The Struggle Within

Index for “The Struggle Within”

Chapter 1 – “Man – God Breathed” ……………………Page 2
Chapter 2 – “Man – spirit dominated soul” ………………Page 10
Chapter 3 – “Man – spirit, soul and body” …………… Page 16
Chapter 4 – “Man – and an Evil Heart” …………………Page 22
Chapter 5 – “Man and His Conscience” ………………..Page 30
Chapter 6 – “Man and His Daily Struggle” ………….Page 37
Chapter 7 – “Man’s Soul Praising God” ………………Page 47
Chapter 8 – “Man and Temptation” …………………….Page 55
Chapter 9 – “Man, His Fight and His Weapons” ……..Page 63
Chapter 10 – “Man and Decisions” …………………….Page 69
Chapter 11 – “Man the Influences on His Will” ……Page 73
Diagram of man’s spirit and soul ………………………Page 77
Chapter 12 – The Saving of Man’s Soul ……………….Page 78
Lesson One

Man - God breathed

The following is a study of the battle between man’s “soul” and his “spirit.” It is an endeavor to realize what Scripture has to say about how man’s human nature is attacked by the enemy of his Soul, Satan and his cohorts, and how one can oppose these attacks and enhance his “spirit’s” dominion over his “soul” and win the battle within.

In order to better understand the battleground of the spiritual warfare the believer is engaged in, these studies will view the realm of the unseen nature of man and will help to discover what God says about man’s makeup, and, as a result of this study, it is hoped that one gleans the assurance that his spirit can have dominion over his soul.

SOME OF THE TITLES THAT WILL BE COVERED IN THIS SERIES ARE:

- Just what IS a “soul?”
- Are we hiding from our emotions?
- Getting to know your self
- Aligning your inward self with God’s design
- The sequence of communication with God
- The cactus of the soul
- What is the cause, and the cure of an evil heart?
- What does it mean, “to deny one’s soul?”
- How can one totally submit his soul to God?
- How does one “renew, and transform, his mind?”
- How can one align his will with his desires?

God gave man the Bible in order that he might better understand himself - his inner most being - and in order that he might better understand the battle that wages within him - which is the battle between what he knows to be right and what he actually does. Because Scripture details the makeup of man, his memory, his conscience, his will and other aspects of his inner nature, there is no other book that is comparable to the Bible when it comes to revealing to man what he is really like in the realm of his unseen nature.

Darrel Mitchell
Paul, writing to believer’s past experience before they were converted, wrote, “You were dead in our transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). What was Paul speaking of? What about man was dead? Man was certainly not dead physically – and he certainly his soul was not dead – because he still had an active mind, will and emotion – however, he was dead “spiritually” Ephesians 2:1 goes on to states, “You have been made alive in Christ Jesus.” What about man was “made alive?”

For our answer, let’s look at John 3:6, where Jesus speaks of being born-again. Jesus explains, that when one is born-again – “that which is born of the Holy Spirit is one’s spirit.” It is man’s “spirit” that was dead and then made alive when he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. However, once man’s “spirit” is made alive, a struggle ensues between his “soul” and his “spirit” – a struggle between the New Life in Christ Jesus that he receives at the new-birth and his “self” – his old carnal Adamic nature.

When we speak of the “spirit” we are not referring to the Holy Spirit, but rather, we refer to the “reborn human spirit” – (the “spirit” that was dead before conversion, but “made alive” at the new-birth) – of the believer who has accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

After the believer accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, it is God’s desire that he be led of the Holy Spirit by allowing his reborn human spirit to have dominance over all aspects of life.

**Man’s Soul**

To help understand the difference between man’s soul and his spirit, it is important to know what the definition of man’s “soul” is. Scripture reveals man’s “soul” as his real “self” – the person living within the body – his mind, his will and his emotions! Every human being born into this world, of course, has a soul and throughout his life, he is instructed that he should expand, train and develop, his soul.

The reason that man is so instructed is because a great many of the fields of science, which endeavor to study human nature, do not acknowledge man’s “spirit” and, as a result, they feel that the only thing left for man to do is to develop the components of his soul – especially his mind.

Certainly God is not against education – or anything that develops man’s soul – however, He does oppose the enhancing of one’s soul at the expense of his “spirit.”

The Christian’s “reborn” spirit, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, constantly fights to keep the soul in line – fights to keep his soul from totally dominating his decisions, desires, drives and habits. However, it is an uphill battle for his spirit.

When one is born-again, his “soul” is powerful because it has had a lifetime to be developed and it is in place of dominion, whereas, at the time that he accepts Jesus as his Savior, his new, born-again, spirit is just “a baby.” Therefore, one must, through the power of the Holy Spirit, struggle, and fight, as his spirit attempts to climb up the ladder of influence in his life.

The sad fact is that many Christians never allow their “spirit” to even gain equivalent strength with their “soul,” much less to have dominion over it.
Our “soul” is not our enemy, but it is in the realm of our “soul” that the forces of Satan come to attack us and, if we all him to, he will manipulate our “soul” to use it against us. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, desires to work through our reborn-human-spirit, to tame our soul and to use it to fulfill God’s purposed in our life. Once we come to the place where our “spirit” is dominant, then, and only then, can our “soul” be used for the glory of God.

The less understanding we have of the control our soul has over our life, the more open we are to living a life that is deficient in spiritual power.

A tremendous insight into understanding the “soul” is the fact that the world “soul” as it is translated in the Old Testament, is translated from the Hebrew word “nephesh” and is the same Hebrew word that is also translated “breath.”

All life must have breath, air, oxygen, in order to survive because it is the most basic element of life and without it, nothing could function and, “life” is a function our outgrowth of the soul.

We speak of “natural life,” that is, life that is simply aware of, and capable of experiencing, the physical realm and the circumstances surrounding it.

Our “soul” is made up of appetites, inclinations, drives, desires – in other words, it is the nature of the being, or creature, and it is the mixing, or mingling, of all these attributes within that develops our personality. The soul has the capacity to hate or love, to rejoice or sorrow, and it is the makeup of the soul that produces a quality of life that is either good or bad, positive or negative.

It is through the soul that every creature contacts, experiences, the physical world around him. The soul directs the physical body, enabling it to experience, and possess, physical life.

Genesis 1:20 states, “God said, ‘Let the water teem with living creatures – [The King James translation renders this phrase, ‘moving creatures that hath soul’] and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.’” Verse 28 continues, “God blessed them and said to them, [Adam and Eve] ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

The Hebrew word that is translated as “living” in these verses is the same Hebrew word that is translated as “soul” elsewhere throughout the book of Genesis, so these verses tell us that “creatures” – animals, possess a soul life.

In Genesis 1:30, God said, “To all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground, everything that has the breath of life – (Same Hebrew word that is translated as “soul”) in it, I give every green plant for food. And it was so.”

This passage uses the Hebrew word “nephesh” meaning, that all creatures have “souls.” Scripture states that God gave man dominion over the earth – over every beast, fowl of the air and every creeping thing – “wherein there is life” (Genesis 1:29-30) and, since God sees each of these creatures as a “container filled with life,” these creatures possess life, therefore,
have “soul-life.” As a result of having this “soul-life” all creatures can know, and experience, their physical surroundings, or environment.

While it is admitted that the soul is developed in varying degrees of response in the species, nonetheless, animals are “soulish-beings” – meaning, they are souls that live in bodies.

SIMILARITIES AND DISTINCTIONS

While there are similarities between creatures and man, there is also a great distinction between them as well. If we can only grasp the difference between the animals that God created and man, we will better understand God’s purpose for us.

While the animal creature is totally dominated by his soul, man need not be because, as we will see, God gave him a “spirit” to rule over his being.

Man and the animal creature, are two distinct types of beings, which have a different source of life! At creation, while God created both animal and man as “soulish” beings, however, it must be remembered that he also created man as a “spiritual” being as well.

Genesis 2:7, “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.” Verse 9, “And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Verse 19, “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.”

The word that is translated as “made,” in verse 9, is the same word found in verse 4, where it states, “God made the earth and the heavens,” and literally means, “to do.” Throughout the Old Testament, whenever there is a reference to signs and wonders performed by God, this word “made” is used because it refers to an actual act of God – something God Himself did!

Interestingly, when God caused the trees to grow, He didn’t come down and plant the seed, water the trees and keep the birds away, but rather, he caused the seed to grow by His divine power – simply by an act of His will! However, when God created the animals, and man, He didn’t just “will” them into existence, but was actively involved in their creation.

In verses 7 and 9, of Genesis 2, where it states that God “formed” both man and animals from the ground, the Hebrew word that is translated as “formed” means, “to fashion, to mold, or to frame.”

This word, “formed,” as used in the Old Testament, signifies that the manner in which God “forms” an object – the manner in which as object is brought into being. For instances, when God brought Israel into existence, Scripture states, God “formed Israel as a nation.”

When God formed man and the animals, the “manner” in which they were brought into being was similar, however, the similarity stops there because God did not “breathe” His breath into animals to impart life, as He did when He formed man.
Animals did have life because God didn’t parade a string of dead, inanimate, lifeless animals before He created Adam. These animals could function, and exercise, their beings, because their “souls” were in operation.

Genesis teaches that “animals have (possess) life” and that this life is within them. They breathe, and they experience life, and, as long as they are living, they can function. It is important to note that the Bible teaches that “life” for animals is a “possession” – it is an occupant of their bodies that can be lost or taken and, when their life is taken away, they cease to exist.

Animals are “soulish” because their souls are the source of their life.

God imparted His “spirit” [breath] into man – therefore, man, unlike animals – is not just a “soulish” being. Man is more than just a “soul” that experiences (possesses) life like animals do. When God imparted His spirit [breathe] into man, man did not just become alive, but rather, Scripture teaches that he “became a living soul.” God implanted a soul within man, however, He also “breathed the breath of life” into him that caused man’s soul to become saturated, permeated, and inspired with the very life of God. Man went beyond merely being a soul, to becoming “a living soul,” and the sources of his life was not his soul, but rather, it was his “spirit” – which God breathed into him.

God is Spirit and He gave man of His life!

The point is that, while all creatures have life, in addition to his soul-life, Adam was a “LIVING soul.” The life force that enables animals to function is also contained within man, but, man has available to him a higher, more powerful, life force than animals do because, unlike the animals, he possesses a “spirit,” that, when it is alive unto God, energizes the soul.

One way to understand what Scripture teaches about the soul-life is to think of the soul in terms of a clock that operates on batteries and, when batteries are inserted, they give the clock the components that will enable it to function – make it tick. The clock’s life source is from within because it is the batteries that give it life. That’s the way animals are because, like a clock, all they have is their soul (their battery pack), with which to function. However, while man also has a battery pack, he also has access to a more reliable, more consistent, source of life. He can be empowered by his “spirit,” that is like taking an electrical cord and plugging it into a wall outlet.

Continuing with our analogy of the clock, if one plugs the clock into an electrical current, electricity enters into it – empowers the clock – and even extends this power to the life of the batteries. Man does not have to be restricted to the limited ability of his battery-pack, his soul, because he can “plug into God,” through his spirit, and become a “living soul.”

Genesis 3:20 states that Eve was “the mother of all the living.” it does not state that she was the mother of everything that had life, but rather, “the mother all the living.”

If anyone really wants to live, he must, by means of his human spirit, “plug into the Holy Spirit” and be empowered by the very life of God. Otherwise, he is limited, simply, to a physical, soul-power, existence.
Because animals have a soul, they are able to contact the earth and their physical surroundings, however, because, for them, life is only a possession, they, upon death simply cease to exist. However, this is not true of God’s life, which is imparted to man who became a living soul.

God doesn’t merely possess life – **HE IS LIFE!** God can never cease to exist and, since man was “created in the image of God,” he is a “living soul” who, like God, can never cease to exist!

When man ceases to function, to experience life in this earthly realm, he will begin to function in, and experience, a spiritual realm.

Creatures are merely soulish, completely mortal, and subject to death, however, when God “breathed His breath into the nostrils of Adam,” (Genesis 2:7) He imparted to him a “spirit” which, in addition to a physical, and soulish, existence, gave man spiritual existence and immortality.

The trees, animals, and man, are all “out of the ground” and all have breath. Even trees, and plants, have a system that enables them to take oxygen from the atmosphere and diffuse it into their cells. Even aquatic life – fish and marine life – breath air from the water.

All creatures breathe, however, God didn’t breathe His breath into them to start their functioning as He did with He formed man. He breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life because He knew the effect His breath would have on mankind.

God didn’t choose to dip man into a vat, or to use some spiritual needle, or syringe, to inject His “Spirit” into him, but rather, God designed (“formed”) the community of systems within man. God, with an intricate, detailed, understanding of how man was to work, knew that the best way to impart “spirit-life” was to breathe into man’s nostrils His very life (Genesis 2:7).

Taking a close look at this system, let’s try to understand the reason God breathed into man his Spirit and what effects this Spirit has upon man. Air is breathed in through the nostrils into the trachea, or windpipe. A leaf-shaped membrane called the epiglottis, just behind the voice box, or the larynx, can close off this trachea. This epiglottis works like a lid. As one swallows, this lid shuts in order to close off the windpipe to prevent food from entering it. Air moves through the windpipe into the lungs. The purpose of the lungs is to provide a moist, porous, surface through which gases can be exchanged, the most prominent one being oxygen.

**The pores of our skin cannot perform this function; we are completely dependent upon our lungs for the admission of air.**

The lungs are two porous structures filled with air that conduct a continuous passage of air into, and out of, the circulating blood.

The lungs are responsible for the delivery of air from the outside atmosphere into the bloodstream.

After the lungs deliver air to the blood, the “circulatory system” is then responsible for the delivery of air to the rest of the body.
The lungs, and their delivery system, are servants to all the cells of the body because they do not dictate the level, or rate of activity, of the body. For instance, if the lungs deliver more oxygen than necessary, the activity of the body does not speed up.

However, this is not true in the situation, for instance, of oxygen being supplied to a furnace because the more oxygen supplied to the furnace, the hotter it burns which makes the oxygen, or the deliver of it, the master of the furnace.

The total surface area of the lungs is about 1000 square feet – (40 times the surface of the body) – and blood flows through this area at a rate of about 17 pints per minute. This is an incredible fact when we realize that, on the average, the human body contains 12 pints of blood. The blood, from various veins throughout the body, travels through the lungs.

There are approximately 300 to 700 million air sacs (cells) in the lungs and each of these cells is surrounded by blood vessels, called capillaries. The blood in these capillaries is exposed to the oxygen in the lungs for only about 5/10th of a second. The air in the lungs is diffused into the membrane of the capillaries, and then passes into the blood itself and is swiftly carried to each of the millions of cells in the body.

God created every creature with a system by which air is taken from the environment and distributed to all cells, be it the tiniest insect, fish, bird or four-footed beast – even man! If the supply of oxygen is cut off, any creature will cease to function, or carry on the activities of life.

The vehicle that transmits this source of life to all the cells of the body is blood. God made this clear when He said in Leviticus 17:11, “The life of the flesh is in the blood.”

Because oxygen is the life-producing, life-sustaining, component of the flesh that provides the cells with energy that enables them to function, and because oxygen is carried in the blood, therefore, “the life of the flesh is in the blood.”

