned to effect the will of God here on earth, and as such we can't be clothed with the immortal, incorruptible heavenly body that God has for us (**1 Cor 15:40**, **42**, **50-54**, **2 Cor 5:1-9**), hence we must remain in our earthly vessels to maintain legitimacy to operate here on earth (**Genesis 1:26**, **Ps 115:16**). Because of this constraint, God has graciously made available healing for all those who He calls, which is you and I that believe in His Son.

And to secure this privilege for all of us, God had to find a way of doing it legally, so that we can access it with confidence and without any objection from the devil. So we all know that sickness aims to destroy the body, and ultimately lead to death. So God allowed for Jesus's body to be utterly destroyed from His Head to His Foot as payment, so that sickness would have no right to continue its mission of destruction on those who believe in Christ.

So from the Head of Jesus Christ a crown of thorns was placed (**Matt 27:29**). This undoubtedly caused head trauma. And besides that, during Jesus's Passion, He was slapped, spat on, punched, and repeatedly struck on the face with a rod (**Matt 26:67, 27:29-30**); not to mention that according to prophecy they viciously pulled out His beards from His face (**Isaiah 50:6**). So there is no malady on the head or face, that Jesus Christ didn't pay for.

Then in the hands of Pilate and his soldiers, Jesus Christ, was terribly flogged (**John 19:1**). I believe I watched a documentary quite a long while ago which provided historical insight into the Roman act of crucifixion; it was said that the whip used had multiple extended strands or tails; and on each tail was attached sharp objects like pieces of glass, broken bones, metals etc. So every stroke of the whip would have the tails and the sharp objects driven deep into the skin. And then when it is pulled back for the next stroke, portions of flesh can be ripped out. It was believed that Jesus Christ was flogged about forty strokes, but it very well could be much more. At the end of that beating, it would be possible to see His bones, and certainly some of His internal organs would suffer lacerations. David painted a vivid picture of the crucifixion of the Messiah (**Psalms 22:14-18, 27-31**), just like he prophesied about His resurrection (**Ps 16:9-11**, **Acts 2:25-28**), and glorification (**Ps 110:1-2**, **Acts 2:34-35**). In the graphic image that David painted, the aspect of Jesus's bones being on full display as a result of what we know to be the historic flogging process, was captured in His prophecy (**Psalm 22:17**).

And lastly, we know Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross Hands and Feet (**John 20:25, 27**).

Prophecy indicated that His body was marred beyond human recognition, an appalling sight to behold (**Isaiah 52:13-15**). I hope you're taking note of the prophetic insight that God provided hundreds and even thousands of years before hand, and how they perfectly match up with historic insight, I just felt the need to point it out, because it shows that Jesus Christ was not joking when He said He came to fulfil everything that was written about Him (**Matt 5:17-18**).

So Jesus Christ paid this unimaginable price for us. If it was just for sin, God would have allowed Him to face a quick relatively painless death, and this would still secure a place for us in Heaven, because the price of sin is simply "death" (**Rom 6:23**). But God allowed Him to go through the unimaginable torture, and total destruction of His Body beyond human recognition, all to purchase and secure healing for us.

Isaiah 53:3-5

*[3] He was despised and rejected by mankind, **a Man of suffering, and FAMILIAR with pain**. **Like one from whom people hide their faces He was despised**, and we held Him in low esteem. [4] **Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering**, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. [5] **But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities**; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, **AND BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED**. NIV*

1 Peter 2:24

*[24] "**He Himself bore our sins**" in His body on the cross, **so that we might die to sins** and live for righteousness; "**BY HIS WOUNDS YOU HAVE BEEN HEALED**." NIV*

After such a great price paid for us, it would be a pity and shame for us to "meekly" carry sickness in our bodies. We must raise an objection, and assert the fact that Jesus Christ has paid for our healing, hence any sickness operating in our body is illegal, hence it must stop. It doesn't matter if the result of the verdict of healing happens instantly, or takes a while before manifesting, we must stand our grounds, be resolute, and claim what God has made available. Healing is part of our heritage and we need to grab at it with both hands, never letting go.

My Testimony

Again I can tell you from personal experience, through a series of mysterious sicknesses, God entrenched this revelation in me of holding onto healing and deliverance, and this caused me to fight the good fight

of faith. At the end of one encounter when the devil was poised to snatch my life before time, God spoke to me in the midst of severe pains, I mean it felt like every inch of my skin had pins piercing it, and the slightest movement aggravated it. Not to mention the searing headache, with my eyes just seeing multiple colours like a scrambled TV channel showing white noise.

At that time I had transcribed many of the revelations of the Word that God had given me, and I felt well if I died, something would be left behind for the Body of Christ. But God spoke to me and said if I should close my eyes I would die, but before I decided on what to do, He let me know that He had more work for me to do. Then He said, if I wanted to live, I should start laughing. I didn't have to think about it for long, God had work for me to do, so I chose to live, and then I began laughing.

In each moment of laughter I felt relieve, but in the intermission of taking a breath the devil would intensify the pain. But I chose to be resilient in God's command and my desire to live, and to fulfil the will of God for my life, so I kept laughing.

After about five or so times of laughing and breathing, one of the very few times my eyes have been open to peep into the spiritual realm while I was still awake, I saw a shadowy figure leaving my room, past the wall and I briefly saw him through my window. As he walked away, all the painful symptoms left with him, and by the next morning I was seventy percent better. And in about three days I was completely healed.

Regardless of the fact that there are many natural conditions that can induce illness, as I stated in the beginning, the fact is that a majority of times the devil and his demons are the ones who put sickness on people. I believe it is for this reason that God allowed Jesus Christ to pay a high price so that by His sacrifice we can have a legal argument against the devil.

From my experiences with sicknesses I could have a dream that I was going to get attacked, and then I might eat something and then fall

terribly sick. If you do not understand the spiritual side of things, it would only be that you ate something that made you sick, whereas spiritual forces are at the background manipulating the situation.

From the testimony I shared I believe God wanted me to see the role the devil played in sicknesses, and He wanted me to laugh in victory (**Psalms 59:7-10**), because Jesus Christ had completely overcome the devil and all his schemes. When you KNOW that you have victory over the devil, over sickness, and everything thrown against you, you can confidently laugh. I believe God taught me that confidence in that experience; since then, it doesn't matter the symptoms I feel, I stand on the position of being already healed by Christ; so I get to praising God, singing out loud, and claiming His promises, and by two or three days, without the need of taking any drugs, but just staying hydrated, resting, and forcing myself to eat, I recover as though nothing happened. Even when I eat the wrong thing with other people that causes food sickness; and say I and two others begin to fall sick, I never get as bad as they do, and I quickly get back up and doing before them, even though they get pumped with drugs.

So healing is your heritage in Christ. He paid a tremendous price to make it available. You will be doing no one any favor staying sick, and appearing sober. So rise up like a brave soldier, claim your victory in Christ and give the devil no room to afflict your body any further. Healing is most times spiritual warfare, so involve the Holy Spirit to fight and quicken you (**Rom 8:11**), and keep your mind focused on what God says, NOT how you feel. To conclude I'll quote a few Passages below:

Psalms 30:2-4

*[2] Lord my God, **I CALLED TO YOU FOR HELP, AND YOU HEALED ME**. [3] You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; You spared me from going down to the pit. [4] **Sing the praises of the Lord, you His faithful people; praise His Holy Name**. NIV*

Psalms 107:19-20

*[19] Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, **and He SAVED them from their distress**. [20] **HE SENT OUT HIS WORD AND HEALED THEM**; He rescued them from the grave. NIV*

Jeremiah 17:14-15

*[14] **HEAL ME, LORD, AND I WILL BE HEALED; save me and I will be saved**, for You are the One I praise. [15] They keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it now be fulfilled!" NIV*

Matthew 10:1, 7-8

*[1] Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them **authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness**.*

…

*[7] As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' [8] **HEAL THE SICK, raise the dead, CLEANSE those who have leprosy, drive out demons**. **FREELY YOU HAVE RECEIVED; FREELY GIVE**. NIV*

James 5:14-16

*[14] **IS ANYONE AMONG YOU SICK? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the Name of the Lord. [15] AND THE PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH WILL MAKE THE SICK PERSON WELL; THE LORD WILL RAISE THEM UP. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven**. [16] Therefore confess your sins to each other and **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER SO THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED**. The prayer of a **RIGHTEOUS** person is **POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE**. NIV*

4.2 Daily Provision

Another aspect of our inheritance is provision. Indeed we are to pray for daily bread (**Matt 6:11**), but even before we do God knows that we need it (**Matt 6:31-32**), and He makes provisions for it.

At times His means of provision may be supernatural (**Exodus 16:4**, **31**, **1 Kings 17:2-6**). At other times He may use people to bless you (**1 Kings**

17:8-16). But in the general case, He gives His people wisdom and favor to make wealth (Deut 8:17-18). Which ever way it is that God chooses to use, look to Him and trust Him to provide for you. Never in desperation allow yourself to do wrong things just to get by. God can sometimes allow us to experience want to test the resolve of our heart to show whether we TRUST Him as our source and Provider (Deut 8:2-5). But those trying times would not last for too long. If things seem to persist longer than expected, then have an honest conversation with God, telling Him how you feel, asking Him to reveal what's going on, and then submit to His will and direction. The point is don't assume anything (2 Cor 12:7-10); when confused talk to God and hold onto Him until He answers (Gen 32:24-28, Isaiah 62:6-7). And I can tell you for sure that He answers.

Also one practical way of securing a flow of provision and favor from God is to give. It sounds counter-intuitive but I've seen it work. It is one of those spiritual mysteries that is quite difficult to fully comprehend.

Proverbs 11:24-25

*[24] **One person gives freely, yet gains even more**; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. [25] **A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed**. NIV*

Proverbs 19:17

*[17] **Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them** for what they have done. NIV*

Luke 6:38

*[38] **Give, and it will be given to you**. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. **For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you**." NIV*

Acts 20:35

*[35] In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must **help the weak**, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: '**It is more blessed to give than to receive**.' " NIV*

I know the subject of giving can be a touchy subject that pierces the heart of some people (**Phil 4:14-19**, **2 Cor 8:1-3**, **7**, **12-15**, **9:6-8**, **10-15**), but nevertheless it is a Biblical truth, and I am committed to teaching and expounding on the Truth according to Scripture.

I need to make it clear that God has absolutely no need for your money. However the generality of humanity has had their hearts intertwined with money and wealth. God recognizes the fact that our heart follows wherever we put our treasure (**Matt 6:21**). And God is after our heart. So if He can get us to commit our treasures to Him, He knows He can truly win our hearts.

So a person with a heart that is not attached to earthly treasures, He is confident to bless such a person with riches without the fear of having them turn on Him and once again return their heart and confidence to their wealth. So God has no lack, and He has no problem making people rich (**Gen 26:1-3**, **12-14**, **Psalms 4:6-7**, **25:12-13**, **1 Tim 6:17**), however He must detach our hearts from money, because He doesn't like competing for our attention (**Luke 16:13-14** **NKJV**). And the fastest and easiest way to detach our hearts from money, is to have us give it away to bless people. The rich young ruler illustrates the point of a seemingly good man who desired to follow Jesus Christ, but his heart was too attached to his wealth (**Matt 19:21-24**, **1 Tim 6:17-19**). Anyway, the point is that giving is one way to secure provision from God.

But I still maintain that doing something productive, which God can come alongside you to bless, is the general way that God provides for His people. I've already extensively discussed about how you can ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and help in your secular endeavors. With that, and the atmosphere of peace and joy that you should exude by the Holy Spirit, you will prosper in your workplace or business. But I must say, laziness, and wishful thinking are not virtues that God promotes among His children (**Prov 10:4**, **Matt 25:24-30**, **Hebrews 6:10-12**, **2 Thess 3:7-15**, **Eph 4:28**). Also avoid easy money and gambling, those don't build character, and God wants His children to be exemplary people, holy and set apart from the ways of the world (**2 Cor 6:17-18**).

4.3 Protection and Deliverance

As children of God, we have security as one of our heritage. Our security system in God is one that also involves our verbal participation. A popular Passage that many people quote, even secular rappers, is that "*no weapon formed against me shall prosper*…", but the very next portion of the verse says:

Isaiah 54:17

*[17] No weapon formed against you shall prosper, **And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn**. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me," Says the Lord. NKJV*

Isaiah 54:17

*[17] no weapon forged against you will prevail, **and you will refute every tongue that accuses you**. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from Me," declares the Lord. NIV*

Hence we must learn to decree, speak out loud, God's protection over us, our family, property and community (**Psalms 75:9-10, 3:2, 8**). It may sound crazy speaking to the air, but "crazy" that works and is in line with Scripture, isn't crazy in my books (**1 Cor 1:27-29**). When David went against Goliath. The giant wasn't quiet cursing at David, but David didn't stand quiet as well. He invoked the Name of God, declared the outcome of the battle before he charged at Goliath (**1 Samuel 17:43-51**).

We have a host of angels assigned to us, to minister to us, i.e. serve us (**Heb 1:14**). But Remember, the spiritual realm often needs our consent or prayer, which is often verbal (**Matt 6:7-8**). So whether we proclaim it speaking in tongues, which the angels can understand (**1 Cor 13:1**), or decree Scripture pertaining to our protection (**Psalms 91:11-14**), we

must understand that we have protection detail assigned to us, and we must utilise this privilege.

And if ever we find ourselves in trouble, we can decree and declare God's deliverance, and His angels will get to work to effect it (**Psalms 103:20**, **1 Peter 4:11**).

Note, personally speaking, I believe it is more accurate to either just proclaim the Word of God, or to speak directly to God, and then let Him instruct His angels as He chooses, instead of trying to directly solicit the help of angels (**Joshua 5:13-15**). This is to guard against crossing lines of worship, as prayer, which is an act of communicating and soliciting help or intervention of spirits, can be viewed as an act of worship, and we must never put ourselves in the position of worshiping anyone but God (**Rev 19:10**, **22:8-9**). Besides, angels are primarily God's servants, God just assigns, or sends them to us as the need requires. However, if we interact wrongly, or presumptuously, with them the results may not be too great (**Exodus 23:20-23**, **Luke 1:18-20**). So it is worthwhile being cautious, though not in fear, because we know that they CANNOT trespass beyond God's permissible will, and we know that God loves us greatly. But anyway there are instances where God allows us to converse with angels. So the point I'm making is not a doctrinal point, but a personal suggestion.

Either-way, don't let life and circumstances just happen to you. Take advantage of your heritage. Decree and block the enemy before he advances. And believe that God has made provisions to protect and deliver you, so you shouldn't fear the terror by day, or pestilence by night (**Psalms 91:3-10**). The devil would like to terrorize and have us cowering in a corner, but God wants us to be bold as lions (**2 Tim 1:7**, **Prov 28:1**, **Acts 4:29**, **28:31**, **Heb 10:38-39**, **Rev 21:7-8**), not even fearing the possibility of losing our life (**Heb 2:14-15**, **Rev 12:11**, **2 Cor 1:3-5**, **8-11**).

4.4 We Each Have At Least One Spiritual Gift or Ability

Most of us envy and look at other Christians who excel in the spiritual gifting of God, or appear more peaceful, loving or more blessed than we are, and we fail to realize that GOD DOES NOT SHOW FAVORITISM (**Acts 10:34-35**, **Rom 2:11**, **Gal 2:6**). The truth is that He has also blessed us with something according to our current state and maturity. When we focus on and cultivate what we have it opens the doors for God to entrust us with more (**John 15:1-2**).

Jesus Christ illustrated this in the parable of the talents, which I encourage you to study closely (**Matt 25:14-30** **NKJV**).

The first point is that EVERYONE was given something; and the measure of what was given was in accordance to each one's ability.

The next point is focus on what you have, and be faithful with it. Avoid comparing yourself with people (**Gal 6:4-5**), but instead strive to do the BEST you can do with what you've been given. God will not judge you based on what you don't have, but on what you did with what you had (**Rev 3:2**).

And the last lesson is that, if for some reason you cannot be productive, then find those who are productive and support them. Your support to their efforts and whatever results it yields will also be accrued to you (**Phil 1:3-11**, **4:10**, **14-19**). And these days it is quite easy to support the Gospel message going out. Taking a second or two to like, share, subscribe, follow, retweet or whatever can go a long way in helping the message go out and support those who are productive in the Kingdom of God. So we all have the ability to play a little part in advancing the Kingdom of God; so the excuse of being less gifted, shy or whatever, is nothing but that, an excuse.

But really spend time with the Holy Spirit and discern the gift God has bestowed on you, and don't look down on it. If it is that you are a

cheerful person, spread that cheer with gladness. For some people, a smile or cheerful greeting can be brighter than the rising sun, sparking hope and joy. If you're gifted in the arts, let the Holy Spirit help you to bring forth creative beauty to the world (**Exodus 35:30-35**). Whatever gift it is use it well (**1 Peter 4:10**, **1 Cor 12:7**); it is usually the case that God increases the gifting of those who serve faithfully (**John 15:1-2**). The people you see and admire didn't start off at the point you see them today. There were times of pruning and faithfulness, before the manifestation you see.

My Testimony

In university, before I got baptized with the Holy Spirit, that same year I began serving as a sanctuary keeper. Our responsibilities entailed cleaning the church pews, and setting up decorations. The sanctuary was about five to six thousand seater capacity.

After I got baptized in the Spirit, there was a Sunday morning I got a text that wasn't meant for me. It was the practise for the executives of the student association to visit those admitted in the clinic on Sunday mornings, because their friends would be at church and there was no one to buy them food. So the excos (i.e. executives) would go, pray for them and buy whatever they wanted to eat. I wasn't an exco, and much more, I tend to being introverted. So when I arrived the gathering point, it was then I found out I wasn't supposed to have gotten the text. I had the option to leave and join the church service, but something made me stay and go along with the group of about five or six of us.

I was of course worried about what to say, or how to pray for people I had never met before. But the wonderful thing that happened was that the right Scriptures came, the message and conversations flowed, and more than that I saw the countenance of people change in response to the Word and prayer. This enlivened me, and I believe it was pivotal to leading me down this path that I'm on. But remember it kind of started with gladly cleaning pews in the sanctuary, being mistakenly summoned

to visit the sick, and then yielding to the serendipitous moment, which I believe was all orchestrated by the Holy Spirit.

So don't look down on small and simple beginnings (**Zech 4:6, 10**). Cherish the gift you HAVE; envy no one, but encourage everyone, because we are all on the same team (**1 Cor 12:12-27**). Recognize that you are valuable to the Body of Christ by God's estimation, and that is all that really matters. Serve in Love and for the pleasure of God, and not to please or impress any man (**John 7:17-18**, **12:43**, **Gal 5:13**, **Col 3:12-16**, **Rom 14:17-18**). In this way you will grow and prosper, and the enemy would find no grounds to torment your mind. You know what they say about an idle mind … (**2 Thess 3:7**, **10-13**, **1 Tim 5:13**).

4.5 Eternal Life

We are those who would inherit eternal life through Jesus Christ (**John 3:14-18**, **36**, **John 5:24**). I think one big flex we can use this fact for is if the devil comes against us, we can counter him with the fact that his own time is short (**Rev 12:12**); and he is inevitably going to face torment and eternal death in the lake of fire, separated from God and His splendour for ever (**Rev 20:10**). Indeed it may make him angry, but his feelings don't matter in this situation, and to be clear you aren't insulting him (**Jude 1:8-10**), you're just stating facts of Scripture. But remember to use this as a rebuttal, avoid initiating confrontations. But if you are attacked from the spiritual realm, you have justification to fight back (**Joel 3:3-8**, **Eph 6:10-11**, **16-17**, **2 Cor 2:11**), but just make sure you fight with wisdom and the Holy Spirit.

But really the fact that we have eternal life should make you giddy every morning you wake up. It should empower you to live for God fully without any reservations here on earth. It should make you bold and courageous, though not stupid to do some of those YOLO stuff to get a hit of adrenaline.

Anyway, if you truly believe that you have eternal life, it should free you up to live this life gloriously for God. People who have hope ONLY for this life, and no purpose after, tend to live either in fear, or on the extreme side of sin and self indulgence (**1 Cor 15:12-13, 17-20**). Most try to do everything to preserve this life, protect their fragile reputation and ego, and live within the constructs of society and the world (**Matt 16:24-27**).

But someone who knows that they possess eternal life, would have no fear spending this life on earth to please God, so that the next one is even more glorious (**2 Cor 5:7-11**). They would have no problem facing persecution and disgrace, because their mission isn't to protect their own reputation, but rather to elevate God's own (**John 7:17-18**).

Our life here on earth, that God has placed a demand for, is nothing compared to the life He has in store for us (**Rom 8:18-19**, **2 Cor 4:16-18** quoted below). So let our heritage of eternal life keep us focused on doing what we need to do.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

[16] Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [17] ***For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all****. [18] So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but* ***what is unseen is eternal****. NIV*

The heritage of eternal life should really liberate us to truly live our life here on earth for God. So let's be motivated by the eternal glories ahead.

CHAPTER FIVE: LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, THE HEARTBEAT OF CHRISTIANITY

With respect to the Christian lifestyle we've talked a bit about holiness, which is a process of Sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit, and we highlighted its importance (**Hebrews 12:14**). However, I would say that the principal tenet of the Christian faith in general is Love and relationship. It is unarguable that without Love, there really cannot be Christianity (**1 Cor 13:1-3**).

I mean first of all God is identified as Love (**1 John 4:8**, **4:16**). Secondly, it is out of Love for the world that He sent His Son to save and redeem us (**John 3:16**, **1 John 4:7-12**, **Rom 5:6-8**). Similarly, it is out of Love for the Father (**John 14:31**, **15:10**), and Love for us (**John 15:12-13**), that Jesus Christ was willing to undertake the grievously painful mission of Salvation (**Heb 12:2-3**, **5:7-10**). And having demonstrated this kind of Love for us, we are expected to Love Him and the Father as well (**John 14:21**, **23**, **1 John 5:1-3**). And the greatest command in Scripture is to LOVE God with ALL of one's heart, strength and mind (**Matt 22:36-38**, **Deut 6:5**). And that Love, which we have for God, MUST overflow to our fellow Christians (**Matt 22:39**, **Lev 19:18**, **1 John 4:19-21**, **2:9-11**). And it shouldn't stop there, because we are called to Love EVERYONE else, even our enemies (**Matt 5:43-48**).

So reading these Passages cited above you'd find that there is a lot of Loving going on. But I can bet that a lot of people don't really know the core meaning of Love and what it takes to build healthy relationships. So I'll attempt to give us a perspective that covers the major aspect of Love, and discuss the various categories of relationships we are expected to have as Christians, and how to properly maintain them.

5.1 What is Love?

Most of us associate Love to a “gooey” emotional feeling, but Love is more than an emotional feeling, even though feelings do precipitate from Love. However, it is possible to still Love in the absence of that “gooey” feeling.

For instance, a good parent loves their child unconditionally. But children by virtue of the fallen nature do foolish things at times, that would warrant the reprimand or discipline of their parent. When a GOOD parent disciplines their child they do it out of Love (**Prov 13:24, 23:13-16**); but you can bet that at that moment of discipline that parent isn't particularly having a “gooey” feeling even though genuine Love is present and being manifested (**Rev 3:19**). It actually breaks the heart of a GOOD parent to have to administer discipline to their child, but it is a pain they are willing to endure to set their child on the right path (**Prov 22:6**). But of course, I must state that there will be MANY emotional good times that would exist between that parent and their child, moments that would warm the heart in testament of love, hence love does have “gooey” moments. But in the absence of those moments, like during discipline for instance, Love still exists.

So we need to understand the deeper essence of Love that is not dependent on shifting emotions, so that we can build lasting and Loving relationships as is expected of us as Christians. If God's Love for mankind was dependent on shifting emotions, He would have destroyed us by now, and by our honest evaluation we would know that we deserved it.

I would say that there are two principal pillars upon which Love stands. The first is that Love is a CHOICE, and the second is that Love entails SACRIFICE. I believe everything else pertaining to Love can be attached to one of these two pillars.

5.1.1 Love is a CHOICE

In the absence of CHOICE love is impossible. The element of CHOICE precedes every expression of Love.

In the illustration I gave, I cited that a GOOD parent loves their child unconditionally. But the fact of the matter is that we know that there are some parents who aren't good, and by their actions it is clear that they don't Love their children. So to put it simply, some parents CHOOSE NOT to Love their children. And by extension their actions towards their children does not have any subsequent demonstration of Love and affection. So plainly speaking, Love is a CHOICE.

God CHOSE to Love us, even before He manifested us into creation (**Eph 1:4-5**). And He STILL chose to continue to Love us even after we rebelled against Him and practically became His enemies (**Col 1:21-22**, **Rom 5:8**, **5:10**).

Jesus Christ made it clear that He CHOSE us, even before we had any inclination of choosing Him (**John 15:16**). It is as a result of the fact that He chose and Loved us, that we are then able to Love (**1 John 4:7**, **11**, **19**). I'll emphasize this point a little more shortly, because just like holiness, true Love, doesn't originate from us, it is the product of the Love we receive from the Lord, which then emanates and dispenses from our heart through the Holy Spirit (**Ezekiel 36:25-29**, **Rom 5:5**). Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself, let me backtrack to adequately prove that Love is a Choice. Let's go way back to the Garden of Eden.

5.1.1.1 Why there was Choice in the Garden of Eden

Like some people I've kind of pondered why God put the one forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden, and gave Adams and Eve the command not to eat it; in my mind it would have seemed better not to have it there at all. Biblically we know that God is incapable of tempting anyone (**James**

1:13). And I believe this is confirmed with the fact that He didn't make the forbidden tree to be exceptionally appealing or tempting as Eve might have made us believe (Gen 3:6). He made all the trees equally attractive and appealing (Gen 2:9).

So the presence of the forbidden tree wasn't there to tempt Adam and Eve, so the question is why was it there? Now I believe that God put it there so that Adam and Eve would have the opportunity to express true Love through the avenue of CHOICE. Jesus Christ equated obedience to His commands as an expression of Love (John 14:15). Hence when we CHOOSE to obey His commands we prove our Love for Him. In a similar fashion, because God wanted to have a Loving relationship with mankind, He had to give Adam and Eve an opportunity to practically demonstrate their Love for Him through the avenue of CHOICE, just as He manifested His Love for them by CHOOSING to make them in His Image, and entrusting all the work of His creation to them. You would be considered either crazy, full of Love, or existentially about to die, for you to hand over everything you've worked for to another. In the case of God, it was the fullness of TRUE LOVE that made Him give mankind dominion over ALL His earthly creation (Gen 1:26, Ps 115:16).

So the point is that God did NOT want them to fall into sin, it wasn't in any way His plan, otherwise He wouldn't have been filled with regret for creating mankind when they fell into sin and rebellion (Gen 6:6).

But knowing fully well the risk He was taking by giving mankind a free CHOICE, still in Love, He made a contingency plan that would cost Him dearly, before He set out to begin creation (Rev 13:8). So if mankind would fall, then this contingency plan would be activated and people would be presented with a CHOICE: and all who CHOOSE to believe and submit to God's Son, Jesus Christ, would be reconciled to a loving relationship with God, and they would dwell with Him eternally as He originally intended, had Adam and Eve CHOSEN to take of the fruit of the tree of life (Deut 30:19-20, Joshua 24:15, Gal 3:22, Rom 3:21-26). But all who rejected His Son would have to face His wrath and judgment (John 3:16-18, 36, Rom 5:8-11).

So because God is such a Masterful Planner, capable of turning a bad situation good (**Rom 8:28**), some people might have been inclined to believe that the forbidden tree was deliberately put in the Garden to tempt Adam and Eve, so as to play out what we now see today. But the evidence I'm presenting proves otherwise.

I believe one way to further prove that God didn't really want mankind to fall, apart from His expressed Heartfelt regret which we stated earlier on (**Gen 6:6**), is through Jesus's expressed will when it came time to manifest the contingency plan.

Jesus Christ fully well knew that the contingency plan long existed, because He was present at creation (**John 1:1-5**, **Matt 13:37-38**, **John 12:23**, **27-28**, **30**, **Matt 26:52-54**). But the fact that He expressed the desire NOT to want to go through with the plan at the last moment before His arrest (**Matt 26:38-39**, **42-44**), I believe proves that He would have rather preferred that mankind did NOT sin so as to trigger the contingency plan, which would cause Him to suffer and do the hard work of restoring us back to the original state of Adam, prior to sin.

As you know in Chapter One, we proved how Jesus Christ restored us to the original Genesis mandate, prior to the time mankind sinned. But the moment mankind sinned, the contingency plan was triggered; and in the midst of judgment, God prophesied that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (**Gen 3:15** **NKJV**). As we all know it is men who naturally produce the seed in the form of sperm, while the woman has the egg, which is fertilised by the seed from the man. But God was pointing to the virgin birth of His Son, through Mary (**Isaiah 7:14**, **Matt 1:20-23**), and how Jesus Christ would ultimately triumph over the devil (**Col 2:15**, **1 John 3:8**, **1 Cor 2:7-8**).

So I maintain that it wasn't God's intention for mankind to go down the path of sin, so that He could swoop down like a Hero and save the day to gain glory. He, as well as His Son, would have preferred for the contingency plan not to have been initiated. If He really wanted us to sin, then He wouldn't have gone through all the trouble to restore us to

the position Adam and Eve were before they sinned. It makes no sense to view it any other way.

For many people it is important that this point is clarified, because the fact of the matter is that many people, atheists and Christians alike, question the Love of God. And if the Love of God is in question, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to build a relationship with Him. His pruning (**John 15:2**), and discipline to get us to share in His Holiness (**Heb 12:10**), would instead be viewed as hatred or dislike, instead of Love by a GOOD Parent (**Heb 12:7-11**, **Rev 3:19**). But with this hurdle set aside, people can then see the Love of God shining past our murky reality of a sinful world. Everything He is doing is to purge us of the entanglements that prevent us from being all we were meant to be. When you can see it that way, I believe you would be in a better position to welcome His surgery knife without losing love for Him or cessation of relationship with Him (**Job 13:15**, **Isaiah 38:15-17**).

Let's address one more hindrance that people may have to receiving the Love of God, and that's the age old question of why is there good and evil in the world whereas believers in God claim that God is Good and all powerful. So if He really is good and all powerful, then evil ought not to exist in the world by inference. Now let's explore that argument.

5.1.1.2 Why there is Good and Evil in the World Even Though God is Good

And for the atheist and agnostics that still question God's Love, goodness and power due to the presence of evil and sin in the world. Jesus Christ told a parable which proves otherwise, and highlights God's love and patience by allowing good and evil to concurrently exist.

Jesus Christ spoke of how a man sowed good seed on His land, but then an enemy came and sowed weeds among the good seed. When

everything sprouted it became clear there was an unnatural presence of weed among the good crop.

Naturally, the servants of the man suggested to go and uproot the weeds. But the master refrained from that suggestion because he assessed that in the process of pulling out the weed the root system of the good crop will be affected, ultimately damaging the crop.

So he had to let both grow together, so that the good crop could still have a fighting chance to produce a harvest despite the uncomfortable presence of the weeds. The alternative of course would have been that the good crop would have died the moment the weed was uprooted.

So the plan was to let the crop survive up to the harvest season, before the ultimate separation would occur by the efforts of the harvesters (**Matt 13:24-30**).

Afterwards, the disciples came to Jesus Christ and asked Him to explain the parable.

It was then that He disclosed that the good seed was mankind that belonged to His Kingdom, the field was the world, and HE WAS THE ONE INVOLVED IN CREATING THEM (**John 1:1-3**, **10**, **Heb 1:1-3**). He went on to explain that the weeds were representative of sin and the people who do evil, and it was the devil that introduced these. And lastly, the harvesters represented His angels, and the harvest season was the end of the age, which we know is culminated by the Judgment Day (**John 12:48**, **Rev 20:11-15**). He then said, it was only at the very end, before the final separation and distinction is made between His people and those who embrace sin and practice evil (**Matt 13:36-43**).

So God's delay to address the sin and evil in the world isn't for a lack of power, love or goodness. On the contrary, it is on account of His Love and Goodness that He hasn't dealt with sin and evil as atheists and agnostics would suggest, similar to the suggestion of the servants in the parable.

The fact of the matter is that sin has been so intertwined with mankind (**Heb 12:1**, **Rom 3:9**, **23-24**), even the vines of sin still try to wrap themselves around Christians (**1 Peter 2:11**, **Gal 5:16-18**). So if God were to utterly uproot every trace of sin the moment it appears, He would have no choice but to destroy all of us, including Christians. But His goal is NOT to destroy us, but to save each and every one of us (**1 Tim 2:1-4**, **John 3:17**). He even doesn't take pleasure in the death of the wicked, because He even desires for them to REPENT and be saved, hence He patiently waits, and reserves judgment for the very last day (**Ezekiel 18:23**, **30-32**, **33:11**, **Rom 2:4**, **Matthew 18:14**, **2 Peter 3:9**).

So it isn't that God is approving of the evil in the world, but His Love constrains His judgment, so that we can have an opportunity to bear fruit and be gathered into His Kingdom (**Matt 13:30**). And it is only through His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we are able to bear fruit (**John 15:4-8**, **16-17**, **Rom 7:4-6**, **Gal 4:6**, **22-25**). Those who fail to bear fruit like the weeds from the parable are gathered up and burnt (**John 15:2**, **6**). Our fruit in the Spirit, which is primarily LOVE (**Gal 5:22-25**, **Col 3:14**), is what distinguishes us from those who will get burned. You lose your Love, you lose your place, simply put (**Rev 2:4-5**, **Matt 24:12-13**).

DON'T let anyone deceive you, a Christian who doesn't LOVE and doesn't live in OBEDIENCE to the commands of Jesus Christ (**Luke 6:46-49**, **12:45-48**, **Eph 5:3-10**, **Col 3:5-12**), is like a branch originally joined to Christ, but it is then plucked out and burnt (**John 15:1-2**, **6**, **Rom 11:17-23**).

Remember God is the Righteous Judge. Sin, evil and all who perpetuate them would NOT escape His judgment if they fail to REPENT. But if they do REPENT and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, He is then going to forgive them of all their sins, translate them into His Kingdom, and help them to bear fruits of Love and righteousness (**1 John 1:9**, **Col 1:12-14**, **Rom 7:4-6**).

Can I just say that it is quite bold, and unfortunately nothing new, that Human beings, that we are, will challenge God's justice system. Atheists,

agnostics, and even Christians practically share the same viewpoint as the Israelites with respect to some points in God's justice system (**Ezekiel 18:21-32**); it is no wonder why we want the wicked to suffer even if they genuinely REPENT. I mean generally speaking no one, especially the Jews, would want to conceive the idea that if Hitler were to have REPENTED at the last moment and believed in Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior, he would have gone to Heaven. Honestly speaking, a part of me shares those sentiments; but the Biblical reality reveals that according to God's justice system, if Hitler did REPENT and believe in Jesus Christ before his death, he would be saved. Before you "*cancel me*" here are two Biblical examples to illustrate what I've just said: Manasseh, the worst king in Israel's history (**2 Kings 21:6-16**, **2 Chron 33:6**, **9-16**), and the other guy that was crucified next to Jesus Christ (**Luke 23:40-43**).

But before you take a self-righteous stance, try not to forget that you have sins of your own that you must give account for (**Rom 14:12-13**, **Matt 7:1-5**, **12:36-37**). They may not be as grievous as the next person's own, but God's absolute judgment for sin is death (**Genesis 2:16-17**, **3:19**, **Rom 6:23**, **James 2:10-11**).

God is Holy, and He cannot tolerate an ounce of sin in His presence, which is why He sent Jesus Christ to pay the price for sin. And because Jesus Christ lives forever He is able to make all who come to God through Him spotless (**John 14:6**, **Heb 7:24-25**, **9:14-15**, **10:14**). So focus on REPENTING and getting God to forgive your sins, so that you can be reconciled with Him (**2 Cor 5:17-21**, **Rom 5:9-11**). Instead of trying to play judge, even to the extent of judging God and questioning His Love and mercy that you are ignorantly a recipient of.

All through this book I've tried to introduce you to the justice systems of God. At this point if you have began to understand it, and you haven't yet made peace with God, but you want to CHOOSE to right now, then follow this link to go to the Passages of Scripture leading up to the Salvation Prayer in Chapter One, and get on track to building a relationship with God.

To wrap up the subject of Love being a CHOICE, I'll again highlight that Jesus Christ CHOSE to Love us and Love the Father (**John 15:16-17**, **14:30-31**). Even when faced with the knowledge of the tremendous suffering and shame He was about to face, and His Personal desire and preference to avoid it, He still CHOSE to follow through with it in accordance to the will of the Father.

You should also know that at no point in all this did the Father Love Jesus Christ any less to allow Him to suffer grossly (**Isaiah 53:4-6**, **10-12**). The Love of the Father was proved by elevating the Son above all (**Phil 2:5-11**, **Heb 12:2-3**, **Matt 28:18**, **John 3:35**). So in place of the shame and disgrace Jesus Christ underwent, He was bestowed greater honour. To put it simply, the Father made Jesus's CHOICE to obey and lay down His will all the more worthwhile.

Why am I saying all this? It is to let you know that CHOOSING to give your life to God, and loving Him with all your being, is going to be the best CHOICE you ever make, irrespective of what you may face in life. And you will face some things, and SACRIFICE a lot, but like I've illustrated in other chapters in this book, you would surely find that every SACRIFICE yields surpassing greater fruit, and whenever you get to look back on any challenging situation, you will but only look back with gratitude, because those challenges have only made you better and stronger.

That said let's explore the next pillar of Love, which is SACRIFICE.

5.1.2 Love Entails SACRIFICE

The expression of Love is usually outward, meaning it exudes from one and then it flows to someone else, or something external. In whatever shape or form that Love is expressed, the outflow requires some degree of SACRIFICE. Let me also put it this way, the degree of SACRIFICE is representative of the measure of one's love. So from the perspective of

the outflow you can tell what a person loves by what they are willing to SACRIFICE for. And from the perspective of the inflow, or the one receiving love, you can assess how much one loves you by the depth of SACRIFICE or inconvenience they are willing to endure for your sake (**Luke 7:41-43**).

For instance, say two individuals claim to love a soccer team; however, it is only when you observe the depth of their SACRIFICE for the team that you'll be able to tell who loves that team more. If the first person SACRIFICES time to watch all the teams matches, spends money to buy the team's merchandise, or tickets to watch the matches live, and plasters the stickers of the team all over his car, whereas the other fellow barely makes time to follow the games, only spends to have one Jersey, and not much else, you can easily tell that the first guy loves that team much more than the second. So what you are willing to SACRIFICE for paints a picture of what your heart and love is fixed on.

Again you can't claim to Love a person if you don't make time for them, and CHOOSE to set aside resources, and the options of others above the one you love. And if at all you CHOOSE to stop making the SACRIFICES you made to secure the Love interest of the person, they will invariably feel you don't love them as much (**Rev 2:4-5**).

So the two constants in Love are CHOICE and SACRIFICE. Once you CHOOSE to Love, you must consistently CHOOSE to SACRIFICE for the one or thing you Love.

Scripture asserts that:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*[4] **LOVE IS PATIENT**, **LOVE IS KIND**. It does NOT envy, it does NOT boast, it is NOT proud. [5] **It does NOT dishonor others**, **IT IS NOT SELF-SEEKING**, it is NOT easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [6] Love does NOT delight in evil **but rejoices with the truth**. [7] **It ALWAYS PROTECTS, always TRUSTS, always HOPES, always PERSEVERES**. NIV*

Each and every one of the descriptions of Love require SACRIFICE. Patience entails setting aside your natural desire for haste and to be first, and often times allowing others to get ahead of you, or allowing others to peacefully finish before you have your turn. Kindness entails the sacrifice of going out of your way to do good for others. And if you go through the list you will discern that love encapsulates SELF-SACRIFICE.

When two people are in Love, both of them are constantly SACRIFICING for each other, and there isn't ever the need for one of them to think selfishly, because they know that whatever SACRIFICE they are willing to make, their partner is as well willing to make it for them. So no one feels at a loss because the other prioritises their wants and desires.

But when you have a lopsided relationship where one person Loves, while the other receives without making corresponding SACRIFICES, there is a problem there, because that is NOT the proper expression of Love. Both parties are expected to be SACRIFICING for each other and looking out to satisfy the desires of each other (**1 Cor 7:3-5**).

So the point I'm stressing at is that mutual SACRIFICE is the bedrock of any healthy relationship (**2 Peter 1:7-8**, **Rom 12:9-13**). On this premise we'll move on to the next topic.

5.2 Relationship, the Expression of True Christianity

Now let's examine the concepts of CHOICE and SACRIFICE in the Christian context.

God demonstrated His Love for us by the willingness to give His Son for us (**John 3:16**, **Rom 5:8-11**, **8:31-39**). It is incredibly difficult for any good parent to watch their child suffer, but God had to watch His beloved Son suffer, so that He could save the rest of us from suffering, because He couldn't also bear to watch us continue to suffer in sin. So this was God's SACRIFICE for love's sake as Father: He was willing to ENDURE watching

His Son suffer and die; and ENDURE separation from Him for three days; after which He enjoyed the consolation of reunion with Jesus Christ. It was a difficult ordeal for God, but He knew He would have His Son back. So that's how God demonstrated His Love for us, He endured the most grievous pain a good parent can endure.

God showed His Love for His Son by elevating and sitting Him on His own Throne, which is the highest Throne in Heaven (**Rev 3:21**). And while He, God, had His Son sitting down, He set out to deal with all the enemies of His Son (**Ps 2:11-12**, **110:1-2**). So in the first instance the Son SACRIFICED to fulfil the will and desires of the Father (**John 4:34**); and then now the Father is Personally engaged with the task of dealing with those who hate His Son, so that Jesus Christ doesn't even need to lift a finger.

So the relationship in the Trinity demonstrates mutual Love and sacrifice for each Person's wants and desires.

Now we are called into that relationship dynamic. We know the depth of SACRIFICE that God, the Father, and Jesus Christ have made on our behalf. By that degree of SACRIFICE we know that their love for us is great. They have freely offered salvation, redemption, deliverance protection, provision, and the list goes on and on.

But Love demands the freedom of CHOICE. You know that they have freely CHOSEN you, irrespective of the grievous nature of your sin and rebellion against them (**Rom 5:10**, **1 Tim 1:12-16**). Now you are presented with the opportunity to CHOOSE them. If you proceed to CHOOSE them, you are indicating Love for them, and in so doing you're initiating RELATIONSHIP with them (**John 14:21**, **14:23**). But like we've said relationships don't end at the shores of making the CHOICE to Love, that CHOICE must be matched with the CONSISTENT CHOICE to SACRIFICE for the sake of the relationship, and seek to satisfy the desires of the one you're in relationship with.

So the CHOICE to enter into a Loving relationship with God, is also a CHOICE saying that you are willing to make SACRIFICES on your end to fulfil the desires of the one you Love, God. In other words, it is a

commitment to do the will of God. You must realize that just as I said that in a good relationship each partner is preoccupied with fulfilling the desires of the other (**Deut 24:5**, **1 Cor 7:33**), the same is true for a relationship with God. So just as you focus on doing God's will and fulfilling His desires, so also God is focused on fulfilling your desires and meeting your needs (**Ps 37:4**, **Matt 6:11**, **32-33**). So a relationship with God is not one sided where you may think you will do all the SACRIFICING and OBEDIENCE to prove your love, and then God does nothing in return; that's not the case.

By the way, OBEDIENCE to another is the SACRIFICE of one's will in favor of the one being obeyed, hence OBEDIENCE is an expression of Love by inference (**John 14:15**, **14:21**, **14:23**, **15:10**).

And I feel the unction to say to children that OBEDIENCE to parents is an expression of Love for them, and God is pleased to see children love their parents by way of OBEDIENCE (**Col 3:20**, **Eph 6:1-3**), and parents are to discipline in Love (**Eph 6:4**, **Col 3:21**) **?Col 3:14**.

If for any reason you weren't OBEDIENT to your parents growing up, it is important to REPENT of that right now, and if possible ask for forgiveness from your parents, irrespective of whether they were good or bad to you. Your disobedient and rebellious nature may be justified in your sight, but not so much in God's sight (**Prov 3:7**, ***Prov 30:11-14***); so leave God to judge your parents instead of you judging them and using their misdeeds as justification for yours (**Jer 31:29-30**, **Ezekiel 18:1-4**, **19-20**). You need that character stain to be removed otherwise you would sabotage your relationship with God, even before it starts. I can tell you from experience that God can tell you to do something that makes absolutely no sense to you, meaning in your sight it is not justified, but He would expect you to OBEY Him without Him having to give you a two hour briefing on why He wants it done. If you don't REPENT of your disobedient nature to your earthly parents, you will carry along that mindset in your relationship with God. So REPENT now, i.e. *metanoia*, have a change of mind, which will proceed to influence your actions.

So relationship in Christianity is founded on the principle of LOVE, which holds up two concurrent pillars, which are CHOICE and SACRIFICE. Once you CHOOSE God, you must consistently CHOOSE the SACRIFICIAL life (**Rom 12:1-2**). And once you begin living the sacrificial life, endeavor to continue DOING the things that ignited your Love for God and others (**Rev 2:4-5**).

With that we'll move to the next topic, where we'll explore the practical things to do to sustain the various categories of relationships found in Christianity.

5.3 How Relationships Work in Christianity

There are three major categories of relationships in Christianity, but the core principles of what sustains each category of relationship is the same, Love. However the means of expressing the principle of Love, by way of CHOICES and SACRIFICES, are different. It is the means of expression we are going to explore in this section.

So first of all let me highlight the three Categories of relationships in Christianity; and just so you know they are all interconnected, meaning you can't engage one facet without engaging the others:

- Relationship with God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- Relationship with Fellow Believers, a.k.a Relationship in the Church
- Relationship with Unbelievers

There are peculiarities in the expression of Love in each of the categories, so let's get to exploring them.

5.3.1 Relationship with God

I'm sure you already have an idea of what this relationship entails based on what we've already discussed, so I'll try to be quick and brief with it, as I also introduce some dimensions not previously discussed.

5.3.1.1 The SACRIFICE of Time to Build Relationship with God

One of the most valuable things that a mortal can sacrifice is TIME. And as a proof of Love for God, He is going to place a demand on your TIME.

We love things to be done quickly so we patronise fast food restaurants instead of taking the time to cook healthy and cheaper food at home. We sometimes pay extra for quick 24 hour delivery service instead of, saving some cash and waiting a few days or weeks for our packages. And shamefully we bribe our ways to receive quick preferential treatment.

So clearly we show that we value TIME, by our willingness to expend money that we also value. So I believe it is for this reason that God demands a SACRIFICE of TIME from those who claim to Love Him. You may pray, and want an instant answer from God, but a lot of times He would instead make you WAIT, and only come through when it seems to be the last moment. In that period of WAITING your heart is gauged.

Saul lost the eternal dynasty of Israel to David, because he couldn't WAIT a few moments longer for the prophet Samuel (**1 Samuel 10:8**, **13:8-14**). If you do not learn to calm your heart and trust God COMPLETELY, you will be unable to WAIT and this will negatively impact your relationship with God. So God would have you SACRIFICE TIME WAITING ON HIM, that's just the way it is ([**Psalms 37:7-9**, **5:3**, **27:13-14**, **33:16-22**, **Prov 20:22**, **Lam 3:22-28**], [**Acts 1:4-5**, **Rom 8:23-25**, **Titus 2:11-13**, **Rev 6:10-11**]).

Furthermore, if you want to build a strong relationship with God, you'll need to spend TIME studying the Bible, and praying (**Acts 6:4**).

Now even though you may engage in the formal kind of prayers to know and execute God's judicial will on earth, it is also profitable to make sufficient time for an informal kind of prayer where you can talk with God about anything, even some things that may appear ridiculous.

My Testimony to Encourage Spending Time in Informal Prayers with God

I remember in one of those conversations I must have expressed how it had been a while I had eaten chicken, and then I believe it was that day or the next, the car pulled into the driveway and we were presented three live chicken to prepare.