God, Who is Spirit, breathed “spirit-life” into Adam, his lungs filled, and expanded, with the very life of God! This life was absorbed from the lungs into the bloodstream. Think of it! The very nature of God was carried by the blood and deposited into every cells of man – Adam! The essence of God elevated man beyond his being just a soul, beyond his just having life because, when God breathed into the nostrils of man, He employed a delivery system that carried His life to every fiber of man’s being!

The Spirit-breathed life of /God put man beyond, and above, simply just having to follow the dictates of his soul because his soul was put into subjection to the life of his spirit.

Remember that the basic meaning of the word “soul” in the Old Testament is “breath,” and, remember, also, that all life must have air to breath, in order to live. This means that the basis of physical, natural, life is the soul, and the basis of the soul is breath.

Breath maintains, fuels, the soul, which enables it to function physically – to live!

While man’s “soul” and his “spirit” are not the same, nonetheless, the Hebrew word which is translated as “spirit” in the Old Testament comes from the same root word which means “breath,” “wind,” or “air in motion.”
The basis for man’s spirit is breath, God’s breath, or Spirit. It is God’s breath that maintains man’s spirit and produces eternal, (spiritual) life.

Physical, natural, life, as well as the soul, are supported by natural breath, air, while spiritual life, and the human spirit, are supported by the breath of God.

The source of the soul’s being is the world – while the source of the spirit’s being is God’s life. Every creature that has life, that functions, has a soul that is fueled by breathing, which, of course, includes man. However, because God wanted a being created in His image, He didn’t stop at letting Adam breathe air to support his soul, but rather, He imparted to Adam His breath, empowering His very Own Spirit to him.

Above, and beyond, the life of the soul, is the life in the Spirit – ETERNAL LIFE – that is what God gave to, and made available, for mankind.

Just as one must breathe in order for his soul to produce life, he must have God’s Spirit in order to have God’s life!

Adam had the pure life of God generating life in his being. Within each of us are two sources of life – one type of life is produced by the soul – the other by the spirit.

The soul, and the spirit, both want to be dominate, to have the authority to direct the course of one’s earthly sojourn. One can have the abundant life of God flowing through him, directing him – or – he can limit himself to a life that is governed by the components of his soul.

Make the decision today to take authority over your soul, to let the spirit within you soar to its rightful position.

It is our intent in these lessons to examine our spirit and our spirit’s opponent – the soul – and to see how Satan uses our soul against us.
Lesson Two
Man - spirit dominated soul

Adam was more than just alive he was a “living” soul. Living was what Adam did and not something he possessed. God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, His life, or spirit, and then He used man’s respiratory system to transmit spiritual life to his bloodstream, which, in turn, delivered that life to every cell of his being. In essence, then, man’s circulatory system carried God’s life throughout his body.

Genesis 2:21-22 states, “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

The fact, as these verses so state, that God removed a “rib” from Adam’s side to make a woman shows the all-reaching effect of God’s Spirit having touched every cell of Adam’s body.

Remember, from lesson one, that trees, animals and man, came “out of the ground,” yet, “woman came out of man.” The question then is, why wasn’t it necessary for God to breathe into the nostrils of woman in order to impart spirit – life – to her? The answer is that the cells, and chromosomes, that God removed from Adam were so pulsed, and saturated, with life, because the life of God so filled every cell, every chromosome, of Adam, that, as God formed woman out of the side of man, that life – in the part that God removed from Adam – consumed, and infested, the whole makeup of woman.

Jesus taught, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Adam was born of the Father of Spirits and Eve was formed from Adam. God breathed into Adam to make him living and Eve was formed from that which was already living. Two people were now motivated, and dominated, by the very life of God. They were both alive with God’s life. Their human spirits were mingled with, and in touch with, God’s Spirit and their soul lives were completely subservient to their spirit life.

As Adam and Eve fulfilled their God-intended roles, their souls were active, and important, to their beings, and their thought processes were in their proper places, functioning in a place of submission, and receiving guidance from, their spirits.

While Adam and Eve’s souls were submissive to their spirits, they were not suppressed and stifled because it was for the reason that their souls were operating in their correct roles that Adam and Eve’s mental capabilities were heightened, clear and free from anxiety, fear, worry, or tendencies to compete.

To enable one to better understand the relationship between the soul and the spirit, I would like to make the following point that the effect of Adam and Eve’s sin on mankind is like the fact that:

When all the parts of the physical body are working in their proper roles, carrying out their normal functions, there is balance and harmony in the body, and, when a person loses his sight, the other senses, hearing, couch, etc, compensate for the loss and become more sensitive, or dominant.
This is like what took place when Adam and Eve sinned, which is referred to as “the fall,” because, when man’s spirit (life) fell from its God-ordained (God-centered) position, man’s soul emerged to take over and has, ever since, attempted to compensate for the guidance, and direction, which was originally supplied by the spirit which God breathed into man.

When one is “born-again” – his “spirit” is now “made alive” (Ephesians 2:1) – [“That which is born of the Holy Spirit is man’s spirit” – John 3:6] – a battle ensues between his spirit, which, being now fueled by the Holy Spirit is, again, capable of taking its rightful place, and his soul, which, because it has had the leading role for such a long time, does not want to relinquish that role and fights to keep it. Rather than actively engage in this battle, many Christians, however, are content to suppress, strangle, smother, or inhibit, their spirits allowing their souls to have its way. The Bible labels this as “carnality.”

Adam’s ability to name every living creature (Genesis 1:9) is an example of how man’s ability is enhanced, and expanded, when his soul is in its proper position in submission to, and under the supervision of, his spirit. Who, today, could name all the species of animals, even after a life time of zoological study? Yet, Adam’s intellectual ability, assisted by his spirit, was so vast, and extensive, that he accomplished this task within a day’s work.

Genesis 2:25, which is the last statement in the Bible that addresses Adam and Eve’s condition prior to the Fall, gives us another demonstration of Adam’s spirit-dominated, soul-submissive, life when it states, “Adam and Eve were both naked, and were not ashamed.”

Genesis 3:7-11 is the next mention of their state – after they had sinned – and it states, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?”

It is interesting that the word “naked,” which is used here in Genesis 3:7-11 to describe Adam and Eve’s condition after the Fall, is a different Hebrew word than the Hebrew word that is used in Genesis 2:25 to describe their condition prior to the Fall. The Hebrew word which is translated as “naked,” when Scripture speaks of man’s condition after the Fall, always refers to physical (bodily) nakedness – (the state of being nude) – while the Hebrew word that is translated as “naked,” when Scripture speaks of man’s condition prior to the Fall, means, “to be without covering,” or “without resource.” In other words, prior to the Fall, man’s source of life was his “spirit” while, after the Fall, his source of life became his “soul.”

Before eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve were the only creatures who were spiritual, without covering, because the animals were totally soulish, totally with covering.

At creation, with the exception of Adam and Eve, all creatures were given coverings because they were dominated by their souls. This means that every creature either had scales, hair, feathers, fur, etc., not for the purpose of protecting them from the elements (because the elements in the Garden of Eden were peaceable and perfect), or, from one another (because there
wasn’t any ferocity of bests in the Garden of Eden either), but rather, their covering was given to them to provide them with an identity, with individuality, so that they could fulfill God’s command to them to “reproduce after their kind.”

Genesis 3:7 states, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig eaves together and made coverings from themselves.” The first thing that Adam and Eve became aware of, after they had sinned, was their physical nakedness because before they sinned, they had no awareness of any need, or want. However, after they sinned, by being disobedient, they were not only aware of physical nudity, and its related need for covering, but they were also aware, after their soul emerged to a place of dominance, that they had other needs, that there were other things they were in want of.

We can identify with the truth of this because we are aware of our needs!

Ecclesiastes 5:13-16 uses the same Hebrew word for “nakedness” that Genesis 2:25 uses and it is a good example of how this Hebrew word that is used to describe man’s nakedness before he sinned means more than just “physical nakedness.” This Scriptural passage in Ecclesiastes states, “There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begets a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?”

When Solomon states, in this Scriptural passage, “Riches perish and that on has nothing in hand – (nothing in his possession – nothing to show for his labor – nothing he can carry in his hand) – and that “Naked came I into the world and naked will I return in death,” he is making a statement about the futility, the nothingness, of material possessions in the light of man’s mortality.

The point is, obviously, that when the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to write these words, speaking of one’s returning “naked from this world.” He is not talking about one’s not wearing clothes when he is dead, or, of being buried nude.

While it is true that we came into this world without clothes on our body, we, hopefully, do not expect to go out that way. No, when God says we will return naked, taking nothing with us, He is referring to our not taking our physical, or natural, resources with us. He is says, “You arrived in this world with nothing in your possession, with no assets, no natural provision, no shelter (covering) over your head, no carpet, or floor covering, no insurance coverage, no investment canopy, no blanket, no bed covering, no shutters to over the windows, and that is how you will depart this world, without any tangible means of protection, without any shelter, or security, all those things that made your self-life at ease, sufficient and self-sustaining, all those things you used to console, and soothe, your ‘soul.’”

This Hebrew word that describes Adam and Eve’s condition prior to their sinning does, of course, carry with it the meaning of physical nakedness, because they were physically nude prior to the Fall, however, this Hebrew word also carries the additional meaning of “material nakedness,” because they were materially “nude,” but, they were not ashamed of big without
things that would comfort, support, and sustain, their souls. They had neither knowledge, nor perceived need, of such things because their soul was in submission to their spirit.

In the passage of Ecclesiastes 5:13-16, God tells us that, at the time of death, all the things that one has done to pamper, and console, his soul, at the expense of “feeding” his spirit, will be meaningless, and, if one does without having accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, with having been “clothed” in Christ’s righteousness, he will stand naked, and open, before God.

Romans 14:14 tells us to “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ, and to “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” since, when we die, and stand before God, we won’t need natural, or physical, resources because we will be clothed in Christ’s righteousness.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were not only physically naked – they were “materially” naked also. It was true that they had no tangible resources, they had nothing to sustain, and protect, their soul, however, they were not bothered by, or ashamed of, this because God was their resource in the truest sense of the word. Rather than depending upon themselves, or their circumstances, they depended upon the provision of God “through the Spirit.”

Before Adam and Eve sinned, when their spirits were in control of their lives and they were totally “God-conscious,” their souls were not strong enough to bring forth a feeling of vulnerability. But, after they had sinned, they became self-conscious, conscious of their physical nakedness and their need for clothing because their sin resulted in having their soul emerge to a place of dominance. Now their soul was strong enough to bring forth feelings of vulnerability, and fear, which is why they hid themselves from the presence of God and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

It is the soul of man that seeks to avoid feelings, situations or circumstances, which it perceives as making it vulnerable!

Man will build up mental, or material, structures, no matter how flimsy these structures might be, that he believes will protect, fortify or cover, his soul.

For instances, people build financial next eggs to protect themselves against hard times, or, some people, who thought they were about to be assaulted, or shot, have held a newspaper in front of their face. (Of course, no newspaper in the world will stop a bullet, or baseball bat.) The point is that the would is highly aware of “self” and looks to “self” for provision, and protection, because it will not trust God, or obey the leadership of the Holy Spirit, without being forced to do it.

God’s Word gives us a clear contrast between a spirit-controlled life, and a soul-controlled life. Before Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God, they were creatures who had the very life of God flowing through their veins. They were. According to Scripture, “living spirit beings,” whose minds, wills and emotions were in subjection to the life of their spirit. No one knows how long Adam and Eve maintained their spiritual capacity; however, they did not stay that way very long.

How did Satan get involved and use Adam and Eve’s “soul” against them? Scripture tells us that the serpent (Satan) came on the scene in the garden of Eden and, after Eve discerned (or
perceived) certain things, he began to sow seeds of doubt concerning God’s Word. Genesis 3:6
tells us that, when Eve looked at the forbidden tree, she saw that it:

1. Produced god food,
2. was appealing (or pleasant) to look at,
3. was desirable because it
4. would make (or produce) intelligence.

James 1:15 states, “We are tempted when we are enticed by our own lusts (or desires) then, when desire is conceived (given life), sin is birthed.”

When Eve saw that the tree was good and appealing, that it was desirable, it was then that
sin was conceived. It was her desire to sin, in conjunction with what the Devil had said, that
produced the reasoning within her that the tree would enhance her intelligence.

Eve’s desire to sin was the first evidence of man’s “soul” emerging, stepping up, to a
place of dominance. Eve ate of the fruit of the tree and then gave the forbidden fruit to Adam, to
eat with her. As a result of their eating of the tree, they put knowledge (their soul) in a position of
ascendancy. By choosing knowledge they elevated their soulish lives above their wills against
the will of God.

Adam could see, feel and touch, Eve. His will took command of his spirit and he decided
to please the woman rather than God. Adam ate of the fruit in order to please that being that
pleased his senses and satisfied his soul.

1 Timothy 2:14 records, “the woman was deceived but Adam was not deceived.” Adam
sinned as an act of his will and entered into sin with his eyes wide open. He yielded his will to
the desires of his soul.

When Eve ate of the fruit, and then offered it to Adam, for him to refuse to eat of it would
have totally separated him from Eve. Rather than be so separated he chose to please “the desires
of his soul” – to please Eve rather than God – to be separated from God rather than from woman.

Adam and Eve’s choice resulted in their being cut off from God, their having a measure
of life rather than their being “a living soul,” which was God’s intention for them. However, in
the attaining of satisfying their soul’s desires, they had sacrificed their spiritual life in order to
experience a life governed by their soul. Their “spirit dominated” life was now non-existent;
they inherited a “soul dominated” life.

This same tragedy is repeated today as born-again believers who have had their spirits
regenerated through Jesus Christ, and given spiritual ability to bring their spirits into a place of
dominance – choose to live God’s way – to walk in the Spirit – if doing so means sacrificing
their soul’s desires, they let their “soul” life dominate. When the spirit of man is reborn, (John
3:3, 6) and enters into the battle with their soul to take a place of dominance in their life, they
lack the diligence to win the victory for their spirit.

It is sad, indeed, when the “reborn human spirit,” (fueled by the Holy Spirit) wages war
with the soul in order that the glory of God may be manifested in one’s life and the soul refuses
to relinquish its position - simply because the “free-willed” believer chooses to satisfy his soul’s desires.

When Adam exercised his will and mind, the primary components of his soul, and chose those things that pleased, and satisfied, his senses above the Word of God, he cut himself off from God – separated him from the very “spiritual” life that gave him fellowship and communion with his Creator, Almighty God.

Day after day we face the same challenge that Adam faced because every time we choose the desires of our soul over the Word of God, we put our souls in ascendancy over our spirit – we strengthen our soul – just like Adam strengthened his soul that day of the first transgression.

When God said, “Come now, and let’s reason together” (Isaiah 1:18), He was saying, “If you are going to sit down and reason something out, then let’s do it together.” If we will take God’s advice in this command and, before making decisions that arise from our own thinking, stop and consult God as to what He thinking on the matter is, we will give our spirit the necessary input that it takes to keep our soul in line – in a position of servanthood to our spirit.
Lesson Three

Man - spirit, soul and body

Man is such a complex being that, when he malfunctions, specialists have had to delve into the study of genetic, medical science, psychology, etc, in an attempt to understand what “makes him tick” so that they could, if possible, repair the malfunction and restore man to wholeness.

If one is ever to progress beyond an elementary understanding of who he is, he must take a look at the basic makeup of man from a biblical point of view because no medical profession, psychologist, or any kind of worldly wisdom, can give an adequate answer to the question, “Who is man?”

Therefore, in order to answer this question, we must turn to Scripture to see what the Creator of man has to say about who man is. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 states, “The God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God, in this one verse alone, tells us a lot about “who man is” because this verse tells us that man is a tri-dimensional being – he is body, soul and spirit.

Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the same three components of man when it states, “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (the body) and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

To understand these various components of man, it is necessary to give definition to the Greek words from which these components are translated:

“Psyche” – soul; “Pneuma” – spirit; and “Soma” – body.

When 1 Corinthians 2:11 states, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him?” God is telling us that man’s spirit resides within him.

When John 3:3-6 states that, in order for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God, he must, without exception, be born of the Holy Spirit. And, God states that, when a man is born-again, it is his “spirit” that is regenerated, made alive, through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:6 states, “Whatever is born of flesh is flesh, whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit,” showing that when one is born-again, it is his “spirit” that is made alive.

In these verses, God tells us that man is a soul who possesses a spirit and lives in a body, and, when a man is born-again, the new birth is instantaneous as God’s Spirit comes to dwell in one’s spirit, in the deepest recesses of one’s being.

Roman 8:16 states, “The Holy Spirit bears witness without spirit that we are the children of God.” This union, of God’s Spirit with our spirit, opens up the possibility of our knowing, understanding, comprehending and following the will of God.
Our “reborn spirit” has feelings, desires and perceptions that can rejoice, discern and grieve. Our spirit has a voice, a still small voice, an inner knowing, that come from our spirit to give God’s guidance and direction – and that is what should be the basis for our decisions.

The English word that is translated as “soul” in our Bibles is translated from the Greek word “psyche.” The New Testament uses the following words, with their different shades of meaning, when it translates the Greek word “psyche:”

“Life” – It is through his soul that man experiences natural, physical “life.” In other words, it is man’s soulish life that contacts, and interprets, the world in which he lives.

“Self” – The “self” refers to all the drives, desires, appetites and inclination that exist within man.

Whenever we speak of “self-awareness” it refers to one’s being conscious of, and his endeavor to understand, the activities that takes place within his psyche.

These things – drives, desires, appetites and inclination – make us who we are and form themselves into our personality. The mixing, and mingling, of these aspects of our psyche, over a period of time, gives us our personality – the identity by which most other people perceive us.

**Personality is the expression of one’s soul - his PSYCHE!**

It is through one’s psyche that the physical world takes on meaning. The psyche is the “self-life,” – how one is revealed through his personality. The “soul” is all that one is apart from his spirit and his physical body, or, senses. Man’s soul is the basic composition of his mind, will and emotion.

The English word that is translated as “body” in our Bibles is translated from the Greek word “soma,” and is the easiest component part of man to understand because it is so visible, or apparent. Man’s body is the vehicle that transports, and houses, his soul and his spirit.

These three dimensions – body, soul and spirit – make up the total man, and each one of these dimensions has needs that, if fulfilled as God intended, contribute to man’s health, his “wholeness.”

When speaking of man’s being, the Bible also uses the word “heart.” – For instance, 1 Peter 3:15 tells us that “the Lord should be sanctified in the heart.” When Scripture so uses the word “heart,” if, of course, is not referring to the physical “blood pump” under man’s left ribs, but rather, it is referring to the center of man’s inner life – the source of all the functions, and forces, of both man’s soul and spirit. Therefore, the “heart” is all of the intangible components of man.

This being true, then, “to believe (think) something in one’s heart,” is not the same thing as doing so from one’s mind because the mind is only a single function of the would. In Psalm 103, David said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me,” while 1 Peter 3:4 states
that the spirit of man dwells within the heart of man, of, as one translation renders it – “that man’s spirit is hidden in the heart.”

We, later in these lessons, will look at the individual roles that each of these components play in the makeup of man, but, for now, let’s look at man is his totality.

Proverbs 20:27 states, “The spirit of man is the candle of the lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly” – Referring to the innermost parts, inward recesses of the heart, one’s deepest self.

What does this Scripture mean when it says, “The spirit of man is the candle (or lamp) of the Lord?”

The answer is that this verse is saying that it is the “spirit of man” that searches all of his inward parts, it is the “spirit of man” that God discerns all that goes on within a person.

1 Corinthians 2:11 states, “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?” It is the “spirit of man” that is God’s searchlight, revealing and bringing to light, all the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is in one’s spirit that God has “light,” insight or revelation, to see all that goes on within an individual. A man’s spirit is the place where the probing, every-searching, light of God is at work. – the place where every attitude, desire, craving, fear, hurt, emotion or passion is examined, observed, found out and exposed. In other words, the spirit of man is the point of origin of the “X-ray light” of God, the agency God uses to know the inner workings of a person.

1 Samuel 16:7 states that, “man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” – the total inner being of a person, and he knows, and notes, what truly motivates a person.

The term “inward parts,” as used in Proverbs 20:27, is plural, which means that, rather than all the functions of man being separate, specific, entities – they inter-link, interrelate, and connect to make the whole man.
God so designed man that it would be His power that would flow from man’s spirit out to his inner parts – his mind, conscience, will and emotions – and, it is because this is the way God designed man that it is only as sufficient power – drawn from the Holy Spirit – within the human spirit, does flow to all the other parts of man’s being that man is able to function properly.

In the same way that when the proper flow of electricity on a circuit board, if all connections are in their proper places, turns a light bulb on, so, also the Christian who aligns himself with God’s design, and has all his necessary components making contact with God, can he have open communication with God.

As the individual digits in a telephone number must be used in proper sequence in order to make the necessary connection, because anyone digit alone, or out of sequence, prohibits this connection, Christians need to have their components – the parts of their being – in the Divine sequence with which God created them to be, in order for them to make connection with God. All to often, however, man’s components are out of God’s order, out of their proper sequence.

When Hebrews 4:12 states that the Word of God is able to tell what emanates from the flesh, the soul, and what one’s spiritual desires and motives are, it teaches that God works from the inside out, while man works from the outside in.

All too often, Christians do not have the components of their being in the sequence, the Divine order, which God has ordained them to be. Instead of making it their priority to exercise their spirits through prayer and to feed their spirits with the Word of God, in order to obtain Godly wisdom, they put the training, and guidance, of their minds first, and, then, evaluate this guidance with their consciences.

“Man's spirit is the lamp of the Lord” and provides light, which allows man to see, examine and know, himself – know when he is right or wrong – because this light can illumine his mind, will and emotions, so that these parts can function in this “light” rather than in darkness.

The problem with the person who is not born-again is that the light of his spirit – his “lamp” – is out and his inward parts have only the light that they receive from his five physical senses. It is because his spiritual lamp is out, that the unregenerate man is out of touch with God and operating in spiritual darkness.

The unregenerate person can only see what to do – know which way to go – on the basis of his own natural wisdom. And, because his “inward parts” have been taught by the ways of the world, they are not only limited, they are tainted.

When Scripture teaches, “Man's spirit is the lamp of the Lord,” it is NOT referring to the “light of the Lord.” A lamp is only a device that provides (produces) the light. Just as a lamp produces light from the oil – or fuel – that is in it, the “lamp of the Lord” – man’s reborn spirit – produces light from the oil – (fuel) – that is in it, and, this fuel is the Holy Spirit. (Oil in Scripture is symbolic of the Holy Spirit).

The Holy Spirit can illuminate all one's “inward parts”!
God’s very best for man, as he lives out his life on this earth, is to have his spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Who provides power, and direction, to all the other facets of his being.

Many born-again Christian live “soulish” lives, and are convinced that it is normal to live this kind of life. Rather than be dominated by their inward parts, they depend largely on their physical senses, that continually feed them data (formation) which is, then, interpreted by the functions of their souls. It can be accurately stated that the five physical senses are the “eyes” of the soul.

Romans 12:2 tells us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” If one is to glean Godly wisdom from the Word of God, and other spiritual influences, his mind must be “renewed.” 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, makes it clear that there is a wisdom that cannot be obtained by mere intellectual training or thought, or comprehended by the physical senses, because the wisdom of God can only come by way of the Holy Spirit.

Because “spiritual revelation” is solid, unshakable and immovable truth, it cannot be received by one’s emotions because emotions rise and fall – waver from hour to hour.

The insight (revelation) that comes by the Spirit of God transcends every other facet of man and enters into an area that none of the world’s wisdom can enter. It enters into the very “spirit” of man.

Having access to the apprehension, and comprehension of truth, by way of one’s spirit, is something of much greater value than the mere articulation (speaking forth) of truth.

When one lives life with his soul in a position of superiority over his reborn spirit it causes him to miss the checks, and impressions, that the Holy Spirit attempts to give him in order to restrain him from making a wrong decision, or from doing a wrong action.

One’s being led by his “psyche” – (his soul) – makes it difficult for him to be led by his “pneuma” – (his spirit).

The Battle is on!

While the “psyche” (soul) of man desires the position of power, and authority, God, on the other hand, desires that the reborn “pneuma” (spirit) of man come forth, rise up, and have the superior position over his soul. Despite the fact that the psyche (soul) does not give up its position without a fight, God’s way for the spirit is not to damage, (or do away with), the soul, but rather, to work in harmony with it.

God desires that the soul and the spirit literally work hand in glove – the hand is the spirit that provides the power, direction and strength – from within the glove that is the soul! While it is the glove (man’s soul) that comes in contact with the outside world, touching its physical surroundings, it is the hand (man’s spirit) that should empower, and give direction, to the soul from within. Man’s soul is simply the means by which man’s spirit can manifest itself to a long and dying world.
The lowest level a person, in his right mind, can sink is to be controlled, and dominated, by his physical senses. This is the realm in which severe drug addicts exist because their sequence of the scale of “God's power-flow of power” is so perverted that they are totally controlled by the dictates of their physical bodies.

It is a statement of fact that the more out of God’s divine order one is, the worse off he is. Study again the diagram found on page 17.

Satan will do all he can to influence one to move away from anything spiritual and to be more and more controlled by the appetites of his flesh and his physical being that lives in a world system that is littered with attitudes, ideas, pastimes, activities and entertainments which will lead him to be dominated by his soul, and his physical body.

1 John 2:15-16 states, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

We live in perilous times and it is only the Christian who makes the decision to walk in, and live by, his “spirit,” will avoid the many pitfalls and traps of these last days.
Lesson Four
An Evil Heart

Hebrews 3:1 states, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

The book of Hebrews is speaking to Christians – born-again believer – who are considered “holy brethren” and who “have a High Priest, Jesus Christ” (Hebrews 12:4). This whole passage in Hebrews, especially chapters 3 and 4 was a warning to Christians to guard against things that would hinder, or harm, them spiritually. Hebrews 3:12 states, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Hebrews 4:6 goes on to state, “But Christ (was faithful) as a Son over His own house, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Verse 14 continues, “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

The “if” in these two verses makes the facts of one’s being in the house of Christ, and partaker of Christ conditional! Therefore, then, what this passage tells us is that there are things, such as one’s not “holding fast,” which will cause him not to be a partaker of Christ, or, to be a part of the house (or body) of Christ.

When Hebrews 3:12 warns against one’s having “an evil heart,” remember that Scripture uses the word “heart” when referring to the center, or very core, of man’s inner life. When 1 Peter 3:4 states, “The spirit is hidden within the heart of man,” the word “heart” refers to man’s inner being, the intangible aspects of a man, therefore, the source of all the functions within both his soul and his spirit.

When Scripture teaches that “everything is open to view before God,” it tells us that our heavenly Father does not only observe man in his spirit, but He “searches the heart, all the intangible inner aspects of man, and knows the thoughts and imaginations therein” (Hebrew 4:12).

Hebrews 3:12 tells us that it is AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF that causes one to let his confidence, and rejoicing, in the Lord to slip.

God says that there can be an “evil heart of unbelief” even within a one who is born-again child of God – one who has invited Jesus Christ into their heart.

To understand the concept of this statement, one must realize that the word “evil,” as it appears in this verse, does not mean malicious, or wicked, but rather, it means “to be useless, unprofitable, or unserviceable – in its effect, or influence.”

The same Greek word which is translated as, “evil,” is also found in Matthew 7:18, that states, “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” This passage helps to understand the true meaning of the word “evil” because here, Jesus
is saying that a bad, or corrupt, tree cannot produce fruit that is of any use, or profit. An evil tree will produce fruit that is useless. The Scriptural analogy is that an evil heart within a Christian is a heart that is of no service to the Kingdom of God, but rather, it is a heart that God cannot use to benefit the cause of Christ.

Hebrews 3:12 admonishes each one of us to look out for – to be on guard against – allowing an “evil heart of unbelief” to form within us, causing us to depart from the living God.

The purpose of this lesson is to examine some of the symptoms of “an evil heart” in the lives of Christians. Keep in mind that a symptom is an indicator, a warning signal, that there is a deeper problem, that there is the potential for an evil heart to form within a person. Some of these symptoms are:

1. **LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD**

   When one lacks confidence in God he is not sure that God will answer his prayers that result in an inconsistent prayer life, and, when he *does* pray, it is usually for a personal, or family, emergency.

   When he prays, his prayers are not made in faith, but rather, out of a desperation that *hopes* something will happen, and, perchance nothing *does* happen, he is not surprised because of his initial doubt in the effectiveness of prayer. This person begins to have more and more confidence in himself – his soul powers.

2. **UNCONFESSIONED (FORGOTTEN) SIN – BEING ALLOWED TO REMAIN**

   When one sins, he breaks fellowship with God and, as a result of this there is lack of fellowship. This brings about spiritual fatigue. One who in this spiritual condition ceases to exercise spiritually which makes confessing, and taking God’s forgiveness for his sin, a chore. He, therefore, begins to rationalize away his need to repent and begins to keep shorter times of communication with God.

3. **ACTS OF SIN OCCURRING MORE FREQUENTLY – PERHAPS WITH REGULARITY.**

   The person with an “evil heart” will find himself making excuses in order to justify his wrong actions, or his spiritual inactivity. He begins to reason that some sins, especially those sins he is involved in, are not as bad as others. He begins to compare himself with others, thinking that he is not as “bad” as they are. Of course, God sees sin as sin and, in His sight sin is all on the same level of offense.

4. **LOSS OF JOY**

   A loss of joy in the things of God becomes evident in the life of the person with an “evil heart.” Church attendance, tithing, giving of time to God’s service, reading Scripture, verbally expressing thanks to God, verbally praising God and, of course, praying, all tend to become a burden – a “I have to do it” attitude.
Joy is a fruit of the reborn spirit of the child of God, however, as a heart becomes hardened, or “evil,” the spiritual force of joy doesn’t flow. If a person, in this condition, would only stop and look at himself, he would observe that the joy, or the fulfillment, that was once present in his life, at the beginning of his spiritual life, is now gone and his spiritual life that was once so vibrant, because of this joy, has now become dry and mundane. If a person in this spiritual condition attends church, or is involved in any church activity, it is more likely because he has a feeling of obligation to do so rather than because he has a true desire to serve God.