To someone else, it would be like great we've got chicken; but to me I had a smile on my face, and said God you heard me; and this simple act of His deepened my relationship with Him. And just so you know, having three live chicken brought for no special occasion was a rarity, and a luxury. As I said, it had been a while since I ate chicken at that time.

And severally He has done similar things like this on account of my informal conversations with Him , which I know for a fact, with my little scientific knowledge, that it is far from being coincidental or probabilistic.

I mean there are other occasions where God influenced people to say just the right things out of the blues, that matched the private conversation I had with God maybe some days back (**Matt 16:15-17**). And I may not be thinking about it, but the moment God opens their mouth, I become instantly reminded of my conversation with God, and discern that He was giving me His verbal response through that person.

Some people have been privileged to hear the audible voice of God in the course of their relationship and conversations with Him. I on the other hand haven't heard His audible voice, but what I experience like

many is the soft inner voice, which if you're not careful you may ignore or drown out. And then He also speaks to me through other people, or ministers of the Gospel, like I've illustrated, or most commonly through dreams.

The point however is, make TIME to get talking with God like your Father, in addition to the time you pray in the Spirit to execute Kingdom business. In your informal conversations with God, your heart opens up to Him and His to you (**Rev 3:20**), and this will greatly help you mature in your relationship with Him. You will experience A LOT of teaching moments with Him that would build your character, especially if you approach God with sincerity and a teachable heart.

You know how you can take an issue to a friend, say someone offends you, and you recount everything to them, telling them your side of the story, do that instead with God, the result is far better. Your friend may have a bias to you, and besides you give them only one side of the story; but God has no bias, and He will tell you what you NEED to know and do. He may let you tell the whole story and make your case, but while you're feeling justified and good about yourself, He would remind you about a detail you left out in the story, and point your mind to a Scripture that would sink your argument and bring conviction. At the end of the day you'll be humbled, but that humility will breed maturity for you to better handle that kind of situation in the future.

Now tied to the point above, you need to make TIME to study the Bible (**2 Tim 3:15-17**). Oftentimes, even as I've illustrated, when God decides to speak to us, He may channel our heart and mind to a Passage of Scripture, and breathe a new meaning to it in the context of the conversation He is having with you. So it is important to first gain a general overview of Scripture, by reading and learning the stories, Proverbs, promises, instructions, prophecies etc. But after this, in subsequent times of studying the Bible or in your daily life, God can then use the Words to give you insight and direction. So the SACRIFICE of

making TIME to study the Bible will help you deepen your relationship with God.

5.3.1.2 How Giving Can Impact Your Relationship with God

Next, I've already talked about giving of your resources, so I'll just briefly gloss over it here.

Next to TIME, money is the most valuable thing for the average human being. So naturally, God is going to have you SACRIFICE that. Again, it isn't that God wants your money (**Haggai 2:8**, **Psalms 50:9-15**, **1 Chron 29:9-10**, **12-18**, **Rom 11:33-36**), but rather He wants your heart; but it so happens that most people have their hearts tied to their money (**Matt 6:19-21**).

Its a similar situation with TIME. God doesn't need TIME, He dwells in the eternal realm and He can literally fold, or expand TIME (**Psalms 90:4**, **2 Peter 3:8**). And He is capable of acting quickly, much faster than we can even utter the words of prayer (**Daniel 9:21-23)**; but again because of how the anxiety of our heart is intertwined with TIME, He often has to free us from the bondage of TIME and anxiety by making us WAIT (**Phil 4:6**).

So also to free us from the bondage of money and greed, He makes us give it away (**Col 3:5**, **Matt 6:24**). So God can have you sacrifice money so as to deepen your trust in Him that He can fulfil your desires, which is also part of His Love Covenant with you (***Prov 11:23***, **Gen 22:14**, **Ps 37:4**, **103:4-5**, **145:15-21**, **Matt 6:11**, **32-33**). So He may cause you to give so that you can experience His Love by letting Him provide for you in His ways; and also to deliver you from the Love of money, which is His biggest competition in the hearts of many people (**Matt 6:24**, **1 Tim 6:10-11**, **17-19**).

5.3.1.3 Become Sensitive to God's Feelings

Next, relationship with God entails sensitivity to His feelings. That's right GOD HAS FEELINGS. Besides, where do you think your ability to have emotional feelings come from? God created us in His Likeness, meaning we possess some of His characteristics. The difference is that God manages His emotions much differently than we do.

Due to the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, or emotions have generally become perverted, and for the most part susceptible for manipulation by the devil. But the general fact is that I believe we share the full spectrum of emotions that God has, and God has just as much access to influence our emotional state.

God can feel anger, so can we. The difference is God cannot sin when He expresses His anger, which is why though He was severally angered by the Israelites, He did not completely destroy them as they deserved (**[**2 Kings 21:6**,** 9-16**,** 2 Chron 33:10-16**]**, Ezra 9:13, Lam 3:22**,** 33**,** 38-43**,** 57), because that would have been a violation of His Covenant with their patriarchs (Lev 26:44-45, Deut 4:29-31).

But when we get angry, chances are that our next course of action would be sin, similar to Cain (Gen 4:5-8**,** Matt 5:21-24**,** Eph 4:26-27**,** James 1:19-22).

God feels Love, so do we. Remember there is still a feeling aspect to Love, which is generally experienced by the recipient of the Love that was expressed by a deliberate CHOICE and SACRIFICE. So God can feel Love, He feels it from His Son, and Spirit, and He ought to feel it from us as well. But concerning humanity and the perversion of Love, there are some people who have had their love twisted into lust and a dangerous obsession (2 Samuel 13:1-2**,** 11-19).

God feels Jealousy, so do we. Jealousy is what usually sprouts in a one sided relationship where one person pours out all their Love, meanwhile the other person doesn't reciprocate it, and more so lavish their Love on someone else (Prov 2:16-19**,** 6:32-35, Song of Songs 8:6-7).

God feels empathy, and for the most part so do we. God, Himself, feels our painful emotions (**Isaiah 63:9**). And on several occasions in the Gospels Jesus Christ demonstrated compassion, which is an offshoot of empathy.

Even though we feel empathy to a degree, some people more than others, it is important we grow deeper in having the sensitivity for the feelings of others. This is the point I'm also trying to make in the other sense. We need to gain a sensitivity for God's emotions, since we are in relationship with Him. In other words, we need to become empathetic towards God. Attempt feeling what He feels by virtue of your own experiences and feelings. We all have felt betrayal. Now put yourself in God's shoe, and imagine the degree of betrayal that He has experienced, from His angels and mankind as well. It is exponential. If you can sense His hurt, then maybe you will better understand His judgements. Note that God doesn't reveal His emotions to just everyone, He only does so for people who fear Him, and care about Him.

Now your informal conversations with God in prayer would help you get a better feel for God's thoughts and emotions, but you need to be aware of the various ways He tugs at our heart, the emotional center of our being. The emotional center is one of the most effective ways spiritual beings, both Godly and demonic beings, communicate with us while we are awake.

Note that a lot of the twisted emotions and prompts you get are furnished by the dark kingdom, just as sin aggravated Cain's anger to lead him to commit murder (**Gen 4:5-8**). Some strong emotions you get may not be yours, they may be manufactured and delivered by the dark kingdom. So be careful to examine all your emotions and thoughts and discern where they are coming from, whether from God, you, or the devil.

Some ministers of the Gospel have identified this reality, and received revelatory visions of demons stirring emotions, so they teach people not to be moved by their emotions. However some of them take it to the extreme and have people completely shut down their emotional center;

that's why you find a lot of Christians being very stoic, boring, and unreactive, especially during Church services, because emotions are not allowed to be expressed. Because “God forbid” that you have emotions in the presence of God, because emotions can be influenced by demons.

But like I've shown God is an emotional Being, and there are very vital expressions that He channels through our emotions. So just because there is a possibility for emotions to be perverted by the dark kingdom, doesn't mean we then throw the baby with the bath water, and discard ALL emotions. It becomes our responsibility to employ the gift of discernment by the Holy Spirit, knowing which emotions are ours, which are influenced by the dark kingdom, so that we can quickly shut them down (**2 Cor 10:4-5**), and which ones are influenced by God and the Holy Spirit. As you know SOME, but not all, of the fruit of the Spirit connect to our emotions (**Gal 5:22-23**).

When God's presence comes to your proximity, or if you experience heavenly visions or dreams, you'll get a beautiful feeling of peace and joy (**Ps 16:11** **NKJV**, **Phil 4:7**). Should we then shut down those emotions, because emotions are “bad” or “dangerous”? I mean somewhere in Chapter Three, where we talked about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we spoke of the peace, joy and comfort He ministers to our heart. These are all emotional virtues, should we also toss these out? I don't think so. Instead of cooking up extreme doctrines inspired by fear, let's instead strive to build discernment, emotional maturity, and emotional stability, stability furnished on faith and trust in the Word of God (**Eph 4:11-16**).

That said we need to learn sensitivity to God’s emotions, this is vital to our relationship with Him. He will not just communicate peace and joy all the time (**Eccl 3:1**, **4**, **8**, **Jer 6:14**, **2 Cor 7:9-10**), because there are times we need to feel the depths of His displeasure.

My Testimony: Experiencing the Displeasure of God

There was one morning my elder brother wanted to impose something on me, by all accounts I had the right to refuse, and I did. But he kept

insisting, shouting and getting visibly angry that I could have succumbed to let him have his way since the thing was beginning to upset him so much; but I had rational justice on my side so I didn't bulge. My parents got involved and justified me, so I felt victorious.

The thing was that all these happened before my prayer time in the morning, so when I went to my place of prayer, God did not let me sing songs of praise as I usually did, and when I attempted to pray He wouldn't let me. I felt His displeasure towards me, and He gave a stern instruction for me to go and apologise. I stood there stunned and honestly angry with God. I spent about five minutes angrily expressing my side of the story, and asking why should I always be bullied to submission by others. Now I finally stood up for myself and won, and God wanted me to apologise. It didn’t make any sense to me at the time.

Now this was how foolish and hot tempered that I was, that I said, if that was how far my relationship with God would go and stop, so be it, but I wasn't going to go and apologise. God said nothing all the while.

I stood there for another five minutes, before rationality came back to me. And then I saw that the situation was not a big deal; I could have easily allowed my brother to have his way, and it wasn't worth me losing my relationship with God, and His peace, which I knew had left me; and it was also senseless losing my relationship with my brother over this. So I left the room, went to him and muttered incoherent words of apology, and he himself apologised. The moment I got back to the room I felt a multiplied measure of His peace and I was then able to sing, pray and study the Word.

So that day I felt God's displeasure, and that guided me on what I needed to do to experience His joy and peace again. I believe God had me go to apologise probably for two reasons. One, I was the younger one, hence respect should have informed me to behave differently. Secondly, I think He made me do it for my brother's sake, because the incident hurt him and made him angry; and more so I got my parents on my side in the whole situation, thus alienating him further. So looking

back, I guess God felt his hurt. And I believe God knew that the best way to resolve it was for me to apologise. The apology removed his hurt, and it also dealt a major blow to my pride.

So sensitivity to the emotions of God is very important to maintaining a healthy relationship with Him.

Even in relationships among people, insensitivity to the emotions of the other person can eventually fracture the relationship.

Now I would love to tell you that since the experience with my brother, I haven't gone through situations where I've experienced the displeasure of God, but that would NOT be true. But thanks to God for the incident, because it has made me a lot more mature and sensitive to God's feelings, and my peace from the Spirit, which is a guiding principle (**Phil 4:7**). Now I'm more able to discern His feelings, and what He wants me to do about them. And I know He will continue to improve me in this area.

So become emotionally sensitive to God. And also learn to properly channel your emotions to Him, even in the place of worship. Don't be emotionally flamboyant to gain the attention of people to make them think you really Love God. But rather make sure that every expression of your emotions in worship, whether by dancing and leaping for joy, crying tears of joy, or anguish (**1 Samuel 1:12-18**), or in expressing whatever emotion it may be, let it all be channelled to God as the sole audience. To put it simply, expressions of joy and gladness are appropriate emotional displays of worship (**[Deut 12:7, 1 Chron 29:22, 2 Chron 30:25-26], 2 Samuel 6:14-16, 20-23**, Luke 19:37-40, Acts 3:6-10).

5.3.1.4 The Fear of the Lord is Foundational for a Relationship With God

The last point I'll make with respect to building a healthy relationship with God is to have what is called "*the fear of the Lord*". This may sound

counter-intuitive that how can one love and fear God at the same time, but I assure you it is Biblically possible (**Psalms 103:11**). Every major Biblical personality that had a great relationship with God also learnt the fear of the Lord. I discuss this subject more adequately in at least two other studies, so I wouldn't go too deep into it here.

But to make the point I'll highlight that according to prophecy one of the dimensions of the Spirit that came on Jesus Christ was the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord (**John 3:34**, **Isaiah 11:1-3**, **Rev 5:6**). And what I find interesting is that the prophecy showed that out of all the dimensions of the Spirit He delighted in the Spirit of "*the fear of the Lord*" (**Isaiah 11:3**). I also discuss about this subject matter in another write-up, which hopefully I'll release soon so that you can get deeper insight.

Well, if there is anyone who understands what it takes to have a great relationship with the Father, it certainly would be Jesus Christ. And from the study I've done, His delight in the Spirit of the fear of the Lord was because it was tied to His relationship with God while He was here on earth as a human being. What I'm saying is that as a Human Being, Jesus Christ, had to follow the Scriptural protocol for humans to interact with God, which is to have the fear of the Lord (**Psalms 25:14**). And because He treasured His relationship with God, His delight was in the dimension of the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, which facilitated the prerequisite for intimate fellowship between a Man and God. Also remember that Jesus Christ came to live an exemplary life for us, hence if He delighted in the fear of the Lord, we as well must follow His footsteps and delight in the fear of the Lord.

Another important point worth emphasizing is that in His human state, Jesus Christ relied on the Holy Spirit (God), for everything, even in the aspect of fellowshipping with God, the Father, which is made more intimate for those who fear the Lord. So given His example, we as well must lean on the Holy Spirit to help us heighten our fellowship with God (**2 Cor 13:14**). Moving on.

Still on the fear of the Lord, Jesus Christ didn't mince words when He basically told us to FEAR God, even above the fear we may have for

people who have the power to kill us (**Luke 12:4-5**, **Matt 10:28**). At this point I'm tempted to want to expound on what it means to really "fear God", but I'll try to resist the temptation and just say something briefly:

I've heard some people EQUATE the fear of the Lord to REVERENCE. Can I just say that REVERENCE and FEAR are NOT the same things. Indeed, if you have the fear of the Lord you will reverence Him. But on the flipside reverence cannot directly translate to fear practically speaking. In the context of the illustration Jesus Christ gave (**Luke 12:4-5**, **Matt 10:28**), you cannot in your right mind substitute reverence for the kind of fear that Jesus Christ spoke about. You can't do that because Jesus Christ began by speaking about the fear one may naturally have for someone that can kill them. I don't think you'll stand in front of a guy pointing a loaded gun to your head, and then you'll be in reverence towards him. Naturally, you would be afraid, because you know the person has power to inflict fatal damage to you, hence you'd probably do whatever that person said to do at that moment. In a similar way, Jesus Christ was telling us to have it at the back of our mind that God has the power to inflict the ultimate fatal damage to our body and soul by destroying them in the fires of hell. The only difference is that God doesn't use His power to intimidate us (**Job 37:23-24**), because just as much as He wants to be feared (**Mal 1:6-8**, **12-14**, **Isaiah 8:12-13**), He also wants to be Loved (**Deut 6:5**).

In as much as we know that God loves us, and wants to have a relationship with us, we must also maintain the consciousness that He is God and King; and as such we should treat Him accordingly. Consciously, we maintain various degrees of fear in how we interact with people.

Say you're playing with your young niece or nephew that you love dearly, but while playing you do something they don't like, which makes them threaten to hit you. Their threat would have little to no effect, because you know they don't have power to inflict real damage, so you have no cause for fear and no particular need to change course.

But say you have a friend that is a police officer, and you guys have a falling out. And let's just say the friend chooses to abuse their power

and authority to threaten you. You'll probably be a lot more worried, because you recognize their power to hurt you.

Every single relationship we have has the love/fear balance, because in reality it is those we love that have the greatest power to hurt us. If a stranger says a hurtful thing, it may bother you for a moment, or a day. But if someone close to you says or does something similar, it may hurt you for years. If you do not maintain a healthy fear for the people you love, and as a result of that fear adjust your behavior and treat them with respect, you'll expose yourself to avoidable hurts that would be difficult to get over.

Similarly, in building a Loving relationship with God, we must also have the awareness of His power and ability to utterly destroy us. This awareness will make you not take Him for granted.

Again for instance, the boxer, Mike Tyson, has a soft gentle voice, but anyone with the slightest awareness of his ferocious power will think twice about disrespecting him to his face. His full power punch may just send you to Jesus, where it would be too late to learn the wisdom of not messing around with someone who has more power to inflict harm on you.

Now God has the ultimate power. And even though we know He is emotionally balanced (**Psalms 103:8-14**), and He would not oppress us with His power (**Job 37:23-24**, **Matt 20:25-28**), we must maintain the awareness of His power to inform our interactions with Him, so that we don't disrespect Him (**Psalms 90:11-12**). From my example with my brother, I can tell you that back then I had not yet received the revelation of the fear of the Lord, which was why I tagged my behavior as “foolish” in this writeup.

The fear of the Lord will instil in you the wisdom of the appropriate way to relate with God, and how to do things in general, because you'll know that if you act wrongly towards your brother or sister, the Righteous, Powerful Judge can sit on your case and inflict judgment on you.

Some people may think that God will give His people a free pass, that's because they don't understand the fear of the Lord, and God's commitment to execute justice. God will discipline His children FIRST, before He judges the world (**1 Peter 4:17-19**, **Heb 12:7-11**, **Luke 12:47-48**). So if you deliberately keep on sinning, you'll practically learn the other side of why you ought to have feared the Lord, and not abused His Loving Gracious nature (**Heb 10:26-31**, **2 Peter 2:20-22**). The apostles knew the fear of the Lord (**Mark 9:2-7**, **Matt 17:2-7**, **Rev 1:17-18**), and they were also simultaneously compelled by the Love of Christ, to preach the Gospel and bring people to reconciliation with God (**2 Cor 5:11**, **14-21**).

I've gone further than I intended to in discussing the fear of the Lord, so I'll leave it at this, and just cite the example of David learning to fear God, and how that fear informed him to act better, and express profound joy in the Presence of God (**1 Chron 13:9-13**, **15:1-2**, **11-13**). Like me, David was briefly angry with God, but he quickly outgrew that foolishness, when, like me, he understood that he had more to lose than gain by staying away from God (**2 Samuel 6:11-15**).

5.3.2 Relationship with Fellow Believers/Relationship in the Church

John 13:34-35

*[34] "A new command I give you: **LOVE ONE ANOTHER**. **As I have loved you, SO YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER**. [35] By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, **if you love one another**." NIV*

John 15:12-17

*[12] My command is this: **LOVE EACH OTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU**. [13] **Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends**. [14] **YOU ARE MY FRIENDS IF YOU DO WHAT I COMMAND.** [15] I no longer call you servants, because **a servant does NOT know his master's business**. Instead, I*

*have called you friends, **for EVERYTHING that I learned from My Father I have made known to you**.*

*[16] **You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit**—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in My Name the Father will give you. [17] This is My command: **LOVE EACH OTHER**. NIV*

1 John 4:19-21

*[19] **WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US**. [20] **WHOEVER CLAIMS TO LOVE GOD YET HATES A BROTHER OR SISTER IS A LIAR**. For whoever does NOT love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, CANNOT love God, Whom they have not seen. [21] And He has given us this COMMAND: **ANYONE WHO LOVES GOD MUST ALSO LOVE THEIR BROTHER AND SISTER**. NIV*

Note:** please read also: **1 John 2:9-10**, **3:11**, **14**, **18**, **23-24**, **4:7-18**, **1 Peter 1:22-23

So we have no choice as Christians but to Love each other. If we want things to work, and for God to work with us, we must Love each other.

And as we have said about Love, especially from the person of outflow, it is NOT a thing of feeling, but rather a CHOICE and an expression of SACRIFICE. We must deliberately CHOOSE to Love our fellow believers, in all their humanity. The CHOICE to Love means that you put others needs above yours, and you look out for them for their best interest. This requires a lot of patience and self-sacrifice. We need to be sensitive to each others needs, emotions, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses.

And just to maintain a balance, Love is not always cuddly, it needs to be sincere and truthful. And sometimes it may not be fun to be confronted with the truth, but it may be necessary (**2 Cor 7:8-10**). This means that if a believer is to stray from the path of Truth, in Love you are to confront them to get back on track (**Gal 6:1-5**, **James 5:19-20**, **Eph 4:15**), because it would be in their best interest. So tough Love is sometimes necessary.

Now if everyone in the Church is Loving towards each other, there would be a constant outflow of Love, and that outflow would mean that someone is always going to be on the receiving end, and the one on the receiving feels the joys and blessings of Love. This should naturally make the one who has received Love to be more inclined to give Love, and the chain continues.

I've heard that most Americans are ardent coffee drinkers, and they have a lot of coffee stores. I learnt of a trend where a person can buy their own cup of coffee, and then they also pay it forward, meaning pay for the coffee of the next coffee Loving patron. So the first person has made a SACRIFICE. Now when the next customer comes and finds out that a total stranger extended this kind gesture towards them, it warms their heart, meaning they receive Love.

Most times they enjoy that feeling so much, and would want the next person to experience it, so they as well "pay it forward", meaning from the overflow of Love they received, they are making the SACRIFICE for the next person to experience it. And this chain can go unbroken for quite a while, with each patron leaving the coffee store with warmth in their heart and a smile on their face. This simple gesture could make the day of many of them who don't receive much joy from the activities of their daily life.

Now if the Church OBEYS the command of Jesus Christ to Love each other, there will be an overflow of joy, because everyone would be a recipient of sacrificial Love. And no one would have any lingering problems, because their brothers and sisters would always look out for their best interest and help to resolve their problem (**Gal 6:2**, **10**, **Acts 4:34-37**).

James 2:14-18

[14] ***What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone CLAIMS to have faith but has NO DEEDS?*** *Can such faith save them? [15] Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. [16] If one of you says to them, "****Go in***

peace; keep warm and well fed, *"* ***but does nothing about their physical needs, WHAT GOOD IS IT?*** *[17] In the same way,* ***faith by itself, if it is NOT accompanied by action, is dead.*** *[18] But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds,* ***AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY MY DEEDS****. NIV*

1 John 3:16-18

[16] This is how we know ***what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. AND WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS****. [17] If anyone has material possessions* ***and sees a brother or sister IN NEED but has no pity on them, HOW CAN THE LOVE OF GOD BE IN THAT PERSON?*** *[18] Dear children,* ***LET US NOT LOVE WITH WORDS OR SPEECH BUT WITH ACTIONS AND IN TRUTH****. NIV*

Imagine a community of selfless individuals: that community would rapidly grow and be a wonder to communities in the world filled with selfish, greedy individuals. In Loving each other Jesus Christ wanted us to model a community of selfless people that would manifest rapid growth, peace, joy, and harmony, to manifest to the world what the Kingdom of God looks like (**John 13:34-35**).

You know they say "*necessity is the mother of invention*", if a believer with the consciousness of meeting the needs of others discovers that other believers need a certain thing, he would put together his resources and skills, and also receive help from other believers, to provide the thing that is needed. This could lead to inventions, creating administrative structures, governance etc. (**Rom 12:3, 6-8**, **Acts 6:1-7**). And if all this is done without the greed we see in many corporations and businesses, and it is also done in the best interest of the people, unlike how many governments and politicians operate, we will have an amazing society. Crime would be none existent, and everything would work.

This is what Jesus Christ wanted to achieve in the Church by His command for us to Love one another. And if we played our role as the light of the world, a city on the hill that cannot be hidden (**Matt 5:14-16**), then our light would attract the world and illuminate them on how

to make things work through the power of the Holy Spirit, Love and selflessness.