5. REBELLION

The person with “an evil heart,” is bound and determined that he is going to have, or do, things his way, or not at all. Because this kind of person becomes self-sufficient, without any kind of acknowledgment for the need for God, when he succeeds, or there is any positive outcome in his life situation, God receives no credit, or glory.

Because the person with an evil heart develops a readiness to uphold his unbelief, he argues against the Word of God in behalf of what he thinks to be true. When a person in this spiritual condition is presented with what Scripture says to do, or not do, when he is considering the rightness, or wrongness, of a particular situation, or decision, he continues to feel that he knows better.

While this person may never, verbally, express these sentiments around others, nevertheless, these sentiments are present in his heart; they are his heart attitude toward God, and the things of God.

Is it possible that any of these symptoms of an evil heart are either present in your life or at least trying to manifest themselves within your heart?

If so, keep in mind that these symptoms (evidences) are warning signals to you that an evil heart has formed, or has begun to form, within you. If this is true that you have the beginnings of an evil heart, then be aware that you could well be on the verge of departing from God and walking toward the door that leads out of the house of Christ – His Body!

This departure from Christ does not happen all at once because the heart’s becoming evil does not happen all at once, but rather, happens during a “downward spiral” process that begins with doubt, or unbelief, enters the heart, hardening it toward God.

As the heart hardens, it allows for more unbelief to enter it, which just hardens it even more, and, when the heart has entertained enough disbelief, with, in turn, hardens it enough, it acquires an attitude of disobedience toward God and His commands to us.

Three times the warning go out in the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”
The verb “to harden,” is an action word, showing that there is activity taking place in this person’s heart. Because the 3rd and 4th chapters of Hebrews gives us insight into how the heart becomes evil, let’s look at this process as it is given in these verses because if we can understand how this process works, and what produces an evil heart, we, certainly, will be in a better position to thwart its development in our own hearts.

The English word “harden,” as found in our Bibles, is a verb that is translated from a Greek word that means, “to make firm” – “stubborn” – or “to be unyielding.” Whenever a hardening occurs it implies a combining, or mixing, of two elements.

For instance, metal added to, and mixed with, iron will harden into steel. Mineral salts mixed with water produces what is known as “hard water.” Water mixed with mortar forms concrete.

A good example of the usage of the word “harden” to imply “mixture” is Hosea 7:8 that states, “Ephraim, hath mixed himself among the people, Ephraim is a cake not turned.” This phrase refers to Ephraim mixing himself, throwing in his lot, with sinners. He was much like a cake that is baked only on one side – a pancake that is put over a flaming fire and allowed to lay there without being turned and, as a result, becomes scorched – (hardened) – to the point of being brittle on one side.

In this passage in Hosea 7, God is addressing those who have turned away from Him, and His ways, to go after other nations, such as Egypt, Assyria, and others. In verse 8, God is stating that Ephraim’s wickedness, and sin, is a result of this tribe’s having “mixed” (mingled) with godless people that resulted in their hearts hardening toward God, and, once their hearts was completely hardened, they then “turned away” from Him.

The forming of an evil, or hardened, heart, does not begin with blatant unbelief, but rather, it begins with a very subtle thought, or suggestion, that just, perhaps, God is not as trustworthy as one has believed Him to be. This thought, when it mixes with the trust one has, heretofore, maintained in his heart creates “doubt.” This doubt causes one to hesitate, or question, what he holds to be truth, which, in turn, produces uncertainty, hesitation, suspicion, indecision, and misgiving.

When Satan first approached Eve, he sowed the seed of doubt by asking, “Has God truly said?” In other words, what he as asking her was, “Is what God said really true?”

The philosophies of the world, and the demons of hell, still approach us in the same manner, with the same purpose of leading us away from God, and His truth – the truth! It is a statement of fact that Satan wants us to question the truth of Scripture.

If allowed to, Satan will bring misgivings about acting upon the Word of God into the heart of the child of God and, once doubt enters into his heart, he will begin to question the inspiration of Scripture and whether or not God’s Word really applies to him. The, before he realizes it, a process has started that will, ultimately, lead to his having an evil heart.

When doubt had taken root in the heart, it will bring forth unbelief!
Doubt and unbelief are not synonymous; they are not the same thing! When one is in a state of “doubt,” he is just beginning to wonder, or question, if God’s Word is really true, however, when he is in a state of “unbelief,” he has arrived at a point where he has settled the issue of his questioning by deciding that the Word is God is not true.

An unprofitable, nonproductive, heart of unbelief will cause one to depart, turn, from the living God (Hebrews 3:12) and this departure, or turning, is not a sudden, dramatic, event, but rather, happens one step at a time.

Notice, according to Hebrews 3:1-2, that the one who departs from God is one who, at one time, has been in a proper, face-to-face, relationship with God.

In summary, then, the “down spiral” begins as “unbelief” In one’s heart, that soon turns to the “hardening” of the heart, that eventually leads to a heart attitude of “disobedience.”

In Hebrews 3:12 and 19, the word “unbelief” is translated From the Greek word “apista,” which means “to have a lack of faith.”

It was this “lack of faith” that was responsible for a generation of people not entering into the blessing, and provision, of God.

Matthew 13:58 states, “He (Jesus) did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” It was because of their “lack of faith” that they could not receive from the Son of God.

Hebrews 4:6 states “See therefore it remains that some [Referring to Israel] must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.” Verse 11 continues, showing the illustration to this Church age, that we are a part of, “Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

In this passage, the word “unbelief” is not translated from the Greek word, “apista,” (that, as we said, is found in Hebrews 3:12 and 19 and indicates, “a lack of faith), but rather, it is translated from the Greek word “apeithia,” that means “to be disobedient.” This passage, then, tells us that we can sink to a level lower than that of “unbelief.”

The Greek word, “apista,” defines one who, because he has disbelieved and has become unpersuaded by the hearing of truth, acts in a disobedient manner.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that even though the people of Israel had Moses as their leader, heard the Word of God, and saw the great, and might, acts of God, they, nevertheless, deliberately decided not to accept, or believe, what they heard, and saw.
Hebrews 3:19 tells us that they could not enter into the blessing of God “due to their unbelief” – and Hebrews 4:11 states that they “hardened themselves to the point of disobedience,” which caused them to fall away from God’s presence.

The same Greek word that is used in Hebrews 4:11 is also found in Ephesians 2:1-2, however, instead of being translated in our English Bibles as “unbelief” (as it is in Hebrews 4:11) it is translated as “disobedience.”

Ephesians teaches us that when one walks in the ways of the world, he is in relationship with “the prince of the power of the air” – the Devil – because, whenever anyone is disobedient it is because the Devil is at work within him, causing him to refuse to believe the truth after he has heard it.

It is the ingredients of a hardened heart – doubt – unbelief – disobedience – that, finally, gives birth to sin, to a heart that has become evil, and, and evil heart is a heart that is of no service, or use, in the Kingdom of God.

Not that we have seen the causes of an evil heart, let’s consider its cure. Let’s endeavor to answer the question of how one can prevent an evil, hardened, heart from being formed within him, and, what things will cure an evil heart should it be formed within him.

Hebrews 4:2 states “For unto us was he gospel preached, as well as unto the, but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in that that heard it.”

Those who could not enter into the blessings of God were those who had heard the Word, but didn’t profit from it because they didn’t receive it, or didn’t “mix the Word with any faith in them.” They decided to “doubt” the truth of the Word. They took the same view that many in the world take today, which is an attitude of, “When I see it, I’ll believe it.” That is not an attitude of faith. Faith says, “God said it so I believe it!”

Romans, the 4th chapter, tells us that Abraham’s total persuasion (belief) that God would do what He promised to do is a perfect example of what true “faith” is.

When God told Abraham that he would do things that, in the natural, seemed impossible he could have laughed it off and said, “I’ll believe it when I see it,” but, instead of taking this “I’ll wait-and-see” attitude, he believed God – he took God at His word.

If we were to re-write Romans 4:19-20, which is a statement of Abraham’s faith, by leaving out the words “not” and “neither” in the beginning of the passage and then adding “not” and “no” at the end of the passage it would read – “And being…weak in faith, he considered his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old…and the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered…at the promises of God through unbelief; but was (not) strong in faith, giving (no) glory to God.” Can you see, how when it is stated this way, that which was once a statement of “faith” becomes a statement of “unbelief?”

What a sad commentary this would have been for Abraham, if, indeed, this had been his response to God’s Word, and, what a sad commentary it is for anyone today who responds in like manner to what God tells us in His Word.
When Romans 10:17 states “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,” it tells us that faith is not something one can pay for – or earn – but, rather, it is something that every believe can have access too, and therefore, can possess.

If the symptoms of an evil heart are within you, if you are aware of their tendencies rising up in your thinking, then you need to spend time in the Word of God, continually exposing yourself to the Word. There is no substitute for this!

Unbelief is a lack of faith and faith will come by exposure to the Word of God. If one seems to have no faith, it may well be that he has no Word that is fresh and alive in him. One of the reasons that the book of Hebrews was written is that these people to whom the holy writer is writing to were not continuing in the Scriptures, but, rather, were attempting to live on a word that had been preached to them in the past – in by-gone days.

Hebrews 5:12 tells us that these Christians had been saved so long that they should have been instructing others in the Word and, yet instead, they needed someone to teach them again. This being so, the writer of Hebrews is encouraging them to grow and to go on beyond the foundational teachings of the Bible to the deeper things of the Spirit.

When listing these foundational teachings of Jesus for the Church, Hebrews 6:1-2 tells us that one of the foundations in the growth toward perfection (maturity) is “faith toward God,” that is, one should have faith concerning God, because, without faith toward God – that is, a faith that is kept and maintained, one’s relationship with, and attitude toward, God will suffer broken fellowship.

It is the exercise of faith toward God, the exposing of one’s heart to the cleansing power of the Word of God, that guards one’s heart from becoming evil.

**Christian fellowship** is also essential to warding off the development of an evil (hardened) heart.

Hebrews 10:25 tells us that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but rather, we should exhort, and encourage, one another, even more so, as we see the return of the Lord Jesus approaching.

Hebrews 3:13 states “exhort one another daily.” We should encourage one another in our daily walk with God. The believer, who only fellowships with other Christians once a week, is putting himself in a dangerous position because the doubt, unbelief, ridicule, and reasoning of the world, will slowly draw him away from his faith in God.

Fellowship, and sharing with other believers, will help keep one from being deceived, and hardened, toward God. Repentance and obedience link together to form a strong chain in one’s relationship to God and, together, they will enable one to resist the development of an evil heart, Being quick to repent provides continued fellowship with the Father which helps one to maintain a humble heart.

Obedience to God’s Word will stop one short of reaching the point of turning his back on God and will throw the forces of hell into confusion and disarray, because

There is no defense for obedience to God!
Walking in love is another essential activity that one must do to keep his heart from eroding to the point of being unprofitable to God.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 states “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with His holy ones.” This passage tells us that participating in love toward others will establish our hearts unblameable before God, and an unblamable heart is a heart that is not evil, and therefore, it is the kind of heart that we should all have as our goal to acquire.
Lesson Five

Man and his Conscience

In the same way that one cannot get too close to a cactus plant without getting “pricked,” one cannot get too close to sin with his conscience getter “pricked.”

Before man had a clear revelation of God’s Law, he lived by his conscience of right and wrong. True God gave His Law, and promises for man to live by down through the ages – and finally the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the New Testament, however, God also gave man a conscience, an inner voice, to rise up whenever he becomes involved in something that is out of line with God’s design for man. The purpose of man’s conscience is to attempt to keep him from making a wrong decision, and, should he make a wrong, harmful decision, or engage in some improper act, his conscience will convict him of his sin.

There’s a passage in the Old Testament on the life of David that demonstrates how a man’s conscience works.

1 Samuel 21 is the story of how David, when he was running away from King Saul because Saul was trying to kill him, went into the city of Nob and obtained the shewbread [holy bread from the Temple] from the High Priest, Abimelech, by telling Abimelech that he was performing a task for King Saul. Having obtained the bread, David took Goliath’s sword and escaped into Philistine territory. In 1 Samuel 22, we learn that when Saul went to Nob himself, a man named Doeg told him about David’s having gone to the priest, Abimelech, and his having given David the bread and Goliath’s sword. Saul, thinking that Abimelech was conspiring against him, then ordered Doeg to kill all the priests in Nob.

When Abiatha, the son of Abimelech, escaped to find David and told him what happened, David said to Abiathar, “That day, when Goeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul, I am responsible for the death of your father’s whole family” (1 Samuel 22:22). David knew (discerned) “that day” that Doeg would tell Saul. The sight of Doeg led him to see, and feel, that the course he was about to take was wrong and would bring about evil, and, yet he had ignored the prodding, the warning, of his conscience and proceeded to do what he had originally planned to do.

Because David’s “conscience” was activated by the news of the priest’s deaths, which made him feel guilty of the death of these men, he said, “I have brought about the death of all the priests.”

This episode in David’s life is a good illustration of how one’s conscience is not only active before he steps into an area of sin, but, it is also active after he sins.

Did God equip man with a conscience just so that he would feel guilty after he sinned?

The answer is “No!” God gave man a conscience so that He could use it to bring man to repentance and, thereby, renew the fellowship with Him that has been severed as a result of the person having sinning.

The English word “conscience” is actually translated from two Greek words: the first Greek word means, “to know,” or “to acknowledge” – and the second Greek words means,
“with,” or “together.” Therefore, the literal meaning of “conscience” is “to witness with yourself” – or – “to know with another” (co-perception). God’s Word validates this concept of “co-perception” when it states, “in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is to be established.”

When the word “conscience” is defined as, “to witness with yourself,” it means that the conscience of man witnesses to his “self” (the “soul” part of his being), and, when one’s conscience speaks (gives testimony) to his soul, it becomes the link between his soul and his spirit, which is given witness to by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:16 says, “The Holy Spirit bears witness with our human spirit.”

Hebrews 10 tells us that the sacrifice offered unto the Old Covenant could never make the worshipers perfect (or sinless), that is, animal sacrifices only atoned for (or covered) sin, they did not do away with sin.

It is because of this fact – that worshipers were conscious of their sins year after year. Hebrews 10:2 states “If sacrifices could take away sin, they would have ceased to be offered and the people would no longer be conscious of past sins.”

Hebrews 9:14 teaches, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience – (cleansing your conscience – or – purify you conscience) from dead works to serve the living God.”

Because the perfect Sacrifice has been offered – Jesus Christ – God promises us that anyone who accepts the Sacrifice of the sinless Son of God will have all his sins cleansed – will have his conscience purged of past sin and dead works – by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Anyone so cleansed can continue to serve the living God with a pure conscience.

Hebrews, the 10th chapter, testifies that, in this New Covenant, God will not remember, nor hold against him, one’s past sin, which means that one can draw near unto God, knowing that his conscience has been sprinkled clean by the blood of the Lamb.

That person, whose conscience has been purged by the blood of Christ, should not have his conscience dredge up sin, or a sinful attitude, that has been repented of, and, if one does feel condemned in his heart, or mind, of a sin that he has repented of (asked forgiveness for) that feeling is NOT from God.

Satan, not one’s conscience, is the accuser, the false, perverted, accuser of the brethren. The conscience is the true, natural accuser of the brethren who have not repented because the judgment of man’s conscience, when he is in need of repenting, is as natural to man’s nature as are his hunger pangs when he is in need of food.

Even though the admonition, “Let your conscience by your guide,” is not a bad rule to follow, and it is seldom right to go against the dictates of conscience, nevertheless, the conscience is not an infallible guide because it can be regulated.

It is because one’s will, judgment, or knowledge can affect the conscience that God’s Word speaks of those who have an “evil conscience” – “a seared conscience” – “a weak conscience” – as opposed to those who have “a good, or pure, conscience.”
A “seared” conscience is one that has been hardened, or calloused, by one’s refusal to heed its dictates over a period of time, which means that the searing of one’s conscience is a process. To illustrate, let’s say that one who, because he had been saved and had earnestly sought to walk with the Lord, has been attending church services on Wednesday nights decides one Wednesday evening to stay home and do something around the house rather than go to church. When he first makes this decision not to go to church, his conscience drives its spur into his heart as it reminds him of his decision to, first and foremost, follow Jesus. As he opts to stay home, he experiences feelings of guilt, but rationalizes these feelings away by convincing himself that the work around the house must be done.

Over the next few months he goes to the mid-week service less and less and, each service he misses, his conscience has less to say about it until, finally, he stops going on Wednesday evenings at all and his conscience never rebukes him for it.

Most people who are professional thieves, hired killers or prostitutes, have become so calloused in those areas of their lives that they do not feel the pain of their consciences.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 states “The Spirit clearly says that in the latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”

This passage states that in the last days, these days in which we now live, some will abandon the faith and go after teachers whose consciences have been seared and, if they continue to go after these deceivers, their own consciences will also become hardened.

One’s conscience can be educated, trained, so that it will no longer react under certain circumstances.

Think of those under Hitler’s command who threw multiple thousands of people into gas ovens because their consciences had become dead toward the act of murder. One can reject, and refuse, to obey the voice of his conscience until his conscience simply will not deal with him in the aspect of life that is has, heretofore, tried to admonish him in.

When that happens one’s conscience is no longer an accurate guide.

These teachers of those departing from the faith, mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, are those who “listen to seducing [deceiving] spirit,” are not necessarily just “religious leaders.” In the course of one’s spiritual journey, he not only comes under the training, or influence, of “religious” teachers, but Satan will use anyone, in any area, who gives himself over to his deception. One can be deceived by just about anyone despite of his title, or position.

The point that the Apostle Paul makes in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 is that one should, rather than accept a teaching he hears at face value, check this teaching with the Word of God, especially if, when he hears it, the teaching does not seem just right.

1 Peter, chapter 1, tells us that the way for one to honor God in his heart is to maintain a good conscience because, if one’s conscience remains sensitive toward God, his repentance will be quick and he will be quick to forgive another’s offense toward him.
The degree of sensitivity of one’s conscience is a good medium of measurement of the degree of his spirituality. This being so, it is good for one to ask himself, “How quickly do I acknowledge, and respond, to my conscience?”

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, developed a teaching on the division of the human psyche (mind) and decided that the intangible aspects of man could be identified as AD – EGO – and SUPER-EGO. Let’s take a look at this teaching that has saturated, and been accepted by, our society during this century and see how it compares with what the Scripture’s teaching is on this subject.

**ID** – The unconscious element of man’s psyche which seeks gratification of instinctual drives without regarding the consequences.

**EGO** – The rational, and practical, part of man’s psyche that deals with the outside world and controls, or attempts to control, the powerful ID.

**SUPER-EGO** – (Conscience) The part of man’s psyche that consists of the restraints he has derived from the teaching, and example, of parents and society.

The encyclopedia goes on to say, “These three aspects of man continuously interact. The unconscious drives of sex and aggression must be satisfied, but in a way acceptable to society. There must be conscience, but it should not be so strong and fierce that the personality is crippled by guilt and inhibitions. Ego must be sufficiently in control to deal realistically with the experience of life and allow the other two aspects necessary expression.”

These three aspects of man’s psyche that were identified by Freud, are referred to as the human trinity and they are a picture of how carnal, unregenerate, men sees, and understands himself. They deal primarily with what Scripture calls the soul (psyche) of man because psychoanalyst see man as being made up of only a body and soul, and, it is because they do not acknowledge the existence of man’s spirit that their “theories” fall short of the Scripture’s teaching – God’s teaching on what makes a man tick!

According to the world’s understanding, the conscience judges between what is good or evil, however, the soulish, unregenerate, man believe it necessary to limit (subdue) the conscience, to keep it in line, lest one’s personality become crippled, and inhibited. One is, therefore, told that it is necessary to block, harden, limit, even sear, the conscience, to some degree, if man expects to be whole – or fulfilled.

Sigmund Freud’s encyclopedia, “Family Life and Health Encyclopedia,” continues by saying, “Inhibitions are what deprive people of achievements and fulfillment. Anthropologists have found that more primitive people are free from such inhibitions.”

Are we, therefore, to become primitive?

Because it is man’s conscience that attempts to keep him from becoming involved in harmful, sinful, even embarrassing, activities, I wonder if these “experts” have stopped to consider whether, perhaps, the primitive state of thee people is at least partially due to the fact that they have no restraints or inhibitions.
While the “natural” man will recognize the fact that the function of man’s conscience is to judge between good and evil, he also reasons that, since what is good, or evil, is a relative thing, the conscience is irrational, and restrictive, and it, therefore, must be suppressed, its influence must be limited, if one hopes to be fulfilled, to express himself (his soul) to, to have fun.

What should be acceptable to us – what society approves of, or, what God approved of?

Because some parents have brought up their children with some outmoded ideals, the world considers if fitting for the ego, and id, aspects of one’s soul to make proper value judgments that are based on the dictates of society. The world’s reason that it is the soul that is in contact with the outside world, they consider “that is where reality lives.”

For instances, this same encyclopedia, in speaking of sexual behavior, states, “What a majority does cannot be abnormal or unnatural.”

This means that society, not man’s conscience, nor the Word of God, determines what is right or wrong.

A question that comes to mind is, “What about Sodom and Gomorrah?” Since those cities were taken over by homosexuality that was engaged in by the ‘majority,’ was God wrong in bringing judgment upon them?”

In the world’s view, God was wrong, simply because He went against the majority!

Ego is the reasoning faculty of man’s psyche and is defined as, “that part of man that must be in control so he can realistically deal with life.” Again, one is told that it is man’s ego that determines reality, a reality that is based on society and stimuli from the outside world.

However, for the person who is born-again, the ego (man’s soul) must not be in control because he knows that reality is not what society determines it to be, but rather, it is what God judges it to be. The way God sees things, the way He views reality, is, in fact, reality.

Romans 6:16 states, “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

This passage asks, “Do you want to suppress the voice of conscience so you can yield yourself to, and become a servant of, your mind (or soul)?” – Put another way – “Do you want your spirit to become a servant of your soul and be in bondage to the soul’s limited reasoning and insight?”

If one follows the teachings of Freud, and his prophets, he will cut off the voice of his conscience so that he will be acceptable in the eyes of society and he will not be able to walk in the Spirit, or lead a Spirit-controlled life.

One simply cannot serve two masters.

God says, “Choose ye this day whom you will serve – soul, or spirit?”
Romans 8:6-8 states, “The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

Because, in order for one to be subject to God, he must be spiritually minded and follow the dictates of a clear conscience, he must be extremely careful not to allow anything to weaken, or sear, his conscience.

God’s book of wisdom in the Old Testament, Proverbs 20:27 states, “The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being,” and, as we learned in an earlier lesson, this verse tells us that the light, and life, of God, housed in one’s spirit, searches all his inward parts, that includes both his spirit and his soul – (mind, will and emotions).

It can also be said that, in the natural realm, it is light that “guides” us because it is light the produces the sensation, which we call “sight,” which enables us to see the world around us. If one were to close his eyes, he would be unable to see because his eyelids would prevent the entrance of light. There are certain materials that allow, prevent, or hinder, the passage of light and these materials are classified as either “transparent,” “opaque,” or, “translucent.”

A “transparent” material is one that allows light to pass freely through it. Glass is an example of such a transparent material.

An “opaque” material is one that does not allow light to pass through it. Our bodies are an example of such opaque material.

For instance, if one were to stand in front of a window on a sunny day, his body, rather than the window pane, would cast a shadow simply because, while the glass of the window pane allows the sunlight to pass through it, one’s body will not.

A “translucent” material is one that, because it hinders the passage of light, scatters, and diffuses, the light as it passes through it. Material that fit into this classification cover a wide spectrum and include everything from a frosted, or dirty, glass to thin cloth, wax paper, etc.

One’s conscience can be likened to a protruding lens on top of his spirit that, as it allows light to pass through, converges (concentrates) the light at a single point, or area, in very much the same way that a magnifying glass, when held over a piece of paper in direct sunlight, converges the sunlight in one spot to such a degree that it is able to ignite the paper.

As God’s light, His searchlight, within one’s spirit passes through the lens of his conscience it searches, without ceasing, every attitude, desire, craving, fear, hurt – every emotion or passion, and, upon examination by the Holy Spirit, if any of these is found out to be not of God, or out of line with His will, the conscience concentrates the Holy Spirit’s light that flows through its lens on that one impurity. It is this concentration of God’s light in one area that causes one to feel uncomfortable, that is referred to as “conviction,” reprimand, reproof, or, the “pricking of one’s conscience.”

It is important that one keeps his conscience transparent in order for it to maintain its effectiveness.
In 2 Timothy 1:3, Paul wrote, “I serve God, with a pure (clean) conscience.” When one uses the phrase, ‘I’ve got a clear conscience,” it means that, upon one’s thoughts, motives, or actions, having been examined by God’s searchlight, he experiences no reprimand, uncomfortable feeling, in, or from, his conscience.

When one says, “I want to get this off my chest,” or “I want to clear my conscience,” what he is really saying is that he wants whatever it is that his conscience is focusing, concentrating, on to be removed by way of his confession, and repentance, of that which is being exposed by the Holy Spirit’s light.

1 John 1:9 states, “If we confess our sin, then God is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” that is, repentance wipes away the area that one’s conscience has converged on and releases him from its scrutiny.

If there is sin in one’s life, that is, if he is walking after the desires of the flesh or being disobedient to the dictates of God’s Word, it will cloud, and darken, his conscience making it translucent rather than transparent, and, it is only to the degree that one’s conscience is transparent that he can be “pricked” by the Holy Spirit’s convicting light.

Paul said that he exercised himself, put forth the effort, practiced, to keep his conscience clean of anything offensive, or impure (Acts 24:16).

Titus 1:15 states, “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”

In this passage, the word, “corrupted” (King James translates this word as, “defiled”) is translated from the Greek word that means “stained,” or “tainted,” that is, one whose mind and conscience is corrupt, or defiled, sees things through “colored glasses” that tints the reality of that which he sees because he is looking through a lens, within his conscience, that it itself “tinted,” or “stained.”

In order for one to keep his conscience clean and pure, and, therefore, sensitive to the correction, guidance, and flow of the Spirit in his life, he must resist the teaching, and attitudes, of the world that will serve to cloud – “stain” – his conscience.

In 1 Timothy 1:19, Paul speaks of those who are, “holding on to faith and a good conscience.” Then he speaks of others who, “have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.”

God gave man a conscience, not to punish him, but rather, to benefit him. Mans’ conscience is to help him achieve the goal and purpose God has. God gave man a conscience to help him to keep his “soul” in check and in subservience to his “spirit” so that, in fact, he might live a spirit-controlled life.
Lesson Six

Man and His Daily Struggle

Within the child of God there is a daily, yea, moment-by-moment, battle between his soul and his reborn spirit for dominance – for complete control. If one ever hopes to truly understand, and follow, God’s dictate to him in His Word to “deny himself” he must weaken the stronghold of his “soul life” and strengthen his “spirit life.”

Matthew 16:24-25 states, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself (his soul-life) and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life (soul-life) will lose it, but whoever loses his life (soul-life) for Me will find it.’”

Because the English word “deny,” in verse 24, is translated from a Greek word that means “to renounce,” or “to refuse to give access to,” what Jesus is saying in this passage is that if anyone hopes to be His disciple he must denounce himself – “the works of the flesh” – and – anything that is contrary to God’s will. Scripture refers to the works of the flesh as one’s “carnal nature.”

In verse 25, the English word “life” is translated from the same Greek word that our English word “psyche” comes from – and the word “psyche” refers to the “soul-life” of a man.

Many seem to think that the phrases, “taking up the cross and following Jesus,” or “losing one’s life for Christ’s sake,” that the “cross” means that one must endure some kind of physical pain – the loss of a loved one, or friend – poverty – sickness – mental stress – or, some other kind of frustration in this life.

However, “bearing the cross of Christ” does NOT mean accepting cheerfully, misfortunes – or tragedies – that may come one’s way because these things come to everyone – Christians and non-Christians alike – to those who attempt to be faithful to the Lord, and those who never give God a thought.

No, taking up Christ’s cross, following Him and denying oneself, is done as a voluntary act of one’s will, which means that one must decide to do God’s will and then proceed to do it. A sincere follower of Christ, who will take up Christ’s cross and follow Him, must work to allow all those attitudes, actions, motives, service and interests, that honor God (not self) to be pursued. His entire life must be built on those things that are God-serving, not self-servant – those things that prompt him to be aware of God, not self – are to be developed while he, at the same time, denies, denounces, and refuses, to follow “self.”

Since the psyche (or, self-life) includes all one’s appetites, inclination, drives, and desires, when Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save his life (soul-life) will lose it, but whoever loses his life (soul-life) for Me will find it.” He was telling us that we must “lose” all the aforementioned aspects of our “psyches.”

To have a better understanding of this verse, it is important to know that the word translated as “save” is from a Greek word that means “to keep,” “to preserve” or “to maintain,” and the word translated as “lose” is translated from a Greek word that means “to destroy.” This word does not mean to bring to extinction, or ruin, Christ is not teaching that one should have stoic attitude toward his “soul-powers,” but rather, He is saying that if one attempts to protect,
preserve, or maintain, the facets of his soul, it will cause him to experience the ruin, and loss, of his well-being. Christ is teaching that the preservation of PRIDE, IMPROPER MOTIVES or IMPURE DESIRES, all of which flow from the soul, will bring about the destruction of a healthy quality of life. However, if one is willing to lose these WRONG, IMPURE and IMPROPER aspects of his being (his soul) he will ultimately obtain, and find, an abundant life flowing through and from, his soul.

The difference between the soul has Christ’s abundant life flowing through it, and the one that does not, can be compared to the difference between a diamond that has been cut and one that has not. Both diamonds have the same intrinsic value, but it is only the diamond that has been cut – that has had its “rough” excess removed – that can reflect the true hidden beauty within.

If one desires Christ’s abundant life one must be more motivated by a desire to please our Lord than a desire to please others – to be accepted by those in the world.

It is important that we understand that, when Jesus said, “Whoever will lose his life (psyche – soul) for My sake shall find it” – this promise of life (Abundant life) is conditional upon whether or not one “denies himself FOR JESUS’ SAKE,” because, there are many people who deny themselves, live a good moral life, not because they desire to live a godly life, but rather, because its profitable, in terms of the world’s values, or, perhaps, because the believe in “a salvation through works.”