Furthermore, our light would be a great influence in the world. No matter how much people try to deny it everyone needs light; I mean even thieves don't like to be stolen from, hence their dislike of being stolen from testifies that they want light, which stands against stealing, to operate on their behalf.

We are also to play the role of being salt to the earth (**Matt 5:13**). Salt adds flavour (**Job 6:6-7**), and salt at the same time serves as a preservative that stands against corruption. Hence we ought to show what joyous, holy living looks like by the Holy Spirit; and manifest the beautiful emotions that the Holy Spirit causes to overflow from our hearts, regardless of the situations we face (**Rom 5:5**, **Gal 5:22-23**). This would be a flavor that the world would crave, because let's face it emotions can be very contagious. Try laughing hysterically without communicating the cause of your laughter to an onlooker, and chances are they may crack a smile, or even join you laughing. In that manner we are to add flavor to the world, and this would make more people desire to come to Jesus so that they can be filled with the Holy Spirit and overflow with the same flavorful emotions.

Also as salt we play a preservative role, which is speaking and standing for truth in the face of the corruption of the world (**Luke 3:18-20**). But we can't say we stand against corruption when we ourselves are corrupt. That would amount to losing our saltiness and credibility. And this would translate to being trampled by men, or by the world (**Matt 5:13**). But if the Church is truly Loving, then we would speak the Truth in Love (**Eph 4:15**), and give the world an opportunity to REPENT of their wrong doing and turn to God. But how can the Church be Loving to the world if it lacks Love among its brethren? You can't give what you don't have.

Sadly, an arguable vast majority of Christians in the Church do NOT Love their fellow believers. When I speak of Church I don't mean like denominations, I mean the generality of EVERYONE who claims to be a

follower of Jesus Christ; so I distinguish it by using capital “C" in the Word Church, which in the Greek is “*ecclesia*”, meaning “*assembly*”, and I might add “*the assembly of the called out ones*”. So on the grand scale, we as Christians hardly show that we Love each other. And even when you narrow it down to local church gatherings, the story is still the same.

I believe that the lack of mutual Love in the Church is an issue of lack of unity, and an understanding on how to build Loving interpersonal relationships among believers. Keep in mind that as individuals we all still possess certain flaws in the flesh, which mutually requires a constant dispensation of grace and forgiveness (**Eph 4:29-32**, **Col 3:12-16**). If the Church was united in Love, then we would manifest to the world an amazing community that they would marvel at, as Jesus Christ intended. But clearly, for the most part we are not doing that. So I'll take a moment to address what I believe to be the two major issues which are unity and building proper interpersonal relationships.

5.3.2.1 Unity in the Church

I'm sure that you must be tired of hearing me say that I've addressed a topic in another write-up, but please bear with me, I want to try and keep each project as fresh as possible without much repetitions. And if at all there must be a repetition I try to keep the subsequent one brief, or full of new insight than the previous one. I said all that just to say that on the subject of “***Unity in the Church***”, I've already written a full book on it which addresses the nuances of the subject, which I can't afford to flesh out here. But I'll drive at one point, which can easily connect to the subjects already discussed and emphasized in this book. That said, let's forge ahead.

Unity in the Church can only be fostered by unity in the Spirit (**Eph 4:2-6**, **11-16**, **Phil 2:1-5**, **[Rom 15:5-7**, **1 Cor 2:11-16**, **6:17]**, **Col 2:1-5**). No amount of teaching, or doctrine, can breed unity in the Church. But if we have unity in Love, the Holy Spirit, and Mind, which is essentially

embracing the Mind of Christ (**1 Cor 2:16**, **Rom 12:2**, **1 Cor 1:10**, **Phil 4:2-3**), and NOT our own philosophies, then even new doctrines that we may be unfamiliar with would NOT cause us to break fellowship with each other, provided the Holy Spirit brings a confirmation in the hearts of all involved (***Phil 3:15-16***).

For instance, ministering the Gospel to the Gentiles was a novelty idea to the early Church which was predominantly Jewish. Clearly, they were also influenced by their Jewish culture and upbringing which stipulated limited interactions with Gentiles (**John 4:9**, **Acts 10:28**). Nevertheless, when Paul received the commission from the Lord to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, I'm sure that Paul being a Jew understood how the rest of the Church would feel, and besides he also gravitated more to want to preach to Jews (**Acts 22:17-21**, **Rom 9:1-5**, **11:13-14**); so he had to approach the Jewish Church elders to officially present to them what he was doing ministering to the Gentiles, just to be sure he was on the right track. This could have been catastrophic if the Jewish elders held to their cultural prejudice, but thankfully these were men full of the Spirit. And by the Spirit they DISCERNED that the SAME Lord working in them, was the SAME One working in Paul, hence they rose no objections and accepted the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles (**Gal 2:1-10**). Without the Holy Spirit, this would have all gone south, and we would have the first Church split in the Bible similar to how churches split today, making you wonder if one or both of the instigators truly have, and yield to, the Holy Spirit. So simply put, unity in the Spirit, will ensure unity in the Church, despite our diverse giftings, operations and ministries.

Now moving forward, the early Church was again faced with a situation of circumcision threatening to drive a wedge in the Church between the Jewish and Gentile converts (**Acts 15:1-2**, **5-6**). This called for the Church Council to meet at Jerusalem, and the subject matter was deliberated, with each side freely voicing their opinions. At the end of it Scripture was brought to bear (**Acts 15:7-21**), and the Holy Spirit was in agreement to the resolution reached (**Acts 15:28-29**), hence another Church split was averted and the Gentiles rejoiced at the resolution arrived at (**Acts 15:30-32**).

At this point once the HOLY SPIRIT stamps His approval on a matter and confirms it in the hearts of His people, anyone who CHOOSES to go against that breaks fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and they can be allowed to leave because they no longer hold to the bond of unity by the Holy Spirit (**1 John 2:18-19**). Though we should pray for their restoration knowing that God doesn't want anyone to perish (**James 5:19-20**, **1 Peter 4:7-8**, **2 Peter 3:9**), but we CANNOT compromise with them by tolerating something that the Spirit clearly stands against (**1 Cor 5:11-13**, **Rev 2:20-23**, **Jer 15:19**).

I repeat unity in the Church CANNOT be achieved by means of doctrine, because our acceptance and compliance to various forms of doctrine differs, speaking of those doctrines that are NOT at the core of Christianity, like giving (**Phil 4:15**). No one is going to go to hell because they fail to give, however they would miss out on accessing the blessings associated with giving (**Luke 6:38**).

So it is possible for us to differ on those kinds of doctrines, until such a time that the Holy Spirit breathes the revelation of it to us, like He subsequently did for the churches on the matter of giving (**2 Cor 8:1-7, 10-14**). But it would be foolish for the church to split because of the doctrine of giving.

But you'll find today that many churches are not loving and patient enough with each other, so one person gets a revelation that another hasn't arrived at a position to accept. Instead of waiting for the Holy Spirit to work on each person's heart (**Phil 3:15-16**, **Eph 4:11-13**), both parties pass judgment on each other, and then they break up (**Rom 14:1-4, 10, 13, 15-16, 19-23**). Whereas if they maintained the bond of unity by the Holy Spirit they wouldn't jump to rash conclusions by judging and condemning each other.

So unity in the Church can only be truly fostered by the Holy Spirit. And where there is unity by the Holy Spirit, Love would overflow. Remember true Love does NOT originate from us it comes from God (**1 John 4:7, 19**); and because we receive His Love, His Spirit is poured in our heart (**Rom 5:5**); and then from the Love poured out in our heart, we are then

able to SACRIFICIALLY Love people in the Church and beyond (**2 Cor 1:3-4**, **Rom 12:9-18**, **Phil 2:1-5**). So I say again, unity and true Love in the Church can only be made possible by the Holy Spirit.

As a word of caution be apprehensive of church congregations which achieve unity without the Holy Spirit and forge ahead without His dictates (**Isaiah 30:1-3**, **Hosea 8:4**). They may be united in purpose, but because the Holy Spirit isn't involved a counterfeit manifestation of "love" would exist among them. The kind of "love" that tolerates sin, greed and all sorts of immorality that God forbids in His Word, including homosexuality (**Rom 1:18-19, 26-32**).

To be clear God extends His hands to ALL sinners, including homosexuals, but His call is NOT to have them come and remain in their sin, but rather to REPENT and ALLOW the Holy Spirit to change and influence their thoughts and desires (**1 Cor 6:9-11 NKJV**). So if a church congregation achieves "unity" on the bases of false doctrine, it is advisable for you to quickly pack up your bags and leave, and pray that God delivers them from their error, and restores them to His purpose and ordination. This is why I say again unity and true Love in the Church can ONLY be achieved by the Holy Spirit and NOT doctrine.

I believe I've made the general point very clear. Let's now move on to addressing the micro level of the situation between individual believers.

5.3.2.2 Building Proper Interpersonal Relationships in the Church

It must be understood that unity is not uniformity. The Church is full of different people, from different social backgrounds, and different temperaments, it is IMPOSSIBLE to achieve uniformity. However Love and Unity remains a POSSIBILITY.

Take for instance a marriage union. Two people who CHOOSE each other, and LOVE each other, come together and are made ONE (**Matt**

19:4-6), just as the Church is One Body (Eph 4:3-6, 1 Cor 12:12-14). On the wedding day it is all smiles and joy, and this may go on through the honeymoon phase.

But when it comes to living together for the rest of their lives, it is then that the CHOICE to SACRIFICE continually is going to come to bear. It is here you'll truly realize that Love is a CHOICE, and SACRIFICE is the way to demonstrate that CHOICE.

Along the way in the life of the couple there are invariably going to be deviations in viewpoint on certain matters, which could precipitate to conflict and arguments. This is INEVITABLE, because though they have been spiritually made as one, their flesh still possesses peculiarities of their individual nature, inclinations and desires. So advisably when faced with such a conflicting situation, both parties must again be willing to CHOOSE to SACRIFICE for the other, for the sake of Love; and they can do this by patiently and honestly examining the other person's view point, being sensitive to that person's emotions, gleaning as much valuable points from their perspective, and then selflessly contrasting it with their own position setting aside biases and ego. When both parties CHOOSE to express love in this manner by being accommodating and selfless, and fostering healthy communication skills, conflicts would be more manageable without creating rifts that drive away Love and harmony.

So it is important for Christians to realize that though we've been called out of the world, and have been blessed with the Holy Spirit, we all still have a human flesh that is naturally wild and needs to be tamed. That's why Scripture says we should offer our bodies as a “living” sacrifice unto God, and not be conformed to the world (Rom 12:1-2). “Living” connotes a daily perpetual thing, and at the same time we need to be living sacrifices, because only living human beings have legitimacy in the earth realm, so this is not just a thing of ego driven carnal mortification (Col 2:23). And Jesus Christ Himself tells us to take our cross and follow Him daily (Luke 9:23-26, Matt 10:37-39). The cross is a symbol of death, which means we are called to die to self-will daily (1 Cor 15:31 **NKJV**).

However not all Christians understand this, or are taught about it, hence aspects of their human nature still find expression. And even those that know it and diligently practice it, may stumble in certain situations. So chances are that a believer may sin against you, or hurt you by their actions or inactions, or by their words. When something like this happens, before gossiping about it with friends or other believers, which may make things worse, table the matter before God and vent out the way you feel about it. This should relieve some, or all, of the hurt. I believe 98% of the time God will instruct you to forgive (**Matt 18:21-22**), but I believe there is the 2% where God says He would avenge or vindicate you, and you are to just leave them to Him (**Rom 12:17-19**).

There may still be occasions where God deals with your heart and relieves the hurt from you, but then to help the other person God would have you confront them of their wrong doing so that they can REPENT. Jesus Christ highlighted the process for this kind of scenario (**Matt 18:15-20**).

But I must make this clear, do NOT confront a person of sinning against you for the purpose of getting them to seek your forgiveness before you let them go from your heart. I'll talk shortly about forgiveness. But it is advisable to settle the matter before God, forgive and get the comfort of the Holy Spirit, being set free from the hurt, before you confront the person. The reason is that they have hurt you once already, suppose you were depending on them to seek your forgiveness before you feel comforted, but they fail to do that and instead compound the matter. You will become twice hurt with no relieve and comfort. But when you confront them with an open heart that has already forgiven, and is filled with sincere love, irrespective of the outcome, you'll leave the place still having the peace of God. Their refusal to REPENT and seek forgiveness is no longer your problem, but between them and God.

Now concerning forgiveness. Forgiveness among believers is a MUST. Remember, be conscious of the fact that we ALL still possess human flesh, and there is a tendency that once in a while the flesh may find expression to do something wrong. You and I are guilty of this (**1 John**

1:8-10, 2:1-2). So it isn't a matter of IF you will get hurt and offended, but rather, WHEN you get hurt and offended.

Understand that the Holy Spirit can be in ALL of us, but we are not all at the same levels of discipline, discipleship, and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. We are all on a progressive journey with the Lord. So if you've progressed to mile 10, and experienced the training and challenging situations that instilled character for someone at mile 10, you may encounter a believer at mile 1 or 2, and their immaturity and lack of character, behaving less than your expectations from your vintage point, might cause you to be naturally offended by them. In this case you have no choice but to be gracious and forgiving towards them (Col 3:13-14); To whom much is given much is expected (Luke 12:48). You have been given much grace and forgiveness, hence you are expected to in turn give much grace and forgiveness to your fellow believer (Matt 6:14-15, 18:21-35, Mark 11:24-26 **NKJV**).

Besides, bear in mind that you are also not perfect, and you may knowingly or unknowingly hurt someone. So wouldn't it be nice if they forgave you, and didn't torment you with your misdeeds, or moments of your weakness? I think you would like them to forgive you so that the cycle of Love and sweet fellowship can be restored.

So in terms of interpersonal relationships in the Church, it is important to recognize the humanity of each individual, offer forgiveness freely and correct graciously, with a Loving heart and desire to restore the individual who sinned.

And if you're the one on the receiving side of the correction, then humbly and patiently listen to understand where the person is coming from; discern what you could have done differently, or communicated better to avoid the misunderstanding; and avoid escalating the situation, but instead be quick to offer a sincere apology if needed (Matt 5:23-26, Psalms 141:3-5, Prov 15:12, 31-33, 9:7-12, 10:16-22, 12:1, 25:12, Eccl 7:5).

And sometimes try to discern if a situation is worth fighting for. There are some fights that are worth fighting, and there are some that are just NOT. Have wisdom to discern which is which. And also don't be like me in the illustration I gave concerning my brother. I knew from the start that it wasn't worth fighting over it, and I believe the Holy Spirit gave me that insight. But I chose to fight because I felt justified, and this didn't sit well with God. So if the situation is NOT worth fighting for, and you get the impression of the Holy Spirit to deescalate the matter even though you are right, then swallow your pride and apologise. Otherwise, if the situation is worth fighting for, and the Holy Spirit sets you on that path of confrontation, then stand your ground like a lion, and do NOT retreat, fighting the good fight of faith (**1 Tim 6:11-12**, **2 Tim 2:3-4**, **4:7-8**).

To conclude I'll give an illustration using Peter, to show that even though we are Christians, and we are expected to be very spiritual people, there may be times when our old human nature may creep up. And if it does, like I said, we just have to REPENT and humbly receive correction.

Peter was one of the most outspoken disciples. And sometimes he spoke as though he knew better than Jesus Christ (**Matt 16:21-24**). But I must say he is one of my favorite disciples among the twelve. In the Last Supper, Jesus Christ told Peter that he would deny Him three times. Peter was confident in himself and his fleshly resolve that that wouldn't happen (**Matt 26:31-35**), but it turned out to be the case (**Matt 26:69-75**). At this point Peter and the other disciples had not received the Holy Spirit, so we can cut them some slack for denying Jesus Christ, Who is the way the Truth and the Life (**John 14:6**).

Now fast forward to after Peter received the Holy Spirit, and after he had ministered to Cornelius and his household. At this point he happened to be with Paul and Barnabas along with some Jews and Gentile believers. Peter knew from his personal encounter, and ministry to Cornelius that God had accepted the Gentiles, so he freely interacted with them disregarding Jewish traditions (**Acts 10:28-29**, **48**). I believe at this point the Church had not settled the circumcision debate. But when some Jews from Jerusalem came, who apparently stood on the aisle of

circumcision, Peter yielded to his old nature, and denied the truth he knew by separating himself from the Gentiles, and Barnabas, a Levite (**Acts 4:36**), as well as the other Jews followed suite. Paul on the other hand stood for the truth and rebuked them (**Gal 2:11-13**).

So clearly we see the human nature resurfacing in the great apostle Peter, specifically his weakness to deny the truth so as to fit in with people, just as he did when he denied Jesus Christ. Paul rebuked Peter, and it appeared Peter took it well. Because part of the exposition of Paul's rebuke (**Gal 2:15-16, 21**), was what Peter used when addressing the council at Jerusalem to resolve the circumcision issue (**Acts 15:7, 10-11**). Besides, Peter maintained no hard feelings towards Paul, because he acknowledged Paul and his divine ministry in one of his letters (**2 Peter 3:15-18**).

I believe the illustration proves the point that in the Church, you will still encounter people who may allow aspects of their human nature to raise their unsavory head. So be mindful of this, forgive, and remain loving. And if you're the one who errs, REPENT and reconcile with the person. Either-way STRIVE to maintain the bond of unity through the Holy Spirit.

John 17:20-23

*[20] "My prayer is not for them alone. **I pray also for those who will believe in Me** through their message, [21] **THAT ALL OF THEM MAY BE ONE**, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. **May they also be in Us** so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. [22] **I have given them the glory that You gave Me**, **that they may be One as we are One**— [23] **I in them and You in Me**—**so that they may be brought to COMPLETE UNITY**. Then the world will know that You sent Me **and have Loved them even as You have Loved Me**. NIV*

1 Corinthians 12:13

*[13] For **we were all baptized by ONE Spirit so as to form ONE BODY**—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—**and we were ALL given the ONE Spirit to drink**. NIV*

Romans 15:5-7

*[5] May the God Who gives endurance and encouragement give you **THE SAME ATTITUDE OF MIND TOWARD EACH OTHER THAT CHRIST JESUS HAD**, [6] so that **with ONE MIND and ONE VOICE** you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [7] **Accept one another, then, JUST AS CHRIST ACCEPTED YOU, in order to bring praise to God**. NIV*

5.3.3 Relationship With Unbelievers

Now relationship with unbelievers is a bit similar to the Interpersonal relationship with believers, but it is a lot more demanding, and boundaries have to be set.

Because most unbelievers don't see themselves as accountable to God, or a divine authority, so chances are that they would sin without any recourse or concern for your feelings. For this reason you may need to dispense twice as much Grace and Love when relating with unbelievers.

Also there are chances that unbelievers would hate and persecute you for no just reason. But even then you are expected to treat them with Love, even pray for them, and not repay them with evil (**Matt 5:43-48**, **Rom 12:17-21**). You should know this, that you can't accomplish this by your human ability, you need the help of the Holy Spirit. Because humanly speaking you can grudgingly do what is expected of you, but internally your heart would be bitter. You need the Holy Spirit to help you treat them well and keep your heart from bitterness. How you know that the Holy Spirit has helped you in this matter is that your heart would be free towards those that hurt and persecute you, and you'll have no ill feeling, or wicked desire that something bad happens to them on account of what they did to you. But if your heart is bitter towards anybody then you need to ask the Holy Spirit to come and help you.

God does NOT work effectively with those who carry bitterness in their heart. Let's face it, as ambassadors of Christ here on earth (**Phil 3:20**, **2 Cor 5:20**), we are sent into the world, to unbelievers, to proclaim the Love and Grace of Christ, so that they can be reconciled to God. If you are bitter towards those you are sent to offer the message of salvation, won't you end up instead wanting them to suffer and perish.

Jonah was sent to preach to Nineveh, but he was reluctant to go because deep down in his heart he wanted God to destroy them. But somehow, despite his lacklustre message that offered no hope, the people of Nineveh REPENTED, and God forgave them, to the disappointment of Jonah, His messenger (please read the book of **Jonah**, it is just four short **Chapters**).

So don't be like Jonah who was bitter towards those he was sent to minister to. Always try to view unbelievers through the lens of God's Love and mercy. He really doesn't want anyone to perish. So even though unbelievers may treat you poorly despite your good deeds, try to forgive, restock on love, and press on (**Acts 14:9-20**).

Because of how you'll be treated by unbelievers, you will constantly need to be refreshed by love from your fellow believers, so that you don't have a Love deficit from all the Love given and trampled upon by the unbelievers, who generally suck you dry without giving anything in return. By the way believers should not behave like unbelievers, by always receiving but never giving (**Acts 20:35**); that is NOT the Christian way, neither is it the way of Love.

It should also be noted that many unbelievers will take offence by your holy lifestyle, because it convicts them of their sins, so this may also result in hatred and persecution (**1 Peter 4:3-5**). This does NOT mean you compromise to do what they do, so that they can accept you. You have much more to gain by staying holy, like I previously highlighted. And though it is painful to be persecuted for no good reason, and EXCLUDED, God understands the level of SACRIFICE it takes, and He promises to reward you as a result, so rejoice (**Luke 6:22-23**, **Heb 10:32-36**).

So you must be aware that as a result of your commitment to live a holy life, to deny corruption in the workplace, and stand for Truth, Justice, and righteousness, some unbelievers will put your life under a microscope, looking to find the slightest piece of dirt to implicate you. But don't give them the satisfaction (**Daniel 6:2-10**, **13-14**, **19-28**). Make sure you don't just talk holy, or appear holy, or fake holiness, be the real deal. Be holy by the help of the Holy Spirit, and enjoy the holy lifestyle. This way they would never find any dirt on you, and your righteous and productive living may be able to convict them and cause them to REPENT (**1 Peter 2:12**, **3:15-16**). And for those who choose not to REPENT, your lifestyle will still convict them and bring shame and judgment upon them (**2 Cor 2:14-17**).

So in conclusion, be wise when dealing with unbelievers; Be mindful of every conversation, and make the most of every opportunity (**Col 4:5-6**, **Eph 5:15-17**); Be diligent in your work, and excellent in everything pertaining to daily life; And minister love and goodness to EVERYONE (**Gal 6:9-10**, **Eph 5:8-10**).

Lastly, PRAY for unbelievers, because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, that is to say that our fight isn't against human beings, but rather manipulating spiritual entities that tend to influence men (**Eph 6:10-12**). So often times the people who do evil against us do so ignorantly or under the influence of demonic spirits (**Luke 23:34**, **John 16:1-3**), who seize moments of weakness to work through people (**Matt 16:22-24**). PRAY that God will deliver them from the grip of the devil (**2 Tim 2:25-26**). Your prayers matter, and there are many testimonies of God changing the worst people, because someone, or some people were praying for them. So indeed pray for your enemies (**Matt 5:44**). God can miraculously turn them to friends that you will treasure above the hurt they caused, just like every Christian, all through the who are grateful for the ministry of Paul, forgetting the fact that he persecuted the Church and caused the imprisonment, torture and death of some believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

[9] ***Let us not become weary in doing good****, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. [10]* ***Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY to those who belong to the family of believers****. NIV*

1 Thessalonians 4:9, 12

[9] Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, ***for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other****.*

…

[12] so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and ***so that you will not be dependent on anybody****. NIV*

Proverbs 16:7

[7] When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, ***He causes their enemies to make peace with them****. NIV*

CHAPTER SIX: TAKING COMMUNION

Communion is a thing of fellowship that exists between the Church and Jesus Christ. The significance of Communion are very profound, and I would be barely able to scratch the depths of it, because almost every time I hear someone preach about it I learn something new.

Like baptism, Communion is a very important practice. But unlike baptism where you only need to be baptized once, Communion is meant to be a regular practice, also done to keep Jesus Christ in remembrance (**1 Cor 11:23-26**).

It should be noted that you need to be a baptized believer before you should venture to take Communion. Communion is a very sacred practice, and must be engaged in with all seriousness and soberness.

Now I'll focus on what Communion entails, and then I'll discuss some of the significance of taking Communion.