When one allows the flow of God’s abundant life to expose the base, impure, function of his soul to ruin and destruction, for the cause of Christ, his soul doesn’t lose its usefulness, it loses its abusiveness, and, therefore, upon the loss of its unpleasantness, it gains.

Perhaps it can be said that the soul echoes Patrick Henry’s cry of “Give me liberty or give me death,” because, if one does not bring liberty to his soul IT WILL DIE, be killed by its own exaltation. Since God declares in His Word, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” bringing liberty to one’s soul means bringing to it the spirit-controlled life for which it was created.

Despite the fact that there is, within every Christian, the desire to do what is right – to follow Jesus – there is also a pull in the other direction to do what “self” really want to do. In Romans 7:21-22 Paul describes this conflict, battle, between one’s soul and their spirit, when, in talking about his own personal struggles, he states, “So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” In other words, what he is saying here is that when his motive (purpose) was to do good, evil was present with him.

In verse 21, the English phrase, “right there with me” – (or “present with me,” in the King James version) – is translated from a Greek word whose literal meaning is, “to lie beside.” Applying, then, this definition to the above verse, we can state that the Apostle Paul is saying that whenever the desire to do good arise within him, the desire to do evil “lies” right there with, or, beside, him.

In verse 22, Paul says that the part of him that delighted (desired) to do the will of God was his INNER MAN, the made inside (or, as Peter refers to it in 1 Peter 3:4, “THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART”) This “inner man” is the “spirit” of man, the reborn human
spirit that desires to follow Jesus – to do what is right. However, this desire to do good, to follow Jesus, meets with an opposing force – the presence of evil, that surges forth to hinder. Galatians 5:7-8 tells us, “You see running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the One Who calls you.” Paul makes it clear that what hindered these Galatian saints from obeying, and being obedient to, the truth of God was something that was not of God, Who had called them.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:18, Paul tells of an insident when he says, “We would have come to you, but Satan hindered us.”

To state it again – within the believer who seeks to follow God, there is a battle going on between his SPIRIT-LIFE and his SOUL-LIFE for dominion of his life!

Again, Jesus said in Matthew 16:25, “For whoever will save his life (soul) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life (soul) for My sake shall find it.” If one keeps, attempts to preserve – his soul, he will ruin it. The desires, and appetites, of one’s soul are the residue, and result, of his having been BORN IN SIN, and, if these desires are allowed to remain intact, they will bring destruction to one’s life in some way, and to some degree.

If one’s soul-life is left to itself, if it is allowed to have its way, it will eventually self-destruct!

In lesson three, we saw that, because both the soul and the spirit are a source of life, the overall quality of life is determined by whether it is “the life of the soul,” or “the life of the spirit,” that is allowed to dominate him.

Jesus taught that if one does not take authority over his PSYCHE, his soul, it will damage the quality of his life, both here on earth, and in eternity.

We could translated Matthew 16:25 to read, and do it no harm from its original meaning, to read, “For whatever will keep and preserve the appetites, inclinations, drives and desires of the soul will destroy it, and whoever will destroy those appetites, inclination, drives and desires for the purpose of following Me (Jesus) shall discover new appetites, inclination, and drives and desires.” This verse could be summed up this way – “Destruction brings discovery,” or, “Ruin brings revelation.” In other words, the destruction of the impure aspects of one’s soul will bring it to the discovery of its proper relationship to God, the Holy Spirit, and, its own human spirit.

Romans 7 states that these evil desires are present within each, and everyone of us and, rather than trying to sweep them under the rug, or push them into the back of our mind, we should acknowledge, and deal with, them to destroy their influence in our life, because, if we don’t, these soulish desires will hinder our walk with God and erode our quality of life.

Important to note that, after Jesus revealed to his disciples, in Matthew 16, that He must go to Jerusalem, to suffer and be killed – and after that He would rise again – verses 22 and 23 go on to tell us “Peter took Him (Jesus) aside and began to rebuke Him, ‘Never, Lord,’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to You!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Out of My sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’”
One cannot doubt Peter’s genuine love, and concern, for the Lord, and, because of this we might be tempted to think that Peter’s not wanting Jesus to suffer, and be put to death, was just due to the fact of this love and concern for Jesus, however, Jesus was aware that, rather then being God-inspired, Peter’s words were under demonic influence. These words out of Peter’s mouth were in direct opposition to the real purpose of Jesus’ coming to earth. Christ did not come to earth just to display His mighty power, or to amass a great following. He was born of a woman so that He could die as a man. He was born as a man, entered the human race like all men, with the express purpose of dying for mankind. After Jesus had explained this to His disciples (Matthew 16:21) and, rather than being in agreement wit this God-ordained plan for Jesus, Peter exclaims, “This will never happen to You,” which is why Jesus rebuked Peter.

When Peter stated the phrase, “This shall never happen to You, Lord” (New International Version), or, “Be it far from Thee, Lord” (King James Version) – could, in view of he Greek construction from which it is taken – be translated, “Pity Yourself, Lord.” This Greek word translated “pity,” means – “to prefer to take for oneself” – “to be propitious” – “to have favorable influence” – or “tendencies toward oneself.” We would be accurate to say that, in today’s modern jargon, we could translate this phrase as, “Look our for number one.”

When Peter expressed this thought to Jesus, Jesus, because He immediately recognized the source of that thought, turned to Peter and said, “Get thee behind Me, Satan!” Jesus knew that his purpose for going to Jerusalem was not to avoid suffering, but to experience suffering, and death. It was because Jesus knew that this was His Father’s will for Him that he was aware that Satan was using Peter to tempt Him to turn away from His Father’s will by suggesting to Him that He pity Himself and consider having a different purpose, a new reason for living, which, of course, was in direct conflict with the will of His Father.

We now come to the application of this incident to our own life.

In the same way that Peter suggested to Jesus that He turn from God’s purpose for His life, one’s soul-life makes this same suggestion to him – to turn from God’s purpose for him and to live for “self.” Jesus’ response to Peter’s suggestion that He think of self first, was to state to Peter that Satan was an offense – a stumbling block – or – hindrance – to Him (verse 23). Jesus’ response to Satan’s causing Him to stumble in the path that God had ordained for Him to follow was an emphatic, “No!” And, that should be our response to Satan, whenever he suggests that we live to please our “self-life.”

Then Jesus said, “Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (King James Translation). The English word, “savourest,” is translated from a Greek word that means, “to think about,” or, “to be mindful of.”

While Satan is not mindful of the things of God, he is very mindful of the things that pertain to mankind. In other words, Satan deliberates, considers and dwells, on carnal things, with an active interest in them that supersedes just having an opinion about them.

Colossians 3:2 states, “Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth.” The word “affection” is translated from the same Greek word that “savourest,” in Matthew 16:23, is translated from. This text in Colossians is saying, “to savor,” or “to be mindful of;” the things above – to care about heavenly things rather than earthly things. The usage of this Greek word that is translated as “savor” suggests that, when one considers, meditates, or sets his mind,
on something, it will form an attitude of mind upon which he will base his actions, and life, upon.

In response to Satan’s suggestion, by way of Peter, that Jesus should “pity Himself,” Jesus stated that God’s call to man is to “deny himself.”

Today, Satan continues to contradict this God-ordained command to man that he, “deny himself” by suggesting to man that he “be mindful of self,” and, Satan makes this suggestion to us by way of many ways, by way of many man-made philosophies, or theories, such as the theory of “Dianetics,” which was founded by a man named L. Ron Hubbard and which was originally published in 1950 under the title, “Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health.” In 1952, L Ron Hubbard changed the name of his movement from “Dianetics” to “The Church of Scientology.”

Scientology teaches that, “Man’s mind is capable of errorless understanding and judgment – and that perfect knowledge automatically produces perfect behavior. Therefore, human repentance and divine grace are unnecessary.” It also states that, “It is despicable and utterly contemptuous to tell a man he must repent, that he is evil,” and that “Religious practice of all faiths is the universal way to wisdom, understanding and salvation.” In view of this statement, it isn’t surprising that it also states, “Hell is a total myth, an invention just to make people very unhappy and is a vicious lie.”

The book, “Dianetics,” has soled literally millions of copies and even through many who have purchased, and read, this book, would never associate themselves with the Church of Scientology – (because it is a cult) – they have, nonetheless, been deceived and have accepted this teaching because of it “up-town” packaging and promotion.

John Hopkins, who is a professor of philosophy, and teacher of the Bible, at Westminster College, states, “Scientology offers society nothing except an expensive and highly dubious method of psychotherapy, a goal of what is self-improvement, self-mastery and personal happiness. The door of salvation is shut to those who cannot afford to pay the price of processing.”

The literal dictionary definition of “Dianetics” is: “a psychotherapy technique based on the total recall of all sensory impulses or sensations one has experienced, along with total recall of emotional experiences, including prenatal.”

The English word, “Dianetics,” comes from a Greek word that means, “to process through the mind.”

In other words, the teaching of Dianetics is based totally on the sensations, and experiences, that are housed in the “soul” because it purports that life’s answers lie completely within one’s self, perhaps even in an experience that one has had prior to his birth.

The point is that, just as Satan spoke through the “soul” of Peter to deter Jesus from fulfilling God will, he speaks to us, today, through people around us in order that he might deter us from fulfilling God’s purpose for us. God’s ultimate purpose for us is that we become “Christ-centered,” rather than “self-centered,” or “mindful of ourselves,” which is what Satan would have us become.
1 Timothy 4:1 states “Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from (abandon) the faith, giving heed to seducing (deceiving) spirits, and doctrines of devil (things taught by demons).

What kind of image does your mind display when you read things like, “seducing spirits” and “doctrines of devils?”

There are those, who, when they read these statements about “seducing spirits,” think of those who are deeply involved in the occult, or, when they read a statement about “doctrines of devils” they think about the study of witchcraft. In other words, they make the assumption that this verse, 1 Timothy 4:1, is referring to those who have, openly, given themselves over to Satan and his teachings. However, because this verse is addressed to believers, in the day in which we live, who will forsake their faith in Jesus Christ because they listen to the voices of, and give heed to, teachers who have demon-inspired ideas, it is referring to the deception that will take place among those within the church.

If an emergency vehicle approaches one on the highway with its lights flashing, or its siren blowing, he gives “heed” to is, or submits to it, by getting out of the vehicle’s way. This is a good illustration of how when one “gives heed to” something it means that he gives his attention, and thought, to it that, then, results in action, either positive or negative, in his life.

Despite the fact that our society is saturated with the “I’m O.K., you’re O.K.” philosophy, in reality, we are not O.K. Scripture teaches that we are not O.K. Even after we are born again, we still need help. We need a Source, and Supply, beyond ourselves. We need God!

We are to be mindful of, or give heed to – and think about – things that are above, not ourselves. Just think about were mankind would be if Jesus had given heed to Peter’s (Satan’s) advice to pity – look out for – Himself. However, tragically, unlike Jesus, because man has given heed to Satan’s advice to look out for himself, we are experiencing what is happening on the earth today.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 states, “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Having nothing to do with them.”

This passage, that warned about events that were sill in the future at the time of its writing, stated that there would be dangerous times in the last days and while these “terrible times” may refer to things that will result in physical, or bodily, injury, the sins listed here deal mainly with man’s attitude, behavior and spiritual state, and it is these nineteen sins, that are listed in these verses, that are the reason the times are terrible, “perilous times.”

Paul’s letter to Timothy begins a list of the sins that will be the cause for perilous times with the fact that “people will be lovers of themselves” because the sin of “being a lover of one’s self.” This cause is given as primary cause for these perilous times. All the other sins mentioned in these verses result from that one sin.
Men will be covetous because they are self-centered – they will be boasters because they love themselves – etc. In other words, all of man’s other sins, or character traits, during these last days will spring from the root of “self-love!”

The Apostle continues with this same theme in verse 13 when he writes, “But evil men and seducers (impostors) shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

2 Timothy 4:30 states, “For the time will come men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

The persons that Paul’s letter to Timothy describes in the above passage are those who have not denied themselves. Rather than having destroyed the impure aspects of their souls, are going after wrong desires because they are following, and being totally controlled by, the dictates of their souls. They are “ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.”

We live in a time when education, and technology, is rampant and much of what is being taught under the guise of “self-help” aids deal with self-image, the development of self, self gratification and self-awareness, all of which serves to turn people inward and not God-ward. However, self-help teaching will never enable anyone to come to know the truth.

1 Timothy 2:4 states that God “wants all men to be saved, and to come unto a knowledge of the truth.” God wants us to know the truth because it is the truth that sets us free – free from the bondage of self – which will prevent us from being like those who are described in 2 Timothy, chapter 3 and 4.

3 John 1:2 states, “Beloved I wish about all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.” The word that is translated as “prosper” in this verse, is translated from a Greek word that literally means, “to be helped along the way,” as in a prosperous journey. Therefore, John is saying, “I want you to continuously be helped along the way, and be in health, even as your soul is helped along the way.” This passage teaches that God desires us to prosper, and to walk in health, however, true “prosperity,” and “health,” can only be realized if one’s “soul” (psyche) prospers.

One’s soul can only prosper to the degree that its self-destructive qualities and denied, and destroyed, because, if one is mindful of self, he will never fulfill the call of God on his life.

Jesus, in essence, tells us, “If you are going to follow Me, instead of being gracious to yourself, and thinking of yourself, you must deny yourself.”

Matthew 26:34-35 states, “Jesus said unto him, ‘Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crows, thou shalt deny Me thrice.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee.’”

Interestingly, the word “deny,” in the above verse that speaks of Jesus’ foretelling Peter’s denial of Him, is translated from a different Greek word than the one that is used in the Scripture that tells Peter’s actual denial of the Lord. The Greek word, from which the word “deny” is
translated in Matthew 26:34-35, indicates a very strong kind of denial because it means
“absolute, total and utter, denial.”

On the other hand, the Greek word from which the word “deny” is translated from the
Scriptural account of Peter’s actual denial of Jesus, Matthew 26:70-72) indicates a mild kind of
denial because it means, “to disavow” or “to contradict.”

Let’s contrast the usage of this word “deny” ion the aforementioned Scriptures that state,
“‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown
Me three times.’ But Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You.’”
(Matthew 26:34-35) The story continues in verses 69-72, “Now Peter was sitting out in the
courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee,’ she said. But he
denied it before them all ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about,’ he said. Then he went out to
the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, ‘This fellows was with
Jesus of Nazareth.’ He denied it again, with an oath: ‘I don’t know the man!’”

To further understand the difference in meaning of the two Greek words that are both
defined as “deny” in the above Scriptures, let me say, as a way of analogy, If someone said to
you, “I saw you at the Mall last week,” and your response was something like, “No, it wasn’t me
because I didn’t go to the Mall last week.” Because your response would be considered to be a
simply contradiction, or “denial,” would be expressed by the same Greek word that us used in
the Scriptures that related to Peter’s actual denial of Jesus, as found in Matthew 26:70-72.

However, if when I told you that I saw you at the Mall last week, our response was, “No!
It couldn’t possibly have been me because not only was I not at the Mall last week. I wasn’t even
in town last week. Furthermore, it could have been me because I never go to that Mall. I have no
interest whatsoever in anything about that Mall.” Because your response would be considered to be
an emphatically strong denial, it would be expressed by the Greek word that Scripture uses
when it relates Jesus prophesying that Peter would deny Him – Matthew 26:34-35.

Reading on in Matthew 26, verses 73 and 74 state, “After awhile, those standing there
went up to Peter and said, ‘Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.’ The he
began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, ‘I don’t know the man.’ Immediately
a rooster crowed.”

Since these two verses tell us about the third time that Peter was accused of bing with
Jesus, when He was arrested, they also tell us about the third time Peter denied the accusation,
and, it was only after this third accusation that, because he became angry and excited, he denied
the accusation with cursing and swearing, and with a vigor that was meant to communicate to his
accusers that he had no connection, or association, whatsoever, with Jesus Christ.

It was only after this third vicious denial, that Jesus’ prophecy about the extent to which
Peter would deny Him became a reality.

Because the Scriptural verses that record Jesus declaration to us that we must “deny”
ourselves, if we desire to be His disciples, use the same Greek word for “deny” that is used in the
Scriptural verses that record Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial of Him. This means that Jesus is
telling us that our denial of ourselves (the wishes and desires of our souls that are out of line with
the Word of God) must be emphatic and complete. Our denial must not just offer “passive
resistance” when the thought comes to “pity himself” – put number one first – or when, in the interest of preventing God’s plan in one’s life, Satan makes a subtle suggestion that one pamper himself – think of himself first, etc. A suggestions of this nature may come something like:

- “Oh, you don’t want to work with the children or young people of the church, because not only are you not equipped to do so, but it would involve too much of your time and effort,” or

- “You don’t want to be a worker at the church because you’ll have to get to church earlier,” or,

- maybe something like, “You don’t want to get too involved in the activities of the church because you need the time for your self,” or

- “You don’t want people to think you’ve gone off the deep end with religion, do you? – etc.

Regardless of how it is clothed, the message is the same “HAVE MERCY ON YOURSELF, DON’T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, PITY YOURSELF. Forget the things of God. Shun the will of God. Look out for number one!

To “deny oneself” is for one to refuse the claims he has on himself, it is to voluntarily renounce all that might hinder his discipleship, service, or ministry.

We live in a society that teaches that we must not deny ourselves anything, we must not sacrifice ourselves unless such sacrifice will benefit us. This admonition of society comes from the same mind-set from which came Peter’s admonition to Jesus, that He not sacrifice Himself, however, society’s admonition to us is more shrouded, and less conspicuous, than was Peter’s admonition to Jesus.

When any thought comes to one with the suggestion that he think of “self” first he must recognize it for what it is. This means that he must recognize that though as having its source in Satan’s desire that he be led away from the will of God. Satan’s game plan for accomplishing that end is that he uses one’s thought life to keep his eyes on himself – on impure desires – or improper aspects – of his soul. As a result of this kind of self-centered thought-life, one’s soul desires remain in a prominent, dominant place, in supremacy over one’s spirit, that makes it impossible for him to taste of God “abundant life.”

When Jesus recognized what Satan was trying to do, He responded, “Get thee behind Me, Satan.” In other words, He said, “Get of My face,” and this should be our response to Satan because Scripture tells us, “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you!”

By denying the Devil, Jesus went a step further than just denying Himself because, in the process of denying Satan, He denied, rejected, every, and any, aspect of self-pity, and every, and any, thing that did not proceed from God. By so doing this, Jesus brought into focus the proper perspective a believer must have on the meaning of discipleship, of being a follower of Jesus Christ.
We must be aware that, when Colossians 3:2 exhorts us to “set our affections,” to be mindful, think of, consider, things above and not those things on the earth,” one cannot have the needs of self, his soul desires, in a place of supremacy and, at the same time, be mindful of, really concentrate, on the things above, the things of God.

It is because we cannot keep self on the throne of our lives, and at the same time fulfill God’s call on our lives, that he admonishes us to “deny,” “dethrone,” ourselves (self), with the accompanying promise that, if we do, we will experience the abundant life of Jesus Christ flowing out of our souls, which is the quality of life, and living, for which He created us.
Lesson Seven

Man's “Soul” Praising God

As we stated in the last lesson, God desires to lead, and control, every Christian by the power of the Holy Spirit, that is resident in every Christian’s “reborn human spirit.” However, before God is able to do this, one needs to submit his “soul” in servitude to his “spirit.” He needs to submit his thought-life to concentration on the things that pertain to God rather than the things that pertain to “self.”

This being so, this lesson will address itself to the question of what one must do to bring his soul under submission to his spirit, and, as always, we go to our “how to” manual – God’s Word – to find the answer to this question. Since God has outlined, all through Scripture, the remedy of bringing one’s “soul” under submission to his “spirit,” – how one can be God-minded – let’s look at some Scriptural passages that so instruct us.

Psalm 146:1-2 states, “Praise ye the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my soul, While I live will I praise the Lord, I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being” – and – Psalm 147:1 continues, “Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant and praise is comely [pleasing].”

These Psalms tell us that one way to bring one’s soul into submission, and to allow his spirit to soar, is to praise God.

Psalm 149 which states, “Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy” – and – “may the praise of God be in their mouths” – and Psalms 159:6, which states “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord,” – also instruct us to praise God. It is very difficult to be earthly-minded, to dwell on one’s self, while praising God. Praise forces the soul to concentrate on God rather than its own desires – the desires of “self.”

Because the soul desires to be self-sufficient, exalted, and praised when it is required to offer praise to God, it is reminded that it is not self-sufficient, or supreme.

Psalms 100:1-2 states “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing,” (verse 4), “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name.”

Since we, in this day and age, do not worship God in a temple structure that has “gates” and “courts,” as existed in Old Testament times, when Psalm 100 tells us “to enter into the gates, and courts, of God,” it is referring to approaching God – to drawing near to Him and to seek His face. When one seeks to come into the manifested presence of God, he is instructed to do so with singing, thanksgiving, and praise.

Since God dwells within the “spirit” of every born-again believer, and since it is through singing, thanksgiving, and praise that born-again believers acknowledge God’s presence and invite Him to move in their midst, believers are told to come together as a body to present themselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:2) and to offer “a sacrifice of praise,” exalting the Lord God and giving glory due His name (Hebrews 13:15).
James 4:8 tells us that if one draws near to God, God promises us that He will draw near to him. It is one’s willful obedience to the Word, and giving of one’s self, and deserved recognition, to God, that prompts response from the Lord of glory.

Sometimes God’s presence to us come through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or by way of a confirmation of something to us individually, that evokes a response from either those who are saved or unsaved, and, in the process of God’s response to us, no matter what way He choose to respond, our thoughts, attention and emotions are being shifted from self to God.

In order for one to truly “draw near to God,” one must be willing to “surrender all,” every aspect of his being, to God, a truth that is beautifully expressed in the hymn:

**IS YOUR ALL ON THE ALTAR?**

“You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase
And have earnestly, fervently prayed;
But you cannot have rest or be perfectly bless
Until all on the altar is laid

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart, does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.

Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow
Of the blessings for which we have prayed,
Till our body and soul He doth fully control
And our all on the altar is laid.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart, does the Spirit control?
You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.”

Psalm 103:1 states “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name.” In this Psalm, David, by an exercise of his will, speaks to his soul and instructs it, and “all that was within” him, to bless the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Our nature is a many stringed instrument, and every string is to contribute its share to its symphony of sound.” In the same way, when praising God, the soul – (mind, will and emotions) – and the spirit, all the intangible parts of man, contributes its share to the symphony of praise, however, it is the “soul” that is required to be the lead singer – the lead instrument.

Blessing, and praising, our Lord makes the soul bow one’s knee to the God of heaven!

Some struggle with raising their hands before God because, to do so, requires that one truly humble himself before God and there are those whose souls recoil at the thought of being that humble, that submissive before God. If such a one endeavors to stretch for his hands toward heaven, his palms become sweaty, he begins to perspire, his heart rate increases and rather than becoming God-conscious, he becomes very self-conscience, feeling that everyone in the room is
looking at him because it is one’s self – his soul – that, because it is that which contacts the outside world, is very aware of what is going on around it.

For one’s soul – self – not to be so aware of its surroundings, the soul must surrender its place of dominance and submit its awareness from earth to heaven and, upon contemplating the God of heaven, one must then lift his hands in praise. The person who rebels at doing so may excuse himself by saying, “I don’t raise my hands, but, rather I lift up my heart to God,” and while this may sound reasonable enough, nonetheless, Lamentations 3:31 commands, “Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens.”

Because God’s Word tells us that, “We lift up our hearts by raising our hands,” we should proclaim with David, “Bless the Lord…and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name,”

Because verse after verse – such as, “They stretched forth their hands unto heaven” – in the Scriptures concern itself with the lifting of one’s hands in worship to God, the raising of one’s hands, while worshipping God, is not just a matter of tradition, custom, or denominational preference, but rather, it is a command, a dictate, from God to do so.

Therefore, the raising of hands in worship to God isn’t anything new because man has been submitting to God, worshipping Him, by raising his hands, since the beginning of time.

Psalm 63:3-4 sates “My lips shall praise Thee…I will life up my hands in Thy Name,” and Psalm 134 admonishes us to, “Let up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord,” and, in the New Testament, Paul exhorts, “I will therefore than men pray every where, lifting up holy hands” (1 Timothy 2:8).

It is in the book of Lamentations, that has often been called a funeral march for Jerusalem, that the prophet Jeremiah expresses his sorrow for Jerusalem because of her suffering, affliction and servitude as a result of her having gone into captivity because she had renounced God. In other words, Jerusalem was reaping what she had sown.

In their distress, God (in Lamentations 2:19) instructs the Israelites to, “Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up thy hands to Him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

If the lifting up of one’s hands holds no significance in God’s eyes, then why, in this dire, and desperate, time, would God ask His people to do it? God asks them, “Do you want your young children spared…do you want them to live?” The answer is obvious. God continues to tell them, “Then, as you cry out to God, lift up your hands toward Him.”

As a response to God’s command to them, Jeremiah, in Lamentations 3:41, states, “Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens.” If you will remember, in previous lessons, we learned that the “heart,” as Scripture so uses this world, encompasses all the intangible parts of man, so that, when Jeremiah, in this Scripture verse, speaks of the Israelites “lifting up their hearts to God,” he is talking about their submitting their whole being to God.

One acknowledges Christ’s lordship – His sovereignty – by “lifting up his hands,” humbling submitting his body, soul and spirit to Him as he asks for a manifestation of God’s
power and presence. Because one’s submitting in this way has always blessed God, and always will bless Him, it causes a response from the One Who loves us and gave Himself for us.

It is also interesting to note that, in the Old Testament, when the sacrificial lamb was offered to God as a sacrifice, it was lifted over the head.

In Psalms 103:2, David states, “Bless the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all His benefits,” and then continues to instruct his “soul” – his mind that houses his memory – to recall all that God had done.

Like David, one should think about the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God, and reflect on all that God has done for him.

Charles Spurgeon echoes this same thought when he states, “Thread the jewels of His grace upon the thread of memory, and hand them about the neck of praise.” Because there is not one of us who is, really, self-sufficient, we should always take time to reflect on what the Lord has done, and for, our lives, so that we are continually reminded of the fact that God is our Source for everything and because of this, without Him we could, can, do nothing.

In Psalm 103, after David tells his “soul” to humble itself and submit to the Lord, he, then, in verses 3 and 4, states all the ways God blesses us for so submitting ourselves to Him, “Who forgives all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from destruction; Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.”

David acknowledges the fact that God has told us in His Word that there is sin and iniquity lodged in one’s SOUL, however, he states that God will forgive the “soul’s” iniquity and heal its diseases. The sequence is vital.

When Romans 6:23 states that “the wages of sin is death,” it is telling us that sin produces the ways that lead to death. However, if one submits his life to God, God will deal with the root cause, and error, of the soul and heal its diseases that are the consequences of its sin.

This text is a strong reminder to the soul that it has a cancer within which is called “sin,” its life is heaving for destruction, because, the Holy Spirit (through David, the writer) says, it is God, “Who redeems your life from destruction” (verse 4).

The word rendered “destruction,” literally means “pit” in the original Hebrew language here – and has as its root word a word that means “to sink,” or “to bow down.”

There are many things that will adversely affect the soul, or, as Psalm 103:4 states, “bring the soul destruction.” One of these many things is the world’s philosophy, and teachings, as to what it takes to make a man healthy and happy.

The world’s teachings include such topics as:
- “Evolution,” that teaches that man evolved from monkeys –
- “Self-autonomy, that teaches us that man should be his own authority on questions concerning morals and values –
- “Situational ethics” that teaches us that there are no absolute – which means that what is right or wrong is a relative thing, relative to each particular situation –
“Self-realization,” or “Self-awareness” that teaches us that man is the center of the
universe and that one’s success, and survival, lies within himself.

Society tells us that it is wrong for one to take a strong stand on moral issues because he
should, instead, he should “seek out values that are relative!” In other words, society tells us that
any “value” that hinders the satisfaction of one’s need, or the fulfillment of one’s desires, is of no
value. Therefore, to believe in such a value is for one to embrace a negative belief. In essence,
society is endeavoring to teach man that, as a human being, he has the right to his own self-
determination. This societal system of thought, of course, makes man his own “god,” agent, and
savior.

If a man buys this system of thought he, in the process of doing so, “sells out” his soul for
the pit of destruction.

Because God made man with a free will, one can believe anything he wants to believe,
however, one day, he, each and everyone of us, is going to be held accountable for what he
believes.

The theme that runs through the philosophy of the world is control, sho is going to
control you – social restraints – or – God?

Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons
and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and
detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening
wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery
with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her
excessive luxuries.”

This passage describes the destruction of the wicked Babylonian system, that, we are told,
God hates. To better understand this passage, it is important to realize that in verse 3, when it
states that the merchants have grown rich “through the abundance of her delicacies” (King
James Translation), that the word translated “abundance” (“excessive” in the New International
Version) is translated from the Greek word, “dunamis,” meaning, “mighty miracle-working
power,” and the English word “delicacies” (“luxuries” in the NIV) is translated from the Greed
word, meaning, “strong, voluptuous, or luxury.” Therefore, this verse is depicting great power in
voluptuous luxury, power to enslave and to make rich.

Even though this prophecy is to be fulfilled sometime in the future, nevertheless, it is
what the nations of the world, at this time, have gone after. Verse 11, referring to this same great
power, states, “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys
her cargoes any more.” We are told that, when God destroys this wicked Babylonian system, the
merchants of the world will weep, and mourn, because no one will buy its goods anymore.

Verses 12 and 13 lists these goods – goods that are sold for profit – and they include such
things as gold, silver, wood, brass, iron, marble, wine, oil, livestock, slaves, and the last “goods”
mentions is the “souls of men.”
This means that part of this list of merchandise that is going to be sold for profit, or traded and exchanged for money, is going to include the souls of men.

In other words, these merchants are willing to sell, and exchange, the souls of others in order to make a dollar and live in luxury, and, according to verse 4, there will be “people of God” in with these merchants.

Because the possession of an abundance of things fosters greed, commerce, therefore, tends to foster greed and the false notion that material grain is what is important.

The Bible tells us that covetousness is as idolatry. 2 Peter 2:3 states, “All through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” Peter speaks of false teachers and others who through covetousness (or greed) will use false words in order to “make merchandise of believers.” 2 Peter 2:12 tells us that thee false teachers deceived “unstable,” or weak, souls.