6.1 The Practice of Taking Communion

Jesus Christ inaugurated the practice of taking Communion at the last supper with His disciples before He was crucified. This supper is also referred to as "*the Lord's Supp*er", or "*the Last Supper*".

Prior to the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ gave quite a controversial sermon, where, like manna, He equated Himself to be the True Bread that came from Heaven (**John 6:35, 48-51**). He didn't stop there, but proceeded to declare that unless a person eats His Flesh, and drinks His Blood they wouldn't have life. And then He went on to say that His Flesh is real Food and His Blood real drink. This quite upset his audience, who found the teaching bizarre and hard to swallow, so a lot of them stopped following Him from that time on (**John 6:52-60**). However the

disciples stuck around (**John 6:61-69**), and everything began to make sense at the Lord's Supper.

In the middle of the supper, Jesus Christ took bread, gave thanks, and declared it to be His Body. He then broke it and gave it to His disciples to eat. Then He took a cup of wine, and similarly He gave thanks, and He gave it to them. He then declared the wine to be His Blood, the Blood of the Covenant, which is made available for the forgiveness of sins (**Matt 26:26-28**). And He commanded His disciples to practice what He had done in remembrance of Him and His suffering for the sake of establishing the Covenant for us (**Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24-26**).

So the practice is very straightforward, it involves: bread and wine that convey the spiritual connotation of Jesus's Flesh and Blood, and a sober reflection of what Jesus Christ had to endure to establish the Covenant we enjoy, and His depth of Love demonstrated by His SACRIFICE. It should be noted that the Lord's Supper was a Passover meal (**Matt 26:18-19**, **Luke 22:14-15**). And when we discuss about the significance of Communion you'll find some striking similitudes between the death of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.

But one reason, among others, that I'm drawing your attention to the unarguable connection between Passover and the Lord's Supper, is in connection to the bread. So the Passover bread, like the one Jesus Christ and His disciples ate during the Lord's Supper had to be made without yeast, meaning the bread was unleavened, in other words without a leavening agent (**Exodus 12:6-8, 17-20**).

This is not just an ingredient preference, it has significance both for the Old and New Testament. But our focus will be on the New Testament. Leaven is representative of sin, hence taking unleavened bread portrays a body devoid of sin (**1 Cor 5:6-8**). Respectfully speaking there is no other interpretation of this, as I've heard even the church fellowship that I grew up with justify taking Communion with bread that was clearly leavened to imply "*inclusion*", saying that God has included sinful man into His Family. Even in that they recognize that leaven is associated with sinfulness.

The fact however is that God cleanses and forgives us of our sin to usher us into His Family, so those in His Family are not covered with the filth of sin. Hence He doesn't keep someone in His Family who chooses to willfully sin, and by so doing ignore what His Son has done (**Heb 10:26-31**). If He could just include sinners into His Family without cleansing them of their sins, then Jesus Christ wouldn't have had to come and die to pay the price for sin. Let Truth be Truth, and let's avoid any gymnastics to try and fill up churches by appealing to the emotions and fleshly desires of people. So the "*inclusion*" doctrine is a misrepresentation of what God is actually doing in the conversion and translation of sinners from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His Son (**Col 1:12-14**). We cannot create a meaning or significance that God does not endorse. God is in the business of transforming people and getting them out of the worldly way of doing things, and this process involves SACRIFICE and embracing the hard Truth (**Rom 12:1-2**), which needed not be hard had we not complicate things with our flimsy ideas and manoeuvrings (**1 John 5:3**, **2 Tim 4:2-5**, **1 Tim 4:1-2**, **Eph 4:11-16**).

Lastly, speaking of Truth: I need to address one more thing that I suspect is going to be controversial to the Church in general, before we go on to discuss the significance of Communion. But this needs to be taken seriously by the Church.

6.2 Passover or Easter, Which is It?

Now this just wrecks my brain how the Church has let it slide for so long. And I share guilt in this, because even after knowing the Truth, it still felt comfortable to go along with the ERROR of the Church. But NOT anymore.

Practising Communion and remembering the Lord's Supper is a COMMAND that Jesus Christ passed down to us, so it is something that we need to take seriously. And I remember during the 2020 pandemic a

lot of churches really engaged the practice of taking Communion on a daily basis.

But what I feel is a very strong issue worth addressing is, what does the word “Easter” have to do with Christianity, and why has it been chosen as the word to represent the most sacred festival in Christianity, which Jesus Christ commands we keep in remembrance of Him? I mean it literally has no connection to Jesus Christ, the Lord’s Supper or even anything remotely Christian, so why then do we use it to name one of the most sacred Christian holiday?

In case you don't know it, words and names matter. I've already spoken of how both spiritual kingdoms latch upon our words, like prayers, which act as grounds for access to the earth realm.

So what is so concerning about the word “Easter”. Well, if you run a quick Google search about the etymology of the word “Easter”, you'll find that it is associated with some goddess, the “East”, or the spring season. That for me is a BIG red flag there, that is the connection with a goddess of the spring season.

I wonder why there is no outrage among Christians concerning this. Imagine someone associating a person you love, say your mother, with a word used to refer to whores. Isn't that going to piss you off? Aren't you going to get them to stop, or have absolutely nothing to do with them? So how is it that the word used to depict one of the most important Christian festivals has the remote attachment to a pagan goddess and people are just cool with it (**1 Cor 10:15-17**, **20-22**).

Exodus 23:13

[13] “Be careful to do everything I have said to you. ***Do NOT invoke the names of other gods; DO NOT LET THEM BE HEARD ON YOUR LIPS****. NIV*

Psalms 16:4-5

[4] Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. ***I will NOT pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.*** *[5]* ***LORD, YOU ALONE are my Portion and my Cup****; You make my lot secure. NIV*

Some may insist that it is not a big deal it is just a “word”, well that's because they truly don't understand spiritual matters, and it just tells you how complacent some Christians are. And besides this seems to have been the trend in the Church where seemingly “*small things*” are tolerated, until the Church keeps on deviating into bigger things that become more problematic (**Rev 2:14-16**, **20**).

If you've noticed in this book I often write “REPENT" or “REPENTANCE" in CAPITAL letters. Believe it or not, this fundamental Christian teaching, which can be easily proven through Scripture is on the chopping board in some Christian circles. Some of them claim that one needs to only repent at the point of conversion and then afterwards everything is good, because Jesus Christ paid for future sins. Others set the scenario that if they sin a hundred times in a day, are they expected to repent a hundred times. The simple answer is yes. But the follow up question to that is if the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and you’re submitted to Him, how is it possible for you to sin a hundred times in a day? This can only be possible if you CHOOSE to sin a hundred times a day.

As the foundations of Christianity get eroded, so also will the efficacy of Christians diminish. It is beyond disrespectful, and I dare say demonic to Change the name of a God given Biblical holiday called Passover, which COINCIDED with the Lord’s Supper and His resurrection, into a word associated with a pagan goddess. To mildly express how I feel about it, I'll say it is utterly stupid, and Christians are being foolish and complacent going along with it. Remember we discussed being sensitive to God’s feelings, so tell me honestly how do you think God feels about it? The pinnacle of His Son’s achievement is called by a name that has nothing to do with His Son, nor His achievement, but rather a flimsy goddess that no one currently knows anything about. By doing this you are desecrating a Biblical festival, and the fulfilment of it through Jesus Christ. You'll understand more on this as we discuss the significance of Communion.

I'm not trying to split hairs with this, but in all seriousness the Church needs to wake up and uproot all these things before God comes to do the shaking Himself (**Matt 15:13-14**, **Heb 12:26-29**, **1 Peter 4:17**). At that point there would be needless losses in the Church for failure to REPENT, and separate ourselves from the world, i.e. being holy (**Rev 18:4-5**), **2 Cor 6:15-18**).

Please, honestly consider what I've just discussed. Is it really worthwhile to maintain a "name" that adds no meaning to the most sacred Christian festival, but rather diminishes it? Is this something that God is pleased with? And why is it so difficult to use the Biblical name of the week long festival, "Passover", that coincides with the Lord's Supper, and Jesus's death and resurrection (**Matt 26:17-19**, **Luke 22:7-8**, **15-16**)? I mean the early Church had no problem with "Passover", so why should we (**1 Cor 5:7-8**)?

Churches need to really have meaningful conversations about this. So even if the general Church takes no steps to rectify this subversion of Glory from God, individual congregations can take a stand with the Truth.

I can say it here and now, I don't give two cents about the Christmas debate. I have no problem celebrating or saying merry Christmas, because first of all the word literally means - a mass held for Christ; in other words, a church service in honor of Christ. Secondly, there is no Biblical Passage that implies whether one should or shouldn't celebrate it. Thirdly, even though it most likely wasn't the day that Jesus Christ was born into the earth, it is still nice to proclaim the fact that one night long ago Jesus Christ was born into the world. So on the subject of Christmas everyone has liberty to choose whether or not to celebrate and consider the day special above others. That one is between you and God (**Rom 14:5-8**).

But in the matter of the Lord's Supper, there is a Biblical COMMAND to celebrate it in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (**1 Cor 11:24-26**). So no Christian has the liberty to put such a spin on the event so as to rename it. Even if the Church is "*allergic*" to call it

Passover, as it actually is, at least let it be called "*The Lord's Supper*" or "*The Last Supper*" for the night Communion is taken. And then the third day from that, we could simply call it "*The Resurrection Day*". At least these have a connection to Jesus Christ, but in my opinion PASSOVER IS MORE IDEAL.

Concerning my suggestion of "*The Resurrection Day*" instead of "*The Resurrection Sunday*", I may have a small reason for that suggestion, which should NOT be seen as a doctrinal matter. Now this is me just saying, I do have personal reservations as to how the dates of the festival are engineered and generated, but I can't speak too much into that because it isn't as relevant. I mean if we are going to celebrate an APPOINTED festival, it becomes impossible to make it fall on a specific day of the week every year. For instance, your birthday doesn't fall on the same day of the week each year. And in a similar fashion the people in the day of Jesus Christ did not engineer the Passover to fall on the Sabbath day, which is the seventh day of the week, i.e. Saturday. So any day of the week a festival falls on, based on its appointed time, it is referred to as a High Sabbath by the Jews. So a High Sabbath can be different from the regular Sabbath, which is the seventh day of the week, i.e. Saturday.

It would appear that on the year Jesus Christ was crucified the High Sabbath of the Passover evening, and the following days of unleavened bread, as both go together (**Exodus 12:1-8, 14-16**), fell a couple of days before the regular Sabbath. This was why the Pharisees did not enter the Palace of Pilate, because it would make them unclean (**John 18:28-29**), and unable to continue with the Passover celebration until the next month (**Num 9:6-11**). And just so you know, Passover was to be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Aviv, which was the first month for the Israelites (**Deut 16:1**, **Exodus 12:1-2**). So without engineering the dates, it is impossible to have the festival fall on a specific day of the week.

Right now, from the little research I've done, which by the way anyone can correct me if I'm mistaken, there is no way of tracing the dates

based on the original Calendar from which the festivals of God were marked out in the Old Testament. So the current Hebrew Calendar is quite frankly engineered, just like the Gregorian Calendar; and maybe so to the similar extent of how the Church makes the crucifixion day fall on Friday, and the resurrection day to fall on Sunday. So similarly the Hebrew Calendar tends to make the festivals fall on, or around the new moon days.

But for a personal preference I use the Hebrew Calendar to know when Passover is to be celebrated. And through that Calendar it is impossible to consistently have "*The Resurrection Day*" fall on Sunday year after year. Again this is a personal preference, so you don't have to follow me on this one. But the change of "name" thing, is absolutely important.

I'll leave it at that for now, so that we can discuss about some of the significance of the Communion.

6.3 The Significance of Communion

These are the following significant things and effects pertaining to communion that we would discuss:

- The connection of Communion to Passover.
- The connection of Communion to Healing.
- Life in the Blood, and the connection to the Communion Cup
- The Blood Speaks, and taking advantage of this through taking Communion.
- Deliverance and Spiritual Warfare by Leveraging the Blood

Not to waste any time let us begin with the significance attached to Passover.

6.3.1 The Connection of Communion to Passover

The Passover celebration was used to commemorate how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, the land of slavery, and brought them into freedom and nationhood, and God specifically told them to celebrate it as a reminder, just like Jesus Christ commanded us to take communion in remembrance of Him on the very same day of Passover (**Exodus 13:3-10**).

Passover in the New Testament speaks of how we are also translated out from the kingdom of darkness, where we were held in slavery to sin and death (**2 Tim 2:25-26**, **Heb 2:14-15**), into the Kingdom of Light (**Col 1:12-14**), just like the Israelites were translated from Egypt, the land of slavery, to the Promised Land.

One other key element of the Passover celebration is the Passover lamb, which was to be sacrificed in the evening, and have its blood placed on the doorpost of the house where it was sacrificed (**Exodus 12:6-8**).

Now from the beginning of Jesus's ministry John the Baptist first identified Him as "... *the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!*" (**John 1:29**, **35-36**). Similarly, Jesus's disciple, John, provides a corresponding imagery of the slain Lamb representing Jesus Christ (**Rev 5:6**).

Furthermore, the Passover lamb is meant to be sacrificed in the evening under the cover of darkness (**Exodus 12:6**). In like manner, even though Jesus Christ hung on the cross from around 9am to 3pm, which is typically day time, a miraculous darkness came over the land from noon to 3pm, so that Jesus Christ would fulfil the condition of being sacrificed under the cover of darkness (**Mark 15:25**, **33**, **Luke 23:44-47**, **Matt 27:45**). Natural full solar eclipses last a few minutes, but this darkness, eclipse or whatever, lasted for a couple of hours.

Furthermore, it was stipulated that the Passover lamb was NOT to have any of its bones broken (**Exodus 12:46**). This aspect was almost violated.

To accelerate the death process, Pilate ordered to have the knees of Jesus and the two others crucified with Him to be broken (**John 19:33-37**). This was because in other to breathe while hanging on the cross the individual had to painfully prop themselves by their feet nailed to the cross, otherwise they would suffocate. Hence if one's knees were to be broken it becomes impossible for them to breathe, hence they'd die quicker, instead of the relatively slower process of bleeding out.

However, prior to being crucified Jesus Christ had already lost a lot of Blood from the crown of thorns on His head and the severe whipping He endured. So when the soldier came to break His knees for the purpose of accelerating His death, he found Jesus Christ to be dead already. So just to be sure, he took a spear to pierce His Side, and this might have pierced His Heart and lungs, and out came a flow of Blood and Water, a testament to the degree of Blood loss Jesus Christ experienced. All this so that His bones would not be broken as stipulated by Law for the Passover sacrifice (**Num 9:12**, **Psalms 34:20**).

The last, and I believe most important, parallel I will draw pertains to what the Blood of the Passover lamb was used for. God instructed the Israelites to take the Blood of the Passover lamb and apply it on the sides and top doorframes of the house they were in (**Exodus 12:7**). This was done so that when the angel of death came to kill all the firstborn sons of ALL who were in Egypt, God would prevent the angel from entering the homes of Israelis, thus SUSPENDING the death sentence (**Exodus 12:13**, **21-23**).

I say SUSPEND, because God still had to settle accounts with the firstborn sons of the Israelites, and the RANSOM he set had to be paid. First of all, since He took all the tribe of Levi for Himself, He had all the Levite males stand as substitutes for the firstborns of the other Israelites. But there was still an excess of Israeli firstborns, and for those He set a RANSOM of five Shekels of silver to be paid for each of them to REDEEM them from the Judgment of death that came upon ALL the firstborn sons who were in Egypt (**Exodus 13:1-2**, **14-16**, ***Num 3:11-15**, **39-51***), which by the way the Israelites were in Egypt at the time.

Note that the sentence on all the firstborns of both animals and people was death (**Exodus 12:12-13**). For the clean livestock like cattle, sheep and goats, there was NO REDEMPTION, they had to die (**Exodus 13:12**, **Num 18:17**). For animals that couldn't be offered as sacrifice, they were either REDEEMED, or they were killed. And then for all firstborn sons, they had to be REDEEMED (**Exodus 13:13**). Those that came out of Egypt were REDEEMED by the male Levites a month old or older; and the excess paid five shekels of silver to be REDEEMED. And as a Law subsequent firstborns sons of Israelites had to be REDEEMED by paying five shekels of silver (**Num 3:46-47**, **18:16**). I'm emphasizing all these to make sure that you understand that ALL the firstborn, both of animal and people, were under the sentence of death the night God killed the firstborns in Egypt. But for the Israelites and their livestock the death sentence was SUSPENDED to allow for people and certain kinds of animals to be REDEEMED, i.e. SAVED from that death sentence.

Redemption is such a deep and profound subject matter which I've written a book to address the topic. The key point in redemption is that God, as Judge, sets the price for REDEMPTION, just like human judges can set fines to redeem people from serving jail time for certain crimes. And as for the price of REDEMPTION from death, God set the price really high, so that only He could pay it, and REDEEM whomever He chooses (**Psalms 49:7-9**, **15**). And in our case as believers He alone supplies the ransom fee required for our REDEMPTION (**Job 17:3**), which is the Blood of Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 1:18-19**). I'm getting ahead of myself, let me make one last point before I get to how Jesus Christ wonderfully fulfilled every detail of the Passover in the New Testament.

In the Passover, also note that no firstborn son, whether Egyptian or Israeli, was condemned to die on account of how bad they were, nor was any spared by how good they were. The deciding factor was the presence or absence of the blood of the Passover lamb. If the blood was seen on the doorframes of the house, the firstborn in that house was spared, regardless of if they were morally good or bad. And speaking of morality, the Israelites who came out of Egypt proved to be exceptionally stubborn and rebellious (**Deut 9:4-6**). But on the other

hand, if the blood was NOT found on the doorframes of the house, then the firstborn in that house would be killed, again irrespective of goodness or badness, Israelite or Egyptian.

Note that all of this was a judgment on the gods of Egypt (**Exodus 4:22-23**, **12:12**). And it just so happened that while the Israelites lived in Egypt they also served the gods of Egypt, hence in a way they were under the same judgement until the time of REDEMPTION (**Joshua 24:14**, **Ezekiel 23:1-4**). So this wasn't an impartial thing, God operated JUSTLY, and I say this for those who constantly try to paint God as being cruel and unfair.

Now let's examine the parallel of Passover fulfilment through Jesus Christ.

Already we know that Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb (**John 1:29**, **36**, **1 Cor 5:7-8**), and He practically shed all His Blood to fulfil the role of the Passover Lamb.

So how do we apply His Blood to mark us as those who would have the judgment of death SUSPENDED, like the Israelites applied it on their doorframes to restrain the angel of death from entering their houses? Yes, you guessed it, by taking Communion. When we take Communion by drinking the cup of wine, sanctified to be the Blood of Jesus Christ, we mark ourselves as those upon whom the judgment of death is SUSPENDED. Remember, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve the judgment of death rested on ALL mankind (**Gen 2:16-17**, **3:19**, **Rom 5:12**, **1 Cor 15:22**), just as judgment was applicable to ALL who lived in Egypt. And like all mankind we were at some point serving the will of the devil being given to sin, hence we were all deserving of death (**Rom 6:16**, **18**, **20-21**, **23**, **Eph 2:1-3**, **Titus 3:3**); because we came under the SAME judgement that was assigned to the devil, which is death and eternal torment in the lake of fire (**Rev 20:10**, **14-15**, **John 16:11**, **John 12:31**). This was just like how the Israelites also came under the SAME judgment passed on the gods of Egypt whom they served while they were there (**Exodus 12:12**).

So the Blood of the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, marked the people who would have the judgment of death SUSPENDED until they appeared before God to settle accounts with Him, and have the price of REDEMPTION paid, or substitution. This may be driving your Theological alarms crazy, but hang in there I'm not done yet, it gets better.

We know that on the first day of the week, Sunday, Mary Magdalene and the others went to anoint Jesus's Body, but on arriving at the tomb they found the stone rolled away, and His Body was not there. Mary stayed there crying, until Jesus Christ appeared to her. She wanted to hold on to Him in joy, but the Lord restrained her because He said He had not yet ascended to the Father (**John 20:1, 15-17**). There was something peculiar about this FIRST ascent, because I believe we find that Daniel speaks about it, in which he portrays Jesus Christ receiving dominion and power, and being worshipped (**Daniel 7:13-1**). And then as we know, after His resurrection Jesus Christ kept appearing to His disciples before His final ascension to Heaven (**John 21:14, Acts 1:3-5**). It was during one of those times that He gave the Great Commission, in which He stated that all power and authority in Heaven and on earth had been given to Him, and He was also worshipped, thus confirming the vision Daniel had (**Daniel 7:13-14**, **Matt 28:17-18**, **Luke 24:50-52**). Having established the fact that His FIRST ascension was captured by Daniel's vision, I believe there was more that happened in that first ascension, which amounted to why Jesus Christ specifically told Mary NOT to hold onto Him until He ascended to the Father (**John 20:17**). It was then in the writings of the Book of Hebrews that it was revealed to us that Jesus Christ had to take His Blood, THE PRICE SET FOR REDEMPTION (**1 Peter 1:18-19**), to present it to God in Heaven (**Eph 5:2**, **Heb 9:12-15**), thus settling the account of all on earth who partake in His Blood by virtue of taking Communion. After doing this in His first ascension, in subsequent appearances to His disciples He allowed them to touch Him, because He had already fulfilled the sacred task of REDEMPTION (**Luke 24:38-39, John 20:27**).

So the price of our REDEMPTION has been paid, so on the Day of Judgment, when the Court of God seats to judge ALL mankind, and

decide who would face the second death in the lake of fire, the books would be opened, and right there the Lamb's Book of Life will be opened as well (**Rev 20:11-13**). So when an individual appears before God, and such a person was marked by the Blood of the Passover Lamb through Communion while on earth, thus SUSPENDING judgment, the REDEMPTION price is then going to be demanded. At this point Jesus Christ is going to step up and say, "Dad, this is one of those for whom I paid for by My Blood, their name is on My ledger, the Book of Life (**Luke 10:20**). And besides Dad, I stand as a SUBSTITUTE for them (**Psalms 80:17-19**, **2 Cor 5:14-15**)." And by that singular fact that person would NOT face the second death and they would be ushered into eternal life, NOT for any good thing they had done, but because of the Blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (**Eph 2:8-9**, **Titus 3:3-7**).

However, we who are saved from the judgement that brings death and condemnation, would still stand before the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ to give account for how we spent the life He paid for (**1 Cor 6:20**), and it is then we would be rewarded for our good deeds and service to His Kingdom (**2 Cor 5:9-10**, **1 Cor 3:11-15**). So good deeds do matter, because it is on that basis that we would receive rewards, so keep that in mind.

And as for those who rejected Jesus Christ, and failed to have His Blood mark them out for REDEMPTION, the court process would go uninterrupted for them. Now no matter how "good" they may be, aspects of sin will still be found in them, and just ONE sin is sufficient to bring the conviction of death, because God is ABSOLUTELY Holy and UNCOMPROMISING when it comes to sin (**James 2:10-11**, **Rom 6:23**, **Rom 3:19-28**). Hence, everyone who does NOT have their name in the Book of Life, and as such goes to full trial at God's Court, which must uphold absolute Justice and Righteousness, will go through a fair trial, but ultimately they will be found guilty and condemned to the second death (**Rev 20:14-15**). Job who was the most righteous of men during His time, and demanded a court session with God to defend his integrity, fell short of proving his case, and had to submit himself to the mercies of God (**Job 13:13-15**, **42:1-6**). So I don't think anyone can

escape the verdict of death on account of their own goodness, so don't trust in your self-righteousness. Christians aren't necessarily "good" people, we are just people privileged to be saved and redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ.

So point by point you can see how God encoded the mystery of Salvation and Redemption through the mystery of the Old Testament festival of the Passover, and how it connects to us in the New Testament; note Testament means Covenant, and our Covenant is enacted by the Blood of Jesus (**Matt 26:27-28**).

Every Old Testament festival that God instituted, as well as a host of other things, paints a significant portrait that makes the New Testament all the more clearer and fascinating (**Col 2:17**, **Heb 8:5-6**, **10:1**). I mean just rip out the Old Testament, and all you'll have is some Guy coming to die, resurrect and claiming that all this would save you. But bring in the Old Testament and you'll find more than three hundred direct prophecies and symbolisms that presents a well thought out plan, that CANNOT be argued to be coincidental, but precise in every regard, pointing to, and verifying, the Person of Jesus Christ.

Now seeing the profound connection between Passover and what Jesus Christ did by instituting Communion at the Lord's Supper, His death and Resurrection, you can understand why I am all the more pissed that the Church would ALLOW all of this to be overshadowed by assigning a "name" to this sacred season that is tied to a pagan goddess, spring or the "East". I believe there needs to be a righteous indignation in the Church concerning this matter, and a speedy REPENTANCE. Again I ask, how do you think God feels about it, that His meticulous effort to encode a mystery, and tremendous suffering to have that mystery uncovered by His Son, only to have it all shrouded by the very people He did all that for, calling His achievements by the "name" of a foreign goddess, thus invoking her name (**Exodus 23:13**, **Psalms 16:4**)?

Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper to have us remember Him, so let's get serious with that, and stop playing games. We even don't teach our children the right thing. In fact one aspect of the Passover was that

God literally instructed parents to explain the WHOLE meaning of the festival to their children, thus building a memorial in the hearts of all His people (**Exodus 12:26-27, 42, Exodus 13:8-10, *Deut 6:6-9***).

But instead of carrying on that symbolic tradition of meticulously educating our children on what Jesus Christ has done, why He needed to do it, how it applies to us, and what is expected of us as a result of it, we take the most sacred season of the Christian faith, that ought to be a solemn reminder, and instead focus our energy on staging "*Easter egg hunts*" and telling our children about "*the Easter bunny*". For goodness sake what does a "bunny" have to do with Christianity; I mean even in the Old Testament it would have been considered unclean (**Lev 11:6**). But somehow it has been made the central figure of the most sacred Christian holiday. So we find businesses putting up promotional flyers depicting "*Easter eggs and bunny*" to pander to the Christian population, because we have made them believe that, that is what is representative of the season. The Church needs to understand the gravity of what they have done and allowed, and collectively WE ALL must REPENT of this and stop giving foolish justifications. The Truth sometimes hurts, but we CANNOT afford to bend it so as to make ourselves "comfortable".

Understand that I'm not just saying all this to make you sorrowful for your involvement or complacency to what has been going on in the Church, because I myself admit guilt for not immediately taking a course correction for almost a year since this was slightly brought to my attention by my mum, and subsequently when God started tugging my heart on the matter. But now together with me, we need to REPENT on the matter and bring about a change that would be pleasing and acceptable to God. Godly sorrow should lead to REPENTANCE (**2 Cor 7:10-11**).

That said, let's move on to the other significance of Communion. The focus of some of the points would be tied to the Blood of Jesus Christ, and what the Blood is capable of achieving. And since we ingest that Blood we can expect it to have the same effect in our life.

6.3.2 Taking Communion is Linked to Healing

I'll admit that the first Passage of Scripture that I'll cite, which provides us with the insight that taking Communion can be efficacious in bringing about healing and restoration to our physical bodies, is a result of the converse reality that if Communion is taken in an unworthy fashion, lacking reverence and discernment, it can result to causing illness or even death (**1 Cor 11:27-32**). This may not be as direct a link to healing as you would like, but however, taking cognizance of what Jesus Christ endured in His Body to purchase healing for us, it then follows that taking the bread in Communion, which is associated with His Body, provides a direct undeniable link to healing. Hence beyond the Passage I've cited, healing is a justified benefit of taking communion. And to remind you of what Jesus's Body was subjected to so as to purchase our healing, I'll refer you to **Chapter four (Section 4.1)**, where we've already elaborated on the subject (**Isaiah 53:3-5**, **1 Peter 2:24**).

The sickness and death part from the first cited Passage may be worrisome to some who may not understand why God can go to such extremes in judging His own Church (**1 Cor 11:27-30**). Things like this could happen in the early Church because God's Glory was present with them in ways that we have not experienced in present times, or at least not in a widespread manner (**Acts 2:1-6**, **4:23-31**, **2 Cor 3:7-18**), just as He was with the Israelites (**Exodus 19:16-19**, **13:21-22**, **Num 14:14**, **Deut 23:12-14**). Hence there was a tremendous amount of power available, but at the same time misdeeds were quickly judged because God is Holy and He really CANNOT stand sin being so close to Him (**Acts 5:1-11**, **13:6-12**, **Heb 10:26-31**).

But it would appear that the Glory of God is NOT as much present in the modern Church, and I believe it is a thing of mercy because of the degree of corruption, malice, hatred, dissension and disunity present that would have caused a lot of people to come under judgment. But

God is preparing to come back to the Church in Glory and might. And it is for this reason that the alarm is being sounded, and all the Church's filth is bubbling to the surface, so that it can be discarded. Because when God comes in His Glory, He would first of all bring judgment to His Church, because "*charity begins at home*", before He brings judgment upon the earth (**1 Peter 4:17-19**, **1 Cor 11:31-32**). This is INEVITABLE, hence He brings warning to His Church so that she doesn't get swept away in judgment, along with the world, when He comes (**Heb 12:25-29**).

I appeal for you to REPENT and pray for all the brothers and sisters to REPENT. If we do, His coming in Glory would be the most amazing thing we could ever experience. Some on earth are already experiencing it, and they speak of mind blowing miracles happening, unbelievers being convicted of sin and REPENTING with little to no effort from preachers, mass baptisms, and the list goes on. The atmosphere on the horizon is that God appears to be ready to stage the most amazing revival in this generation that would rival previous ones. So we need to prepare and align ourselves with the purposes of God, so that everything manifests wonderfully as intended. So let's do our part and do what is RIGHT IN GOD'S SIGHT.

So anyway, Communion can be efficacious for one to take and receive healing.

6.3.3 There is Life in the Blood

In Scripture we get to discover that the life of a creature is in its blood (**Lev 17:11**). In a similar fashion, the life of Jesus Christ is in His Blood. This explains why when He taught the controversial message about Communion He stated that unless we drink His Blood we would have no life in us (**John 6:53-58**). His Life is the True and perfect life. And because He lives forevermore, we as well will live through Him (**John 14:6**, **6:57-58**). His Life is the wellspring of abundant life (**John 10:10**).

Now this can easily pertain to healing, as many would tend to apply this faith revelation. But I dare say it translates to much more. Jesus Christ wants to envelop your whole being that He influences your mind, hence the thoughts you think would be in alignment to His (**1 Cor 2:16**); He wants to influence the words you speak, and the strength by which you operate, which is why you have been given HIS Spirit (**Gal 4:6**, **1 Peter 4:11**, **Matt 10:17-20**); He wants to inform your attitude and disposition (**Phil 2:1-5**). He wants to live with, and through you, that's the only way you can have true life.

Matthew 16:24-26

[24] Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. [25] ***For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, BUT whoever loses their life FOR ME will find it****. [26] What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or* ***what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*** *NIV*

John 10:10

[10] The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. ***I have come THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, and that they may HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY****. NKJV*

John 4:13-14

[13] Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] ***but whoever drinks the water I give them will NEVER thirst****. Indeed,* ***the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to ETERNAL LIFE****." NIV*

John 7:37-38

*[37] On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "****Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink****. [38]* ***Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, RIVERS OF LIVING WATER WILL FLOW FROM WITHIN THEM****." NIV*

Ephesians 4:15-16, 22-24

[15] Instead, speaking the truth in love, ***we will GROW to become IN EVERY RESPECT the mature Body of Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ****. [16] From Him the whole Body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament,* ***GROWS*** *and* ***builds itself up IN LOVE, as each part does its work****.*

…

[22] You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; [23] ***to be made NEW in the attitude of your MINDS****; [24] and to* ***put on the NEW self, created to be LIKE God in true RIGHTEOUSNESS and HOLINESS****. NIV*

Galatians 4:19

[19] My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth ***until Christ is FORMED IN YOU****, NIV*

Of course the transformative process depends heavily on one allowing Jesus Christ to express Himself in and through them, but I believe the act of taking Communion initiates and reinforces that process, also coupled with the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual.

I also find that since taking Communion is such a sober reminder of Jesus Christ, and it becomes even more sobering reading Paul's letter to the church at Corinth (**1 Cor 11:28-29**), one is forced to examine their life and REPENT of any sin that comes to mind, whether against God or fellow man, and forgive anyone that might have hurt them (**2 Cor 13:5**). This solemn reminder of Jesus Christ, and forgiving others as you've been forgiven, brings a surge of new life and revitalization, and as I can testify it makes me feel free and ready to face my day. I believe this feeling is the life of Christ resurging in me, and personally I associate it with the act of taking Communion.

So I recommend taking Communion daily, and also yielding yourself to have the Life of Christ manifest through you to be a blessing to others and yourself most of all. The well that gives water can never be thirsty.

6.3.4 The Blood Speaks

One spiritual attribute of blood that has been shed is that it speaks. We are introduced to this insight when Cain gave into sin, and murdered his

innocent brother. When God confronted Cain, Cain thought that since no one physically saw the act he could just deny it and go scot-free. Unbeknownst to him Abel's blood had raised a cry to God against him (**Gen 4:10-11**, **Heb 11:4**).

Now I'm just saying as a side note, I would like to think that if Cain would have admitted guilt, REPENTED and sought forgiveness from God, his story might have gone a bit differently (**Prov 28:13**). Anyway, let's not get distracted, the point I wanted to make from this illustration was that blood speaks.

And here is the significance for us: because Jesus's Blood was shed on earth, and was also taken into Heaven, His Blood is testifying and speaking better things on our behalf (**1 John 5:6-8**, **11-13** **NKJV**, **Heb 9:12-15**, **10:19-22**).

Hebrews 12:24-25

[24] to Jesus the Mediator of a New Covenant, and to ***the sprinkled Blood that SPEAKS A BETTER WORD than the blood of Abel****. [25]* ***See to it that you DO NOT REFUSE HIM WHO SPEAKS****. If they did NOT escape when they refused Him Who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him Who warns us from heaven? NIV*

So I also believe that when we take Communion we carry the voice of Christ speaking into the spiritual realm on our behalf. And the testimony of Jesus's Blood impacts both the angelic and demonic, none can escape the authority and command of His voice. And most importantly, His voice is speaking GOOD things on our behalf.

6.3.5 There is Deliverance from the devil by the Blood of Jesus

Lastly, also tied to the previous point, there is power in the Blood of Jesus Christ to bring about deliverance. In this regard the Blood is NOT

playing a redemptive or salvation role, which is a transaction with God (**Eph 5:2**, **1 Peter 1:18-19**), but rather It takes a combative stance, because deliverance isn't a negotiation but a question of superior power and authority (**Luke 11:21-22**).

Hence Scripture tells us that we OVERCOME the devil by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of our testimony (**Rev 12:11**). OVERCOME signifies the outcome of a conflict, and it so happens that the Blood of Jesus Christ is instrumental in securing that outcome. I also believe that since according to the Passage our testimony is involved, I am made to believe that the Blood also plays the role of speaking a testimony to the undoing of the devil. Remember the greatest miscalculation of the devil and his associates was to have Jesus Christ killed, had they known the outcome of it they wouldn't have allowed it (**1 Cor 2:7-8**).

So I strongly believe that taking Communion is an active weaponry to take one's stand against the devil. The devil has no sensible rebuttal to the speakings of the Blood of Jesus Christ. This is all the more reason to take Communion.

Now this is a rabbit whole I'm not going to delve into here, as it is quite a long subject that I've addressed elsewhere. The question is can a believer be demon possessed? The short answer is NO, because a true believer is already possessed by the Holy Spirit. However a believer can be oppressed by demons in their body and mind provided they give them entrance through, sin, unforgiveness, and letting their minds roam aimlessly (**Job 3:25**, **Phil 4:8-9**). Demonic oppression is a reminder that we are at war with spiritual entities (**Eph 6:10-13**). You can't be at war and expect the enemy not to make attempts at hurting you. So demonic oppression are the attempts of the dark kingdom to hurt the children of God.

If as a Christian you discern that a demon is oppressing you to inflict sickness, or furnishing wild thoughts that deep down you don't want to think, don't waste time on trying to argue the theology, get deliverance quick. Besides it is much easier to get delivered than to argue the theology. One potent means of deliverance, even from demons, is

through Communion. Many people have testified to this, so it works. Get free, stay free and enjoy your freedom through the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Now there could be much more to get into by exploring the subject of Communion, like I said in the beginning, but this is as much as I'm going to address in this book. If I learn more that absolutely needs to be included, I'll do a revision of the book, and the same thing goes for other subject matters.

That said let's move on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DYING TO SELF AND THE SIN NATURE

I've long hinted about this chapter through the course of this book, and we've already touched on some vital elements of it. So now I'll just try to put everything together for the purpose of future reference, say you want to come back to refresh you memory on the subject in the future.

OBEDIENCE to another requires the SACRIFICE of one's will, hence if we are to be in relationship with God, and live in Obedience to Him, we are required to lay down our will, and there are many reasons why this is important. I know this already doesn't sound palatable to many, so I'm going to have to explain WHY we must lay aside our will, in other words why we must die to self (**Matt 16:25**, **Mark 10:29-30**).

In many Christian circles this would seem a mature subject matter, but I instead believe it should be introduced as a fundamental subject matter, because understanding it, or the lack thereof, can be very impactful in the life of a believer. I'll try to keep it basic here, and discuss certain aspects of it more deeply in other projects, or perhaps a standalone book.

Now, before you set out trying to die to self, or engage in any form of mortification, I think it is important to first understand the composition of mankind, discern the aspects that are flawed, before placing it or them under arrest and intense supervision.

7.1 The Human Makeup: Body, Spirit and Soul

So there are three aspects to our being: the flesh, spirit, and the soul. The process of creating mankind highlighted these three aspects.

On a side note, I do not think that it is coincidental that there are three aspects to mankind. Because if you remember, God said “let **US** make mankind in **OUR** Image, in **OUR** Likeness...” (**Gen 1:26**). The plurality of “Us” and “Our” (i.e. *Elohim* in Hebrew) is a representation of the concept of the Trinity, hence since God is a Trinity, He also made mankind a trinity consisting of the flesh, spirit and soul. Hence we share that similarity with God. I'll digress no further.

So the union of the spirit from God and the flesh of earth produced the soul, which is the governing agency in a man

Genesis 2:7

*[7] And the LORD God **formed man of the dust** of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils **the breath of life**; and man became a **living soul**. KJV*

Note:** the breath of God is representative of the spirit dimension. Read also: **Job 34:14-15**, **John 20:22**, **Luke 23:46

Job 32:8

*[8] But it is the **spirit** in a person, the **breath of the Almighty**, that gives them understanding. NIV*

Now, the spirit of man is encoded with God's will and purposes for that specific person. That's right every human being has locked in their human spirit what God has predestined them for.

Admittedly, predestination is an advanced subject matter, so I'll leave it for other projects that warrant digging deep into the subject. But I must say that it is a valid Biblical concept (**Rom 8:29-30**, **Eph 1:4-5**, **11**, **[John 17:24**, **1 Peter 1:20**, **Rev 13:8]**). Before I leave it alone I think it is important to set the record straight that predestination doesn't imply

that one would automatically fulfil what was destined for them. If they don't give their spirit the opportunity to run the code embedded in them by God, their predestined plan would not materialise, the same way an architectural plan doesn't become a building if people don't go to work to follow the plan and build the structure. I'll leave it at that.

So like I said earlier on, the union of the spirit (breath of God), and the body of earth, produced the soul (**Gen 2:7** KJV). So the soul is sort of like the offspring from the union of the spirit and the body, so it inherits a few traits from both, just like a child inherits traits from their father and mother. From the Spirit it inherits the eternal nature, hence the soul can never die; and from the body it inherits sensory abilities to feel and desire pleasurable things on earth. In other words, earthly realities can directly influence the soul.

So the soul is connected to both the spirit and body. But what is of particular interest is that the soul connects to the spirit, which then connects to God to get directions from Him. As you know God is Spirit and we worship Him in spirit and in truth (**John 4:23-24**). And He is the Father of ALL spirits (**Hebrews 12:9**), hence He has access to communicate with all spirits, including ours. And indeed He does communicate with our spirit, and then our spirit relays it to our soul and body, but primarily to our soul.

Before the fall there was balance in the person of man. In addition to the soul connecting to the spirit to get directions from God, by design it was also to connect to the flesh, and by proxy it was able to enjoy the beauties of God’s creation on earth: to enjoy the coolness of the breeze, or warmth of the sun, the beautiful sceneries, and also to be gladden and revived by the wonderful fruits in the Garden of Eden. Essentially, the soul was the mediator and governing figure in mankind. So that was the ideal design before Adam and Eve sinned.

7.1.1 The Chaos in Man

So the result of the sin of Adam and Eve was that the devil IRREVERSIBLY corrupted the human flesh; after all the sin involved eating the forbidden fruit, and the flesh is the one directly responsible in the dimension of eating. So you heard me right, your human flesh, as well as mine, are corrupt and IRREDEEMABLE. That is why our physical flesh is bound to die and decay, there is no escaping that.

So as far as it concerns our being, the devil has a partner in our flesh to tempt and cause our soul to sin and lead us off course.

But our spirit still connects to God and delights in God's will and commands (**Rom 7:22-23**), but its influence isn't often times strong enough to get the soul to do the right things. So it is in constant strife with the flesh and the lopsided decisions of the soul. It was because of this contention that God reduced the life span of humans, so that His Spirit in them wouldn't have to spend too long in constant contention with the flesh and soul (**Gen 6:3**, **Gal 5:17**). Note that the subtle, and often subdued, voice of our "conscience" is actually the spirit trying to voice out displeasure or guidance for us to stay on the path of God, or do what He desires us to do. But as you know not everyone listens to their conscience. Some have gone as far as permanently silencing their conscience (**1 Tim 4:1-2**). Such people have subdued and “broken” their spirit, “broken” in terms of how cow boys break the spirit of a wild horse to tame and subdue it to their own will and direction (**Prov 18:14 NKJV, 17:22 NKJV**).

So the situation in a man after the fall of Adam is chaotic. Imagine the soul on the driver’s seat, and the flesh and spirit in constant battles while the car is in motion; each reaching for and pulling the hands of the soul in one direction and then another, thus causing occasional collisions with the railings of the road, and as such damaging the car, which is representative of the man's life.

7.1.2 The Restoration of Some Sensibility to Man

But when a man comes to faith in Christ Jesus, yielding the will of his soul to Him, the Personality of the Holy Spirit is introduced into the man's life. In other words, the Holy Spirit steps into the car. He comes in to subdue and bind the flesh, and also amplify and make it possible for the soul to much easily execute the code that God long put in their spirit (**Eph 2:10**). As long as the individual yields to the Holy Spirit, the flesh would be bound and the soul would be able to navigate a smoother journey in Christian living and accomplishing the purposes of God for their life.

However, note that the flesh is still a passenger in the vehicle. It cannot be evicted, because if it goes out you lose legitimacy to operate within the earth realm. Because only entities with vessels of earth, i.e. earthly bodies, have legitimacy to operate on earth. Which is why you see spirits wanting to possess human beings, and as such Christians are possessed by the Holy Spirit. So the flesh has to remain a Passenger in the vehicle, for the man to continue living on earth. But even though it is subdued by the Holy Spirit, i.e. in a man who surrenders his well to the Spirit, it stays in the car whining, complaining, and doing everything to distract or entice the soul to listen to it for a moment.

And sometimes the soul foolishly empathizes with, and even listens to the flesh, because there is still that connection through which the flesh can communicate it's displeasures to the soul. I mean try engaging in a prolonged fast, and you'll soon discover that the flesh has a voice, which you must do everything to silence. But if the soul does in fact listen to the flesh when it throws its various tantrums, the soul will sooner or later be forced to regret it (**Rom 6:12-18, 20-23**), because the flesh, will as fast as possible send the car smacking right at the railings attempting to get the car off road, down the valley of sinful living, which is like a freefall unto death (**James 1:14-15**). The result of yielding to the flesh would breed chaos in the life of the individual, and in all aspects of their relationships. As long as we have the flesh, i.e. the sin nature, present

with us, it's primary purpose, whether directly or indirectly, is to lead us into sin, and ultimately unto death and separation from God.

But the more we listen to the Holy Spirit and ignore the flesh, the quieter it becomes, and the less susceptible we are to sin (**1 John 3:5-6**, **9**, **Gal 5:26**). Using the example of fasting, I can testify that the first few times you attempt it, especially if you aren't used to abstaining from food to focus exclusively on God, it would feel like hell because the body would just keep on sending hunger signals making it almost impossible to focus. But after a while it becomes much easier, almost as if the body finally gets the memo that, "Today no food for you, so keep quiet and wait until I'm done." So whenever you DECIDE to fast, the flesh doesn't even bother sending hunger signals, because it knows the soul would not pay attention to it, so it switches to ketosis mode, where it begins burning fat.

This implies that we have an unending responsibility to checkmate the flesh and ensure that we yield only to the directions of the Holy Spirit no matter how uncomfortable it may be on the onset. Eventually it gets easier when we have asserted mastery over the flesh. This describes the principle of dying to self. It stipulates that you CANNOT just do what you want to do, because self-will is usually flesh-will, and flesh-will must be "crucified" (**Gal 5:16-17**, **24-25**).

7.2 The Flesh is Utterly Corrupt and Incapable of Doing Good by God's Standards.

Romans 8:5-9

[5] ***Those who live according to the flesh have their MINDS SET on what the flesh desires****; but* ***those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their MINDS SET on what the Spirit desires****. [6]* ***The mind GOVERNED by the flesh is death****, but the mind GOVERNED by the Spirit is life and peace. [7]* ***The mind governed by the flesh is HOSTILE to God; it does not submit to God's law, NOR CAN IT DO SO****. [8]* ***Those who are in the realm of the flesh CANNOT please God****.*

*[9] You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh **but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you**. And if anyone does NOT have the Spirit of Christ, they do NOT belong to Christ. NIV*

***Note:** The mind, just like the emotional center of an individual, are departments of one's soul. So one's soul, through the mind or emotion, can either be inclined to the flesh or to the Spirit (**Gal 6:7-8**). If it is inclined to the flesh, then it is INCAPABLE of pleasing God or doing His will as the Passage above implies.*

You need to recognize the utter corruption of the flesh, then you can understand why God calls you to set aside its will, both the evil, and sometimes its will to do what appears to be "good".

Remember the forbidden tree Adam And Eve ate from was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, hence the flesh knows something about good and evil. But the product of that knowledge was rebellion, because man wanted to be like God so that they could be self-reliant not needing to do God's will. So before God both the good and evil produced by flesh are corrupt, because they are actually founded on the premise of rebellion initiated by Adam and Eve.

This was manifested when a group of people decided to build the tower of babel. It sounded like a "good" idea, especially after the global flood, to build a tall tower with thoroughly baked bricks, making it waterproof; to use tar as mortar, thus making the seams waterproof; make a name for themselves; and not to scatter over the face of the earth (**Gen 11:3-4**). All of that sounds kind of "good", I mean at face value what would you say is "bad" about what they wanted to do. But in reality what they were actually saying was that, "God if You dare think of judging the world by sending another great flood without warning, we have a tower that reaches up to the heaven (**Gen 7:17-20**), and it is also waterproof, so You can't touch us with Your flood. And we know You told Noah to multiply and fill the earth (**Gen 9:1** **NKJV**); but we are going to disregard Your instruction for this generation, and we will instead settle down in this city. And we have no interest in calling after Your Name (**Gen 4:26**), we are going to make a name for ourselves, and have people call after

our name if they need to escape Your flood." Now God could not let them carry on with their rebellion, so He confused their language, so that they were forced to scatter and populate the whole earth as God intended at that time (Gen 11:7-9).

Now you may understand why God loved Abraham so much. God told mankind to scatter and populate the earth, but those involved with the tower of babel were unwilling and had to be forced to comply with God's directive. But then God met Abraham, and basically gave him the directive to as well "scatter" from his homeland, so that he and his descendants will populate a certain land (Gen 12:1-7). And unlike the people of babel, Abraham OBEYED. So God finally found a man that would OBEY His every command. And God wanted Abraham to train his children, and his children would train their children to OBEY Him (Gen 18:19, Deut 6:6-9), and so on and so forth, and in that way God would have a people group who will do His will on earth. In other words, they would die to self and the sinful desires of the flesh, which was prevalent in all mankind, but they would instead CHOOSE to live for God.

So if you're not discerning, you may be doing something by the flesh that looks "good", as the project of the tower of babel appeared "good" at face value, but that kind of "good" emanating from the flesh is still seen as rebellion against God. We were not created to just do what we want (Gal 5:16-17, 1 Cor 6:20); we were created to do God's will on earth, which is to be fruitful (John 15:4-8, 16-17, Rom 7:4-6, Gal 5:22-25), multiply (Mal 2:15 **AMPC**), and then rule over the earth realm (Gen 1:26). By the way, ruling over the earth is not just a domineering thing to have everything bow to your will, but rather it is a thing of service, i.e. taking CARE of the earth and TENDING after it and the creatures in your charge (Gen 2:15, Matt 20:25-28, Prov 12:10).

But self-will and the fleshly nature has no interest in doing what God wants (Rom 8:5-8). Hence the flesh's attempts at doing good are often just self-serving, or for selfish motives. Which is why God views our righteous acts by the flesh to be as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). But He did

not consider Abraham's righteous acts as filthy rags because they were not done out of self-will, but rather in OBEDIENCE to the will of God.

7.3 Distinguishing Between Works of the Flesh and Works of Faith

Many people are only aware of the fact that the flesh is sinful. But fewer people are aware that the flesh is capable of doing “good”. But both the “good” and sinful side of the flesh are corrupt in God's sight.

As Christians we are often taught to crucify the sinful desires of the flesh because they lead to sin, and sin is bad. But just as bad, we must be mindful of the fact that “good” deeds inspired by the flesh are unacceptable before God.

Jesus Christ began to address this with the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day, who were proud, hypocritical, and self-seeking.

For instance, no one can argue and say that reading the Scriptures is not a good thing, I mean even several times in this write-up I've encouraged the study of Scripture (**2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV, 2:15 KJV, 1 Tim 4:11-16**). However, the study of Scripture diligently done by the flesh is profitless. Only when you study the Scripture by the help of the Holy Spirit that the deep meanings of the Word come to light and become profitable to you. So Jesus Christ confronted the Pharisees that they diligently study Scripture, but fail to realize that Scripture was pointing to Him, hence they couldn't come to Him (**John 5:39-40**). This meant that the Pharisees studied Scripture by the flesh and NOT by the Spirit (**1 Cor 2:14**). If they had studied by the Spirit the Words would have truly transformed them, and caused them to act differently, and accept Jesus Christ. I mean even at Jesus’s birth, it was still the religious leaders that Herod called upon to find out the city where the Messiah was to be born. And from their study of Scripture they could accurately decode from the prophecy of Micah the exact location for the birth of the Messiah (**Matt 2:3-6**). But

not one of them thought it wise to stick around and follow the wise men to find Jesus Christ.

So there are other things like praying, fasting, and giving which are naturally good things, but again if done by the flesh it would only profit you from men, but NOT from God (**Matt 6:1-8, 16-18**).

So God demands that all the desires of our flesh be crucified (**Gal 5:24**). Every good and bad intention emanating from the flesh needs to be put to death. Because if you serve by the flesh, your focus will generally be to please people and gain their approval and praise, instead of solely focusing on God (**John 7:18, 12:43**). So you can be doing "good" by the flesh, but what that is, is just eye service (**Col 3:22-24, Gal 4:18**). If you do any good with the sole purpose of how it is going to benefit you, and no thought is given to if it will be pleasing to God or has His approval, then you are working and living by the flesh. In other words this encapsulates the work of the flesh.

So in the service of God there is a distinction between works of the flesh and works of faith, or works of the Spirit. God has work for us to do (**Eph 2:10**, **Titus 2:13-14**, **Rev 3:1-3**), and He has empowered us by the Holy Spirit to do that work (**1 Cor 12:4-7**, **2 Peter 1:3-8**). But attempting to do the work of God, without the Holy Spirit is unacceptable (**Gal 3:1-6, 5:7-9**).

If you don't understand the distinction between the work of the flesh, and the work of God prompted by the Holy Spirit, you might fall into the misconception of many Christians who see all works as the same, and choose to categorize them as works of the flesh, hence they use aspects of Paul's writing to justify their laziness and ineffectiveness in the Kingdom of God. Before I emphasize the distinction, let's quote Paul on the subject of work to show that he was a hard worker, whereas people misunderstand his letters to justify laziness in general (**2 Peter 3:16**).

1 Corinthians 15:10

*[10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, **I WORKED HARDER than all of them—YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD THAT WAS WITH ME.** NIV*

Acts 20:33-35

*[33] I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. [34] **You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions**. [35] In everything I did, I showed you that **by this kind of hard work we must help the weak**, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: '**It is more blessed to give than to receive**.' " NIV*

2 Thessalonians 3:7-10

*[7] For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. **We were NOT idle when we were with you**, [8] **nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it**. On the contrary, **we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you**. [9] We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, **but in order to offer ourselves as a MODEL for you to IMITATE**. [10] For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "**The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat**." NIV*

Now the simple distinction between works of the flesh, and works of the Spirit is already highlighted in this statement, but let me expound on it a little so that you have a grid of understanding for its application.

Works of the flesh are works inspired by the will, idea and strength of self, often to benefit self directly or indirectly. So everything revolves around self, and for that reason works of the flesh are devoid of Love, because Love in its expression is always outward and SACRIFICIAL, targeted at blessing others not self (**1 Cor 13:4-7**).

Works of the Spirit are works inspired by the will, or Word, of God, and most importantly the source of strength comes from God through the Holy Spirit (**1 Peter 4:11**). The works of the Spirit are NOT self-centred, but rather they aim to do the will of God, and benefit other people (**1 Peter 4:10**, **1 Cor 12:4-7**). For this reason the works of the Spirit are Love based, because there is ALWAYS an aspect of it that benefits others. Of course, in the process of carrying out the work of God some benefit

comes to you, however there MUST be ways that that work benefits others or the Kingdom of God.

For instance, the Levites and priests were in service to God, and they carried out what were supposed to be the responsibilities of all the Israelites (**Exodus 19:5-6**, **Num 1:50-53**, **3:38**, ***8:19***). As a result of this, God made the priests and Levites entitled to portions of all the offerings that the Israelites brought to Him (**Exodus 29:27-28**, **Num 18:8-19**, **21**, **24**, **26-29**), and in the third year all the Tithe of the land was given to them (**Deut 14:28-29**, **Deut 26:12**). So the work the Levites did was for the Israelites and for the House of God, it wasn't self-centred. For that reason God blessed them with portions of the cumulative income of Israel, and the freewill gifts of the people.

7.3.1 The Work of the Spirit, or Work of Faith, CANNOT be Self-Centred

There is an important point there that I don't want you to miss. The work that God inspires and facilitates is love based, meaning it must be sacrificial in nature. In other words, even though self might benefit from it, self CANNOT be at the center of it, God, or the people He wants helped should be the focus, in which case you are SACRIFICING for others apart from yourself. If you understand this concept then you will know how the power of the Spirit works in, and through, an individual.

Let me explain with illustrations. If you study Scripture, Jesus Christ NEVER did a miracle for His sole benefit, because the work of the Spirit is Love based and must in some way flow OUTWARD. So Jesus Christ could not perform a miracle to benefit just Himself, it would go against the protocol of Love and the Spirit.

Let's begin from when He received the Holy Spirit and was taken into the wilderness to fast for forty days and be tempted by the devil. After the fast He was clearly hungry, so the devil tempted Him to turn the

stones into bread to satisfy His hunger (**Matt 4:3**). Apart from the fact that if He did that He would be in error for obeying the devil, but if He did it, He would also be in violation of the working principle of the Holy Spirit. After the whole process of temptation, we are told that angels came and ministered to Him (**Matt 4:11**). So He didn't use the resources within Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, but rather God used the resource of sending His angels to meet the need of His Son. So the power that was released was an outflow in keeping with the principles of love.

In another situation, Jesus Christ was hungry and He saw a fig tree at a distance. On arriving to the tree He discovered that it had no figs. In the past I always wondered why He didn't instead bless the fig tree so that it could accelerate the process for it to instantly bear fruits for Him to eat and satisfy His hunger. I mean Biblically speaking God caused the dry staff of Aaron to bloom and bear fruit overnight just to prove to the Israelites that He had chosen Aaron, so as to stop all the contention (**Num 17:3-9**). So in this case it wouldn't have to be an overnight miracle to cause a fig tree already in bloom to produce fruit. But now I realize that He couldn't do that, because if He did, it would be a miracle to benefit Himself. So what He did was curse the tree, and guess what, that miracle benefited us and His disciples as well, because from that incident we learn one of the most profound lessons about the working and efficacy of faith (**Mark 11:12-14, 20-25**).

If you think of any other miracle you will find that it wasn't done to benefit Him directly. I mean consider the money from the mouth of the fish. When they made an indirect demand for the Temple tax from Him, He simply instructed Peter to take a line and go fishing. And the first fish he caught would have money in its mouth, which in itself was a miracle. But so that the miracle would not benefit Him alone, and as such be a violation, He instructed Peter to use the money to pay for both His, i.e. Jesus's, and Peter's tax (**Matt 17:24-27**). Hence He wasn't the sole beneficiary from that miracle, which was why the miracle was possible.

You can go on and on, and you will find that He did no miracle to benefit Himself. I believe the same principle applied to His disciples.

Much earlier I discussed about always asking the Holy Spirit for help in everything, including your secular endeavors. I must tell you now that this principle of Love and SACRIFICE will determine if the Spirit will yield His power to help you. Simply put, you must be a channel of virtue flowing OUTWARD before the Holy Spirit can truly help you without any violations. So what does that look like:

Say you are an employee in a firm. If you want the Holy Spirit to help you, then first develop Love for what you do, the firm, your boss, fellow employees and customers. Remember, LOVE IS A CHOICE. I don't care if you have to stare at the mirror and profess your love for all these, but CONSCIOUSLY and DELIBERATELY CHOOSE to Love. Once you've chosen to love, the SACRIFICES necessary to do your job and interact with colleagues and customers become less burdensome, because the Holy Spirit would be working through you, and He Loves working through an individual that sustains an atmosphere of Love. In this state, your mind is less occupied by complaining, and more open to the wisdom the Spirit provides to make the most of everything. And because you sustain a disposition of Love and genuine concern for others, the Holy Spirit will help and favor you quickly, because you flow by the protocols of Love that allows Him to operate easily. And also take note of the fact that Scripture says whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your heart, meaning Love it, and do it as if it were service unto Jesus Christ. Don't be an eye service kind of person, if you do it from the heart it wouldn't matter to you who is watching (**Col 3:22-25**).

But if you hate your job, boss, colleagues and customers, how can you expect the Holy Spirit, Who is associated with Love (**Gal 5:22**, **Rom 5:5**), to come and help you. You have created NO channel of OUTFLOW, hence He cannot help irrespective of how much you pray. Change your attitude and He will come.

Now suppose you are the owner of the firm or business and you want the Holy Spirit to help you. Again you can't make it all about you and the

progress of your business, because that still revolves around you. Rather, show genuine concern for your employees and their welfare, and don't rip them off (**Eph 6:9**, **Col 4:1**, **James 5:3-5**). Provide excellent products and services to your customers and go the extra mile to truly serve them. And as a business try and set aside some of your profit to give and help the poor, also I'll recommend tithing. It may sound crazy, but the more OUTFLOWS of Love and SACRIFICE for others that your business has, which is truly blessing people, the more the Holy Spirit will help and bless your business (**Prov 11:24-31**, **19:17**, **22:9**, **Psalms 112:3-10**, **1 Tim 6:17-19**).

These are spiritual principles that work, even for unbelievers, because at the heart of it these are principles of God. When Jesus Christ came to earth, His primary assignment was first for the Jews, hence He wasn't inclined to minister to the Gentiles (**Matt 15:22-28**). However, when the Jewish elders spoke on behalf of the Centurion, and made it clear to Jesus Christ that he was a man that LOVED the Jewish nation, Jesus Christ had no reservations to go and minister to him (**Luke 7:2-10**). The point is God gravitates to people who truly love, and as we've already learnt, Love is measured by the degree of SACRIFICE for the sake of others. Speaking of which, the Centurion was going out of his way to seek healing for a servant he loved, so we see that truly he was a loving man.

I believe Paul had an understanding of the concept we're looking at. Whenever he engaged secular work, he was not only working to provide for his needs, but he made sure to include the needs of his companions (**Acts 20:34-35**). When he encouraged various church congregations to work for their daily bread, he made sure to add that they should have it in mind not to only take care of themselves, but also the weak among them, and also to assist ministers of the Gospel passing through (**Eph 4:28**, **Titus 3:13-14**). He must have understood the principle we're discussing, taking to heart the Words of Jesus Christ that "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*." (**Acts 20:35**). I believe you can understand why Jesus Christ made that statement using the understanding we've gained so far. Giving always represents an

OUTFLOW, and this engages the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does not work without leaving behind a blessing for the one who yields to Him.

This thing about OUTFLOW and not being self-centred is a very big deal if you want to experience the supernatural of God. I've heard some genuine anointed ministers of the Gospel speak of how the anointing would flow through them to instantly heal many people at crusades, but if they themselves fall sick they can't just lay their hands on themselves to instantly recover. Either someone else will pray for them, or God could divinely heal them, or they may have to visit the doctor. So it is possible to be sick but anointing will flow through you to accomplish purposes of God (**2 Kings 13:14-21**, **Gal 4:12-16**).

So I'll simply say, take advantage of this principle. Don't be self-centred, but in sincere Love consider others first and follow through with the necessary SACRIFICES to prove your Love. If your heart is right, you'll experience God do amazing priceless things on your behalf. Always keep in mind that God is after our heart, and He observes it very closely. You cannot fool Him, so settle to be authentic and sincere (**Gal 6:7-10**, **1 Chron 28:9**).

In the matter of giving, I already communicated that God doesn't need your money, He is only interested in your heart. Well I guess now you should understand more about that. So don't just make giving a ritual, or some sort of investment plan where you start calculating what you would receive; that would truncate the whole OUTFLOW process because you have become self-centred again. By all means be expectant that God would bless you as a result of your giving, but try not to be fixated on how and when. But instead when you give do it genuinely from your heart, knowing fully well that God is interested in your heart, and then also give cheerfully from the heart (**2 Cor 9:7**). If you're not going to be sincere about it, then it is better NOT to give. Just in case you didn't see that clearly, I'll repeat it. If your heart doesn't flow with it and the Holy Spirit doesn't move in your heart to nudge you, you are better off NOT giving, irrespective of how convincing a person may be to

stir you up to give. If at all you give only do it from the heart and with gladness.

Pardon me, I just got excited and carried away because I'm just receiving this revelation about how God's power in general operates, i.e. always flowing OUTWARD, and not being self-centred. So for a moment I lost track on what we were discussing. But now let's get back on track.

So I believe we intimately know how the works of the Spirit look like, and the distinction from the works of the flesh. Now let's quickly address a common misconception that has made a lot of Christians allergic to the four letter word "work"

7.4 Not by Works

Ephesians 2:8-9

*[8] For it is by grace you have been **saved**, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9] **NOT BY WORKS, so that no one can boast**.*
NIV

Now this has been the clarion call for a lot of Christians in the Church today, and I grew up hearing it a lot of times. Now let's analyze the Passage.

So what is the Passage talking about? Well, simply put, it is about Salvation. In the context of Salvation it is absolutely correct that we can't work our way to being saved. There is no amount of good deeds that one could do to be saved. Besides, if one was to do good deeds to be saved, those good deeds would be devoid of Love, because the person in sincerity is doing it with the self-centred aim of being saved, and not out of concern for the people they claim to help. So good deeds for the purpose of Salvation are works of the flesh by definition, because they aren't love based. Furthermore, God cannot place a demand on

unbelievers to be able to truly Love, since that is only made possible after receiving and encountering God's Love through Salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their heart (**1 John 4:7-8, 19**). Hence God places NO demands of works from unbelievers before they receive SALVATION. You cannot put the cart before the horse.

However, immediately after they receive Salvation, and consequently the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the story is different. We all of a sudden find out that God had even long prepared work for us to do. Just read the next verse from our original Passage, and these other Passages which you've already come across in Chapter One (**Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-8, Col 1:10-11, 2 Thess 2:16-17**).

Ephesians 2:10

*[10] For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus **TO DO GOOD WORKS**, **which God prepared in advance for us to do**. NIV*

Now when you analyze this verse, you should be able to understand that first of all this is NOT talking about Salvation. Furthermore, the works in question do NOT originate from your will or desire, hence they are not self-centred, and as such these "good works" are NOT works of the flesh. But rather they are works you do for the benefit of God and others here on earth; so by our definition these qualify to be described as works of the Spirit. And at this point you would have already received Salvation and purification through Jesus Christ (**Titus 3:4-8**), hence you have the Holy Spirit to help you carry out the work.

So at any point in time it is important to discern the kind of work you are doing, based on the parameters we have given. If it is the work of the flesh, kill it, no matter how good the work may appear. It amounts to NOTHING before God as Paul asserts (**1 Cor 13:1-3**). If it is the work of the Spirit, persevere in it no matter how hard it gets. The rewards of this from God would be tremendous (**1 Cor 15:58, 2 Tim 4:7-8, 2:3-7, Mark 10:29-30, 2 Peter 1:10-11**).

Conclusion

So whether good or bad, the works of the flesh must be killed, because it is self-centred and repulsive before God. And in other for you to do the work of God, you must die to self and bring your will into submission to Him.

Love is the golden rule, and the Holy Spirit is the Facilitator of all things. Maintain a loving disposition in your heart and the Holy Spirit will come along side to facilitate and manifest amazing things through you.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LIFE OF FAITH

Christianity is a faith walk; hence the element of faith is at work in every single thing that pertains to Christianity. Right from Salvation (**Eph 2:8**, **Rom 3:22-25**), to prayer, which I highlighted as part of our practical purpose as Christians, faith is a must (**Heb 11:6**). There is nothing you will ever receive from God that doesn't come as a result of your faith, or the faith of others (**Mark 2:3-12**).

Now seeing how important faith Is to your Christian walk let's take a moment to understand what faith is, and what it isn't, so that you can properly navigate your Christian walk of faith.

8.1 What faith isn't

I'll go through a list and highlight a few points:

1. Faith isn't wishful thinking, emotion or logic driven, especially when attempting to use God's word as the basis of the logic. We've already touched on the complex legal platform upon which God operates. Your mere human logical deductions would be laughable in His court if you don't present your arguments by the help of your Advocate, Who is the Holy Spirit. Many people have tried and failed to force the hand of God to do something by using random Scriptures. Admittedly, I number among those, but I've learnt my lesson, and I'm telling you from experience that faith cannot be fruitful if anchored on anything that emanates from the flesh, and of course this includes human logic.

From the previous chapter you already know that God finds human flesh and its ways corrupt and repulsive. So any pattern of faith that is tied to the flesh in any shape or form, no matter how good and well meaning it may be, God will most certainly frustrate it.

Proverbs 19:3

[3] A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord. NIV

Let's examine one instance of foolishness that led to ruin.

The Temple of God which Solomon built was the center jewel of pride for the Israelites. They put so much faith and trust in the structure, instead of on God, for Whom the structure was built.

So when the Jews started sinning against God, time and again God sent His prophets to warn them and urge them to REPENT but they refused to listen to Him. Instead they maintained a vain trust of having the Temple, instead of heeding the warnings of the One to Whom the Temple belonged.

It's a bit lengthy, but please read the following Passage: **Jeremiah 7:1-14**. In that Passage you'll find that the people were doing all the wrong things, but somehow they had created a belief system that as long as they simply went to the Temple everything was going to be alright (**V4, 9-11**). God was trying to dissuade them from such vain faith highlighting how the other half of the Israeli kingdom maintained a similar belief system with the Tabernacle of Moses that was pitched in the town called Shiloh, and God Himself judged them. But they wouldn't listen, until they themselves were destroyed (**V12-15**, **17-19, 24-28**, **Jer 44:16-28**). They put their faith on things, rather than on God (**Num 21:7-9**, *__2 Kings 18:3-8__*).

If their faith would have been on God, they would have listened to His words and REPENTED, and they would be saved. In other words, faith informs our actions. They had a kind of belief that they could sin, which is contrary to God's expressed will; but then their belief was that because they had the Temple and could quickly sacrifice a goat or some animal everything would be okay. Hence that belief system made them

continue in their sins. Whereas if they put their faith on God, then they would live by the words He proclaimed.

This is very instructive to believers, do not fashion a vain belief system that can be easily debunked by Scripture. Grace and forgiveness is freely available to cover sin, but this does not mean you deliberately jump right back into the cesspool of sin and revel in its filth. If you do that you are no different than the people from the illustration above, and according to Scripture you'll meet the same fate they faced, and even possibly worse (**Luke 12:47-48**, **James 4:17**, **2 Peter 2:20-21**, **Heb 10:26-31**).

So be wise and anchor your faith on what God actually says, NOT on bits and pieces of it used to garnish the vain ideas and constructs of men. It is for this reason that you need to become personally acquainted with Scripture, lest you get misled by the eloquence of ignorant men. Simply reading three chapters a day is more than sufficient to finish reading through the Bible in a year and still have more time to cover the New Testament before the year runs out. You at least owe that much to yourself and to God to set aside about 30-45 minutes from your 24 hour day to study the Word. If you set a time and make the commitment in your heart, the Holy Spirit will come and help you achieve it; He will help silence and keep the flesh in check as you commit to that time, and He will also teach you in the process as you discuss and ask Him questions about Scripture.

So wishful thinking kind of faith often extracts part of God's Word and intermingles it with fleshly ideas, hence this kind of faith doesn't work, and it leads many ignorant people to be frustrated with God, when it really isn't God's fault (**Prov 19:3**, **25:26**).

The second point I'll highlight to show what true faith isn't is what I refer to as blind faith.

2. Faith is NOT blind: Blind faith is a dangerous concept, because like the previous point it is formed by fleshly imaginations. Blind faith is even

more daring because it often times sustains no connection to God's Word, but is simply held up by the thoughts and imaginations of the individual. And then on some occasions it may be a product of an initial revelation of God that the individual then blindly hijacks to force its fulfilment by way of the flesh, or a blind leap of faith hoping that God would step in before they hit the ground. The dangerous part of this kind of faith is that sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't, hence it can be the most risky kind of gamble. On the rare occasions that it does work, I would attribute it to the mercy of God. I understand that faith in general is a risk, however blind faith is an additional unnecessary risk that can be avoided if you understand Scripture and build a relationship with God.

Granted, while here on earth we may never see the full picture of things pertaining to our life and the plans of God in general (**1 Cor 13:9-12**), but yet God always supplies sufficient insight and guidance so that we do not grope around in the dark like a blind person hoping to arrive at the appointed destination by chance.

The men and women of faith in Scripture were afforded a natural or spiritual imagery from God, upon which they latched onto and to navigate their lives. The key point is that the image came FROM God, it wasn't self generated (**Gen 15:5-6**, **Jer 1:11-13**, **Heb 11:8-10**, **24-27**). And if at all God did not give an imagery, He would take the individual by the hand, so to speak, and lead them on the way. Just like He did for Abraham, whom God will say to go to a place that He would show him (**Gen 12:1**, **22:2-4**). So in such a situation, even though Abraham was in ignorance of where he was going, God was leading the way and showing him every step he needed to take. So Abraham's faith was always ON God, both the times when he was given an imagery, or when God led the way. Hence in these instances it was not blind faith because God was with Him.

But what I refer to as blind faith is when God has NOT given you any imagery or word, and there is no indication that He is prompting or guiding you to take a risky step, yet you proceed to take the step and

hope for the best. That is foolishness. And another dimension of blind faith is that God may give an imagery for a future thing, but not disclose the timing. It would be blind faith to move by the flesh with the hope of catching up to the imagery that God initially furnished. As you know, and as I'll continue to say, God does NOT like ANY work of the flesh; and you CANNOT disguise a work of the flesh with the “good intention" of accomplishing His will (**Gal 3:1-3**).

Abraham was a man of faith, but there was one instance where he operated by the kind of blind faith I just described, i.e. receiving an imagery from God but trying to accomplish it by the flesh (**1 Cor 10:6**, **Rom 15:4**). So God promised to give Abraham many descendants, but up till that time Abraham had no children (**Gen 12:1-2**, **7**). On another occasion God specifically promised that Abraham would have a son, and Abraham believed this wholeheartedly (**Gen 15:1-6**), but God never told him the exact time that this promise would be fulfilled.

By nature Abraham's wife, Sarah, had passed child bearing age, hence by their understanding and her suggestion Hagar was brought into the picture, and Abraham had a child by her, called Ishmael (**Gen 16:1-4**, **15-16**). Abraham, by the flesh, thought he had fulfilled God's promise, and even tried to convince God to go along with his fleshly achievement, but God wouldn't. Instead, God insisted on fulfilling His promise in His way and not by the blind supposition of Abraham and Sarah. Yet, God was merciful to Abraham and still blessed Ishmael (**Gen 17:17-21**).

Now by my definition Ishmael was the product of Abraham's “blind faith”, yet God was merciful to His servant Abraham, because He was in Covenant with him, and probably there were fewer righteous men He could work with. If you remember I stated that there was a fifty fifty chance for blind faith to work, but it will be on account of the mercy of God, and it is a risky approach to faith. The average individual operating by blind faith, will like Abraham, go by the flesh to produce an “Ishmael”. And because God in His mercy blesses them, they would believe that that kind of faith is the way to go.

The fact however, is that blind faith comes with its risks, and often times that which is generated by the flesh, will most likely oppose what God wants to bring about by the power of His Spirit. And for Abraham, that was exactly what happened. Right from childhood Ishmael opposed Isaac, the child born as a result of the Promise (**Gen 16:11-12**, **21:8-9**, **Gal 4:22-23**, **28-30**). And till date the descendants of Ishmael are in opposition to Israel, which is a descendant of Isaac.

Now this is just one instance of blind faith, but let me cite the example of the Israelites attempting to take the Promised Land after God had judged and condemned that generation (**Num 14:1-3**, **20-35**). God was still going to fulfil His Promise to the Israelites, on account of His Covenant with the Patriarchs, nevertheless He was no longer going to do it through that generation. But yet, the people presumptuously, or I should say blindly, decided to still go and fight to take the land, even though God was NOT with them. And they suffered great loss and humiliation (**Num 14:39-45**).

So this reflects an instance where blind faith or presumptuous faith when dealing with God doesn't work. Either-way, it is advisable to avoid blind faith all together. Instead build the proper kind of faith which I'll discuss on shortly, and limit the kind of unnecessary risk that blind presumptuous faith offers. But before I move on, I feel there is a point I need to make to balance things out.

On the extreme of not wanting to work by blind faith, some people may then want God to paint the entire picture for them in 4k Resolution before they take the necessary steps. This is NOT faith. Faith will always have that element of risk or mystery that we must forge pass when beckoned to come by God (**Matt 14:25-31**). So God might give you the general idea, and then nudge you to just walk by it. You may not know exactly what to do, but you just take steps that you sense the Holy Spirit wants you to take. In the course of that, you can still ask God for specifics, and He may graciously give you, but the point is still KEEP ON WALKING in the direction you sense the Holy Spirit guiding you to go in.

The details in most cases are not given to deviate you from the path, but rather to prepare you for the path (please read **John 16:1-4**).

For instance, Paul got the impression from the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem (**Acts 20:16**). So keep it in mind that Paul's journey to Jerusalem was inspired by the Holy Spirit. On the way there, he made a number of stops, as was typical in the transportation system of that time, and he used the opportunity to meet with believers along the way. In one of those stops he met with the Elders of the Ephesian church, and it was then we learnt that he was COMPELLED by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. He made a statement that I want us to take note of. Generally the Holy Spirit had prepared him to know that from town to town he would face prison and hardships, but SPECIFICALLY for his current trip to Jerusalem he didn't know what would happen to him (**Acts 20:22-24**). You can say at this point he was going in blind to Jerusalem, but at least he knew he was going there by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Now it was as if the Holy Spirit wanted to now give insight to Paul about what would SPECIFICALLY happen to him, almost as if Paul's previous statement was taken as a prayer. Remember, in Heaven our every conversation is recorded, whether those we have with God, or our conversations with each other (**Mal 3:16-18**, **Col 4:6**, **Prov 22:11**). So at the last stop before getting to Jerusalem, in the city of Caesarea, a prophet named Agabus, who had come from Judea, basically prophesied that Paul was going to be arrested at Jerusalem (**Acts 21:10-11**). The others saw what was meant to just be information, and by the flesh interpreted it to mean it was something that was to be avoided. But the Holy Spirit had good reasons for all this, to fulfil the destiny of Paul's life. And since Paul initially knew that it was the COMPULSION of the Holy Spirit that set him out on this journey, his faith was anchored on that, and not the emotional flesh driven manipulation that was playing out (**Acts 21:12-14**). In other words, Agabus's prophecy was just information and confirmation of what Paul already had an idea about by the Holy Spirit (**Acts 20:22-24**). So it didn't deviate Paul from the path he was certain the Holy Spirit set him on.

Two lessons here: be mindful of how you interpret prophecies and dreams that come from God, and secondly vigorously hold onto what God tells you, because some “well meaning" individuals can derail you from the purposes of God (**1 Kings 13:3-4**, **7-10**, **14-26**). We all see in part and prophesy in part (**1 Cor 13:9-12**), none has attained perfection on earth, except Jesus Christ.

Now not to leave things hanging so that we understand that the Holy Spirit was deliberately leading him down the path to fulfil his destiny, let's examine the call of Paul. When Jesus Christ sent Ananias to go and commission Paul, this was the simple mandate: he was sent to the Gentiles and their kings, and to the people of Israel, and he was going to experience suffering for the sake of Christ (**Acts 9:15-16**). Up until that time Paul had only preached to the Gentiles and Israelites, and indeed he had suffered for the sake of the Gospel, but he hadn't yet preached to kings. But by insisting to obey the Holy Spirit, Paul was given the opportunity to preach to at least two governors, Felix and Festus, one king, Agrippa, and all the leading men in Caesarea (**Acts 24:1-27**, **Acts 25:13-23**). And because he appealed to Emperor Caesar, he was also going to preach to the most powerful leader in the world, because at that time the Roman empire had the greatest influence in the world. And while he was there he got to convert some people in Caesar’s household (**Phil 1:12-13**, **4:22**). So the Holy Spirit was leading Paul down the path to fulfil his destiny.

So keep faith pure and untainted by the flesh. Trust in God and His guidance to you by the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that we don't consult with each other (**Gal 2:2**, **Acts 13:1-3**). But make sure you have a deep personal and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit, so whatever you’re receiving from others is mainly a confirmation of what the Holy Spirit said to you, or to bring clarity on the matter. In your consultation with others, bear in mind that they are also human, and they may superimpose their human bias on some interpretations. So first seek to get the exact word or dream that they received without any filters, before allowing them to deliver what they believe to be the interpretation. Then do the due diligence of taking everything back to

the Holy Spirit and hearing what He has to say (**1 Thess 5:19-22**, **Jer 28:1-17**).

With that I believe we can move on to discuss about what faith is.

8.2 What faith is

The first point worth making is that true faith does NOT originate from you, it ORIGINATES from God, it is incubated in your hearts, and when it sprouts and matures, it yields its fruit in the season and under the conditions that God has prescribed for it.

It is worth saying again in another form. The ORIGIN of true faith is very important; it should come either by hearing the Word of God, through Scripture or Prophecy (**Rom 10:17** **NKJV**), or receiving imageries from Him by virtue of visions and certain kinds of dreams (**Job 33:14-30**). The emphasis is that it comes FROM God to you specifically, or is made alive in your spirit by the Holy Spirit (**Rom 8:16**).

So what do you do when the seed of faith FROM God arrives to you? Well, you receive it into your heart and nurture it.

Note that the soil of faith is the heart. There is nothing that God will minister to you that would not have to pass through the heart before it can manifest. At times God completely bypasses the mind and natural understanding and goes right straight to the heart. So you may not understand it, but you just believe and receive it into your heart, and you proceed to nurture it.

Now the nurturing process determines, in most cases, the magnitude or degree of effectiveness in the manifestation of what that faith is designed for, or what it is meant to accomplish (**Luke 8:15**). For instance, you can plant the same kind of seed at two different places. If the soil at one place is better and well taken care of than the other, you can expect

a greater yield from the plant there, than the other. It is the same with faith, we all get the same seed of faith, but the better we nurture it, the greater our faith would produce. So great faith is a measure of one's capacity to nurture the seed of faith that comes FROM God, and NOT their ability to generate faith itself.

When you've received the seed of faith FROM God into your heart, in other to properly nurture it, you must allow it to influence your thoughts, words and actions. And if this is done faithfully, then the fruit of that faith will produce what God intended.

The Word of faith from God may be sent to accomplish various things. Or let me put it like this, there are different seeds of faith. There is the seed that pertains to Salvation, to forgiveness, to healing, to prosperity, to deliverance etc. When you receive any of these seeds by faith, it takes root in your heart, and if properly nurtured, i.e. allowed to influence thought, words and action, it would yield the fruit after its own kind.

So faith for salvation produces salvation. And just to buttress the point that faith does NOT originate from you, but rather it ORIGINATES from God, Jesus Christ said NO ONE can come to Him except the Father draws them (**John 6:44, 65**). So even before you thought of receiving Jesus Christ into your heart God was first drawing you. Or I should say sent the seed of salvation to your heart, hoping that you would receive it and allow it take root so that it can produce the fruit that leads to eternal life (**Rom 10:9-17**). So the seed wasn't your idea, all you had to do was allow it into your heart. If faith originated from you, then it would be a product of your flesh, and then you would have cause to boast; but that is NOT what Scripture teaches, there is no room for boasting, hence it must mean that the faith necessary for salvation did NOT originate from you, but rather it came FROM God (**Eph 2:8-9**).

If you receive the faith that pertains to healing, the seed takes root in your heart, and in due time it manifests healing in your body. Again to prove that it did NOT originate from you Scripture says that, "*He SENT His Word and healed them...*" (**Psalms 107:20 NKJV**).

If you receive faith that pertains to prosperity, the same process is engaged, and prosperity would manifest. Sometimes we may feel that it is by our own ability and strength, but God clearly indicates that He is the True source (**Deut 8:12-18**). And just like any other seed of faith, some people may choose to accept it, and others may choose to reject it. Those who accept it would of course experience its benefits, while those who reject it won't taste of it (**Phil 4:14-19**).

And it goes on and on, faith comes FROM God to produce, or manifest aspects of His will for our life. You will need to know how to interact with, and nurture faith in other for you to live the kind of life that God wants you to live. You cannot receive anything from God without the process of faith. It is the primary delivery mechanism.

So our responsibility is to receive and nurture the faith we receive from God through His Word, prophecy, or revelation via the various revelatory channels. If we fail at our responsibility then we wouldn't receive what He intended for us to have. But if we are faithful in our responsibility, we'll receive ALL the packages He sends our way. And boy... oh how much I enjoy receiving and unboxing packages, how much more delightful it is to receive Divine supernatural packages. So let's be faithful to wait for the delivery date by properly and expectantly nurturing the faith knowing that its manifestation is near, and not send it back before arrival, due to unbelief (**James 1:6-8**, **Mark 9:23-24**).

8.3 Faith in Action

The act of receiving faith, nurturing it, and walking by it, is not a passive esoteric process. It requires a deliberate will and corresponding actions.

For instance, if you have received faith for salvation, it means you've agreed that sin is bad; hence that understanding, and faith so to speak, should inform you that you ought to avoid sin, because sin is bad. If you instead go on freely indulging in sin, then your faith is brought into

question because your action does not match what you claim to believe - **Matt 3:8**, **Acts 26:20**, **2 Tim 2:19**

Faith isn't independent of actions, even faith for salvation, as we have seen that faith informs our corresponding actions. Faith for Salvation informs REPENTANCE, and repentance is a change of mind that is equally matched by deeds as a proof (**Acts 26:20**, **Heb 10:24**).

But some conflate these actions associated with faith to works of the flesh. Remember I've utterly condemned the works of the flesh, whether good or bad, and I'm not going to recant on that. Faith that comes FROM God, is well anchored on God's Word (**Rom 10:17** **NKJV**). Hence this faith will cause you to abide by God's Word, and NOT guide you in the path of the flesh, which is sinful. Hence works of faith are NOT to be confused with works of the flesh (**1 Thess 1:3**). So the two of them are totally different matters.

Faith generally propels someone to do, or not do certain things, because in this way the person receives Divine blessings from the one they believe in. In this regard faith acts like a compass through which one navigates life. In other words, through the lens of one's faith certain things are acceptable while others are forbidden, hence one's actions are directed by these tenets.

So I'll keep on driving this point until every Christian hears it repeatedly, so that it even resounds in their sleep, Faith CANNOT be nurtured without corresponding ACTIONS (**James 2:14-18**, **26**).

You want to discern the voice of God so that you know what to anchor your faith upon, first spend time reading His Word, so that you can distinguish when He speaks to you, opposed to when your mind proposes things. Studying the Word takes time and effort, it is a spiritual work and SACRIFICE. Simply put, it is action.

Going to fellowship with other believers at church, or a home gathering, to enjoy the extra presence of the Lord (**Matt 18:18-20**), takes will and deliberate action. By the flesh, some people would rather choose not to go, because they may want to sleep in, or avoid driving, or spending

money on transportation, or whatever fleshly reason. But if they are more conscious of their faith and the benefits attached to gathering together, then by the prompt of that faith they would DO whatever is necessary to overcome the flesh (**Heb 10:24-25**). So again faith requires, or prompts, actions.

Bottom-line is that the works associated with faith and the works of the flesh are two different things.

Now to drive this to a close, let's dig a bit deep using one of the personalities that James used to exemplify active faith in His writing – **James 2:17-26.** We've spoken on Abraham quite a bit, so let me use Rahab to drive the point that practically every inspiration from God is given to provoke an action from mankind, even the most unlikely impressions.

Joshua had just led the Israelites to cross the Jordan, and it was time to start taking over the Promise Land. The first city to take was Jericho. Now the next thing I'm about to say may not sit well with mainstream, politically correct Christianity; but I've stuck to Scripture thus far, I'm going to end with Scripture if you don't mind. One way God made the Israelites to defeat the inhabitants of the land was that He filled them with the fear of the nation of Israel and Him, their God (**Deut 2:25, 11:22-25**). Some may not like that God used the instrumentality of fear to achieve His purpose, but if you paid attention reading this book, you'll remember that I've already began to introduce the subject about **the fear of the Lord**. And still in that **Chapter dealing with Relationship**, I highlighted that all spiritual beings most effectively communicate with us through our emotional center when we are awake. Like you may get a "gut" feeling not to go somewhere, and as a result you avoid something bad. Every single one of us has it, and God, the Holy Spirit, or the guardian angel assigned to us can use our emotions, including raw fear to communicate certain things to us (**Job 33:14-30**).

In another write-up I really deal with how God can use even the spectrums of emotions that we are categorically taught as being bad to accomplish His purposes; but of course they must be utilised under the

supervision of the Holy Spirit otherwise things will get out of hand. So one of such emotions is anger or righteous indignation (**1 Samuel 11:2-9**, **John 2:13-17**, **Acts 16:16-18** **NKJV**). And then another is of course fear, which we're currently exploring (**Heb 10:31**, **11:7**, **1 Cor 10:21-22**).

So God overshadowed the inhabitants of the Promise Land with fear. That fear came from God, in other words, it was inspired by God. Now the next thing is that whatever is inspired of God, demands an action response. The whole of Jericho chose to close their gate and maintain a defensive/offensive stance. But Rahab, who felt the same fear, instead chose to help the spies and send them on their way peacefully (**Joshua 2:2-14**). Whereas the king and others would have preferred to kill the spies, so as to stand a better chance against Israel in the event of a battle.

Now you may think this was an isolated incidence with Rahab; but in fact, a people group known as the Hivites, comprising of four cities, with Gibeon being a significant city among them (**Joshua 9:17**, **10:2**), felt the same fear that everyone else felt, but like Rahab they chose to make peace with Israel, instead of engaging the fight response to fear as the others did. Admittedly, they used a deceptive means to seek the treaty (**Joshua 9:3-21**), but the people to blame were the Israelites who didn't seek counsel from God before making the treaty (**Joshua 9:14**).

The Gibeonites responded to the fear that God instilled in them in a way that spared their lives, not just from the Israelites, but even from the other people in the land (**Joshua 10:1-4**, **6-10**). And in the future, when king Saul foolishly tried to wipe them out (**2 Samuel 21:2**), God stood on their side, upholding the treaty they made, and punishing His own people, Israel, for three whole years of famine for breaking that treaty (**2 Samuel 21:1**).

Though not the best example, but the point is that God honors faith, which is receiving something from Him by virtue of a word, dream, prophecy, or emotional prompting, and then taking appropriate actions or responses. Rahab and the Gibeonites demonstrated this, and God honored them for responding to his prompting, even though it was fear

based (**Heb 11:7**). In fact, the human genealogy of Jesus Christ is traced through Rahab and Ruth, who were both foreigners, and the only two out of three women mentioned in the genealogy (**Matt 1:5**).

Speaking of foreigners, Jesus Christ honored the faith and persistence of the Syro-phoenician woman, who gave a rather good response to a statement that others might have taken offense with (**Mark 7:24-30**, **Matt 15:21-28**). So she, like everyone else, heard the word that Jesus Christ heals and delivers people from evil spirits, thus receiving the word of faith. She put action to that faith by persistently asking Jesus Christ to heal her daughter, even though she was a foreigner. And even though many would have left discouraged by Jesus's response, she held on to faith knowing that only Jesus Christ could deliver her daughter, hence she produced a wise response that Jesus Christ could not ignore; again, despite the fact that she was a foreigner. So you see the ingredients of faith being put together and producing a result.

Anyway the point of the examples is to show that whatever comes from God by way of word, prophecy, Revelation, and now I'll add emotion discerned to have truly come from Him by the Holy Spirit, seeks or requires an active response. This response is our responsibility when it comes to nurturing faith. And with the appropriate resolute response, you will then find that faith bearing fruit.

With this understanding we can better steward faith, the gifts of the Spirit, prosperity, influence etc. And as such I believe we can begin to view faith more as a GIFT, than something to generate (**Rom 12:3 NKJV**).

Great faith doesn't mean you generate it, it has to do with how much your heart has capacity to nurture the seed. Everyone in the time of Jesus heard of His great miraculous exploits (**Matt 4:23-25**, **9:29-31**, **Luke 5:12-16**), even Herod the king (**Luke 23:8**). So knowing that Jesus Christ could heal was the seed of faith that everyone received (**Rom 10:17**), but each one nurtured that faith differently.

The woman with the issue of blood settled it in her heart that if she touched the helm of His garment she would be healed. The seed was

Jesus can heal, she nurtured that fact in her heart and the corresponding action she connected to it was to touch the helm of His garment, and she got healed (**Mark 5:24-34**).

The centurion was still working with the same fact of faith that Jesus heals. What he knew in his heart was his military career, and through that lens He discerned that Jesus Christ had that same kind of authority in issuing commands. I'm sure he must have also heard that with a single word Jesus would order evil spirits to leave and they would obey (**Matt 8:16**). So incubating the very same faith that everyone had access to, he nurtured, and matured it as best as he could to believe that Jesus Christ could heal his servant by just issuing a command, irrespective of time and space (**Matt 8:5-13**).

On the flipside, even though the people from Jesus's hometown knew about all what He was doing, like everyone else, they had no space in their heart to allow that faith grow, hence they couldn't receive from Him what everyone else was freely receiving, because they chose not to receive and nurture the faith associated with the Word about Jesus Christ (**Mark 6:1-6**, **Rom 10:17**).

So we all have access to the mustard seed of faith (**Luke 17:5-6**, **Rom 12:3** **NKJV**), but how we nurture and mature it, will tell of how great it becomes (***Luke 8:15**, **Matt 13:23***).

For instance, most people who receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, almost immediately, if not immediately, receive the gift of praying in tongues. But not everyone uses this gift to the same degree, hence not everyone enjoys all the fruits from this gift because their degree of action and engagement differs. But we find that Paul claimed to pray in tongues more than anyone (**1 Cor 14:18**); and in another letter he encourages continual prayer, or praying without ceasing (**1 Thess 5:17 NIV**, **NKJV**). So it very well could be that apart from His ordination, his corresponding action to give time to prayer were the labors he spoke about (**1 Cor 15:10**, **2 Cor 12:12**), to manifest the amazing supernatural feats associated with his ministry.

So whatever gifting, faith, influence etc. that God has given you, He expects corresponding actions as well (**Luke 12:48**). So set your heart to do what is necessary to fulfil the purpose for which God saved and called you.

Philippians 3:12-14

*[12] Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, **but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**. [13] Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do**: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, [14] **I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus**. NIV*

CONCLUSION

We've come to the end of the book, and my prayer is that it has blessed, inspired, and set you on the path you need to be on in this Christian walk of faith. Keep this book around, and use it as a reference source, mainly for the Scriptures used to illustrate points. From the onset it was my goal to expose you to Scripture, which was why I took great pains to cite as many that were needed, and also provided links to easily look at them while reading the book.

I've packed in a lot into this book, but deep down I feel there could be much more. So what you find here is meant to get you started, but you'll find much more as you build a relationship with the Holy Spirit. He is the True Teacher (**John 14:26**, **1 John 2:20**, **27-29**). He only uses people like me to cross paths with you to communicate certain things to you. In as much as I'll like you to follow me, as long as I continue to follow Christ (**1 Cor 11:1**), it is far more important for you to be rooted in Christ through the Holy Spirit, learning from Him directly, and processing everything else through Him (**1 Cor 2:1-5**). This means, don't just take my word for it, process everything with the Holy Spirit, and have Him expound things you don't understand. It would be far more easy to get Him to answer your questions, than to get an answer through me, because He is right there with you; and beyond the words you use, He can read your heart to know what you need to know or understand.

I must now say that it is very necessary to find a local fellowship to be planted in, so that you can grow properly (**Matt 18:18-20**, **Heb 10:24-25**). Again, pray to have the Holy Spirit guide you, He knows the best place for you to grow. There is strength in numbers (**Eccl 4:9-12**). And it is important to have a place where you can be continuously fed the seeds of faith, have a community of believers to support and encourage you, and for you to join in the priestly and kingly duty we all have, which is to pray, decree, and execute the will of God on earth.

God bless and keep you on the path He has destined you for, and may you run and finish your course with Grace, joy, and gladness. Go in Love, go in peace, go in the power of the Holy Spirit, and Go in God. In Jesus Name I pray. AMEN!

As always, God is Good; life is beautiful; and we all need to learn to Love more and Live more. Shalom!

WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

It's been a pleasure serving you this book. I've learnt a lot in the process, and experienced a new Grace from God, that I'm really grateful for.

I plan on doing a video series to discuss some, or if not all, the Chapters, provided that God releases me to do so. So it would be great if you would subscribe to my **YouTube channel**, and follow my **Instagram page**, I'll leave the links below. And through those platforms I'll keep you informed of subsequent books, book revisions, and other contents I'll be releasing.

If you can spare a moment, can I solicit your heartfelt prayers. Ministry is nothing without prayers. I'll trust that you yield to the Holy Spirit to inspire you on what to pray for. But specifically, I'll like that you pray for me to stay the course, and never waver from the Truth of God's Word and His purpose for my life.

And lastly, I invite you to join in my labors of sharing the Gospel and ministering to all God's children, i.e. ALL mankind, by liking and sharing my contents on social media, sharing my books, and subscribing or following my channels. This will go a long way in reaching people with the Gospel, and message of Truth concerning the Kingdom.

Thanks for everything, see you around in the comment section or DMs. Have a good one.



@Daniel-Olatunji



@danielolatunji12