Jesus taught that real security in life does not depend upon the accumulation of material things, and, yet, there are teachers today who contradict Jesus’ teaching by preaching what had been called a “prosperity gospel” – a gospel that, because it is based on man’s need, rather than on God’s purposes, tells people that their security lies in the luxuries of the world.

Colossians 2:8 states, “Beware lest any man soil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” This passage teaches one to be on guard against those who will teach him “vain philosophies,” useless knowledge, wisdom and explanations that will bring destruction to his soul. This verse says, “they will ‘spoil’ you.”

The word “spoil” is translated from a Greek word that depicts a conquering army carrying off the spoils – the booty, or merchandise, of its conquest.

The warning here in Colossians 2:8 is that vain philosophies, such as HUMANISM, SELF-AUTONOMY, SELF-REALIZATION, TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION – OR – SITUATIONAL ETHICS – will lead one’s soul to the pit of destruction and made merchandise of him, from which some men will profit.

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One Who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

When, in Psalm 103:4, David states “God will redeem the life of my soul from destruction.” He is not just talking about eternal destruction but rather; he is also speaking of those things in his earthly life that have the capacity to destroy his soul.

In order for God to redeem one’s soul, one must deny himself, submit his soul to God and give Him control.

Despite the fact that God sees each one of us as being the same, because, in His eyes, there is no distinction between born-again believers the moment one comes to Him, we often classify others by attaching labels to them.
In the same way that a label on a can of soup determines how we will approach, and handle, the can – the labels we put on people tend to determine how we will approach them, how we will respond to them, or, whether, or not, we will associate with them. All of this, of course, hinders the work of God because one tends to mingle, and associate, only with those of his own kind – his “labels” – because one feels most comfortable with those whom he can personally identify with. This “birds of a feather” syndrome contradicts Jesus’ dictate that we love all people equally, as He loves them, and that we be salt and light to the world around us.

Putting a label on someone is comparable to stereotyping him. Originally, this term “stereotype” was used in the printing trade when a plate printed the same drawing over and over again. Today the word “stereotype” is also used when one has a fixed image, idea or picture, of a group or a person, because, when one stereotypes a group, he takes the image, or perception, he has of that group and assigns the same image, or perception, to any individual who he thinks belongs to that group.

For instance, one may say that all lawyers are crooked, all Jews are thrifty, or all Irishmen have quick tempers. These are stereotypes that allow one to set up neat, simplified, categories in which he can classify, and evaluate, all people.

The Apostle Paul tells us that he endeavored to be, “all things to all men,” that he preached alike to the rich, the poor, the Jews, and the Greeks.

If God can get each one of us to strip off the labels we place on people, then He can begin to have more control, and “say so,” in our lives because, by His stripping away our labels, and identifiers, of others, we are more open to them – and to Him.

One feels more secure when he can apply a label to himself, and others. This gives him a certain measure of control, dominion, and manipulation; there are many Christians who will not witness to those they have labeled as not being a part of their own particular “category” because they feel intimidated by those who are not “as they are.”

Pleasing labels on ourselves, and others, as harmless as it may seem, is a destructive attitude, and God desires to redeem us from this frame of mind in order that He might have more influence in our life.

In Psalm 103, David, in essence, says to his soul, “Soul, you are sinking into a pit; you are headed for destruction. But you can bless God, for it is He who will redeem you from that gradual decline.” He continues in verse 4, “Soul, God will not only redeem you, but he will crown you and encircle your being with love, kindness and mercy.” Verse 5 goes on, “I know you have certain desires and cravings; but you should bless the Lord because God will satisfy your mouth.”

In this passage, God promises us that, rather than sour our taste for things that are not fulfilling, or that lack substance, He will satisfy, and gratify, us with things that are so good that we will gain strength.

This passage of Scripture goes on to say that our youth, that stage of vigorous growth, vitality, and learning, will be restored to us so that we can once again soar to great heights, no longer sliding into a pit, no long in bondage to sin and disease.
In summary, then, David says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul because God desires to set you free!” David was teaching, and instructing, his soul – his mind, will and emotions – to be in submission to God, to not be the dominant part of him, because of all the benefits, that he than proceeds to list, that come to one when his soul is so submitted to God.

David also stated that it is beneficial for the soul to be in submission to the spirit because the soul not only has sin and disease that is moving it toward destruction, but it also lacks mercy and has cravings, and appetites, that, if they are satisfied, will bring ruin to the spirit and to itself because, in the process of taking dominance over the spirit, it will lose its strength – its youth!

And, then, in verse 22, David said, “Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.” David told his “soul” to “bless all the Lord’s work,” that is, all these benefits that God desires to work in the soul – “in all places where He has dominion!”

In Psalm 23:3, David states, “God restores my soul!” The word “restore” is translated from a Hebrew word that means, “to turn back,” to return to the starting point. When we being this meaning to the above verse, what David is stating is that God will restore, return, man’s soul to be what He intended it to be in the beginning, when He first created man. If man will be willing to submit his soul to God by given Him dominion and rule – put God in ascendancy – within his spirit, making his body and soul a servant to his spirit, God will restore his soul.

Because our God is a God of restoration and redemption, if we do that which has just been stated, we have the guarantee that God will work out all His benefits within us.
Lesson Eight

Man and Temptation

In order for one to understand the soul’s role in temptation – an understanding that will help one to better defend himself against temptation – one must have a knowledge of just what temptation is. It may surprise you to know that the Devil does not, not can he, force anyone to sin. True, some flippantly exclaim, “The Devil made me do it,” but, there is not one Scriptural validation for giving Satan the full blame, or responsibility, for one’s falling prey to Satan’s temptation.

We must also state, and make it very clear, that, God tempts no man with evil. One can never blame God, or, in anyway, make Him responsible, for their being tempted to sin. The Apostle James, in his writings, establishes the fact of this in chapter 1, and verses 13 to 15. They read, “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me,’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away (drawn away), and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

This Scripture tells us that everyone, because he has lust, cravings and desires within him, is tempted and that, when he is emptied, he is “drawn away” from his having intimate fellowship with God, from God’s righteousness and from doing God’s will.

Since sin separates one from God, Satan seeks to draw one away from God by enticing him to sin. Temptation’s motive, then, is to turn (draw, or pull) one away from the things of God.

When one is under strong temptation, a strong struggle ensues within him and he needs to know how to fight this battle in order to win it as a conqueror in Christ Jesus.

This passage in James actually give us the method, or process, of temptation when it tells us that one is drawn away by his own lusts – cravings, desires and appetites – that is, one is drawn away “by aspects of his soul” because the desires and appetites of the body make themselves known to, and are given meaning in, the mind, that is a part of one’s “soul.”

Temptation is complete when, after one is “drawn away, he is enticed,” and it is in the activity of enticement where Satan comes in. After there is a desire to be “drawn away from” God’s will – the “pull” of which comes from within one’s soul – then Satan sees to it that there is something else to “lure,” or entice, him to fulfill his desires.

To illustrate the difference between the “pull” of desire, and the “lure” of enticement, imagine a boat that is being pulled to shore by a rope, when suddenly it is swept away in the wrong direction by a strong current pulling it. While the boat may offer some resistance to the “pull” of the rope – it offers none to the current.

The “pull” within one’s soul toward a temptation to sin can be likened to the rope, while the “enticement” that Satan’s sends to assist this inward desire may be likened to the current. Like the boat in this example, one may be able to withstand, and resist, the initial, inward pull – the desire within him that seeks to draw him into temptation, but, when Satan comes along with his enticement, it adds enough strength to that inward “pull” that one finds it very difficult to
offer resistance to the pull toward sinning – in the same what that the boat is unable to offer resistance to the pull of the current.

In the same way that we put bait out in a trap to trap an animal, Satan puts his “bait” – his enticement – out to trap us. However, in the same way that it is the animal’s own cravings, and desires, that pushes him to snatch the bait, that then catches him in the trap, it is our own desires, and cravings, that causes us to fall prey to Satan’s bate, and bring us into the trap and snare of sin.

In like manner, in the passage we quoted in James 1:13-15 that tells us that it is the lusts, or cravings, of one’s soul that produces the power to pull him in the direction of sin and it is enticement, that gives him the incentive to obey that pull. Enticement, even though it has no power in and of itself, nonetheless, makes the initial pull stronger and the desire to sin more irresistible.

In summer, then, it takes both lust (inward desire) and enticement (outward lure) working together, to bring about the complete temptation that leads to sin.

It is important to keep in mind that Satan cannot lure, or tempt, us with anything that we don’t, initially, already have an attraction to. For instance, if one had a beautiful set of wood carving tools in front of him, if he cared nothing about woodwork, he would have no desire to pick up the tools – he’s walk by them as if they did not exist.

When James tells us that “when lust has conceived” – or, “sin is birth” – what he is really telling us is that the conception of sin takes place in the mind in the same way that conception, in the natural birth process, takes place in the womb.

Following the Biblical analogy in James 1:15 even further, it states that, in the same way that an egg and sperm must both be present for conception to occur, lust and enticement must both be present for the conception of sin to occur. In the natural birth process the egg does not generate energy it is just available. However, the sperm, on the other hand, is actively searching for an egg to fertilize and, upon finding one, a child is conceived.

Continuing with the Biblical analogy, in James’s statement, “when lust has conceived,” we see that Satan’s enticement is like the egg because it has no energy of itself. Our soulish desires are like the sperm, they do have energy that, like sperm, draws it toward the egg. Satan’s enticement. It is only upon their meeting, getting together, – sperm and the egg (our inward desires and Satan’s enticement) – that sin is conceived and birthed.

When James uses the phrase, “to conceive” he is actually speaking of becoming pregnant. In this Biblical analogy, what is James saying about a pregnancy – pregnant with what? What is it that “lust” has “conceived?” The picture that God gives is that “the mind is the womb of the soul,” a place where something is formed, or produced. What is it?

The primary functions of man’s mind are to think, imagine, reason and form ideas. We “conceive” ideas, and thoughts in our mind. The “conception” of ideas is often called “concepts.” Concept is defined as the act of forming ideas, or thoughts, the act of comprehending through the intellect.
When God says, “When lust has conceived,” He is saying, “When lust was formed images – ideas or thoughts.” And, it is only when lust has conceived its thoughts in the mind that sin is brought forth – produced.

**The Process of Temptation**

1. Lust within the soul, if it is allowed to grow, becomes powerful enough to give birth to a desire – to a strong “pull” toward sin.

2. The exertion of this “inward pull” pressures one to move in the direction of fulfilling, or satisfying, the desire to sin.

3. Enticement, though in itself has no power, comes from without and serves to make the thing desired more attractive and acceptable that, in turn, serves to make one give in to the inward pull toward sin.

4. As one, in the arena of his mind, thinks about the thing he lusts for, and as the “lure” from without increases the frequency of these thoughts, his lust finally expresses itself in action as his desire to sin causes him to actually sin.

1. Lust, or the desire to sin, resides within the soul (psyche)

2. Lust, or the desire to sin, is allowed to grow until it exerts pressure, or pull, on one, moving him in a direction toward fulfilling, or satisfying, his desire to sin

3. Enticement comes from without and gives one an incentive to give into, and go along with, the inward pull toward sin.

Despite the fact that enticement has no power in and of itself, it serves to strengthen the pull toward the act of sinning by making the sin more attractive and acceptable

4. The desires of the soul within, and the lure from without, meet together in the mind causing one to give expression to his desire to sin, which is the act of sinning.

Romans 12:2, in the Phillips translation, states, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within.” God is reminding us, in the verse, that we cannot afford to allow the world, and its philosophies, to shape our thinking, but, we must be on guard against the kinds of thoughts, and images, we allow to form, and develop, in our mind. We must follow Scripture’s dictate to think upon, “whatsoever things are true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). If we center our thought-life around the cravings, and desires, of self, rather than around the things of God, we will have a great potential to bring forth sin in our life.
The world has many avenues – such as television – by which it promotes, and “advertises,” its enticements that, ultimately, bring about sin. The word “advertise” is defined: “to praise the good qualities of something in order to induce, or entice, the public to buy, or invest in, something.” The aim or advertisement is to create a mental desire in the consumer to possess a certain item and, once the desire to sin is birthed within one’s mind, Satan sends exactly what is required to entice him to satisfy his desire. It is at this point that one experiences “temptation” and that he is tested as to whether or not he will give in to the temptation and choose to sin.

Temptation is going to come to everyone; however, we don’t have to give in to it. Temptation can be resisted. The simple fact that the same temptation may come against us, repeating itself again and again, proves the existence, and effectiveness, of resistance.

Temptation, in itself, is not sin. Sin is “consent to temptation,” therefore, no one can honestly say, “The Devil made me do it,” because no one is compelled to sin. If one is forced, or compelled, into some action, there is no sin involved because sin is voluntary. In other words, for sin to be sin, one must choose to give into temptation. Satan has power to entice, and persuade, one to sin; however, he cannot force, or compel, one to sin.

James 1:15 states that, after lust is conceived, sin is birthed – “and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” This phrase, translated as, “when it is finished,” literally means “matured enough to bear children.” When sin is matured enough to bear children, it brings forth death, therefore sin is the parent of death.

Scripture teaches us that death is the offspring of sin and that sin is conceived of by lust. Think about that the next time some “soulish” craving creeps into your consciousness. Think about the fact that the yearning thought is just two steps away from producing the see of death within you.

This truth is that the very reason one’s reborn spirit must be strong, and in a place of dominance over one’s soul. If one is to be led by the Holy Spirit, through his reborn spirit, he must not be led away by the desires of his soul.

Lust is the parent, or father, of a though, and, if that thought is given life to mature, it will produce sin. God tells us that the “birth,” and consequent maturity, of sin leads, ultimately, to death.

According to Hebrews 4:15, Jesus was in all points – in all respects – tempted just as we are tempted, yet He was without sin. Does this mean that Jesus was tempted in all the various areas of life as we are – that He was tempted in the same ways – in the same manner, or method – that we are tempted? The answer is, Yes, Jesus was tempted in all the various areas of life as we are because, even though He was without sin, Jesus was, nonetheless, a man.

The fact of Christi’s humanity, manhood, is validated in many Scripture passage such as James, chapter one, that tells us about Christi’s manner of temptation, Philippians 2:7-8, that tells us that Jesus was made in the likeness, and fashion, of a man, and, Isaiah, chapter 53, that refers to Jesus as “a man of sorrows.”
Hebrews 2:14 speaks of Jesus being “flesh and blood,” and verses 16 and 17 go on to say that He “was the seed of Abraham.” Because Jesus was fully human, fully man, He was in all things, like His brethren. Hebrews 2 closes by telling us that Jesus “suffered being tempted,” that is, He experienced, or felt, temptation, and it is because He was tempted that He can come to our aid and “succor,” (which is the giving of help, aid or relief, in time of difficulty, need, or distress), of those who are tempted.

Many people who read, in the fourth chapter of Luke, the account of Jesus’ temptations in the wilderness make the assumption that it was only after Jesus had spend forty days in the desert (and was hungry as a result of having fasted for that period of time) that Satan tempted Him with the three temptations that took place in quick succession. However, this assumption is not Scriptural because Luke 4:2 tells us that Jesus was tempted of the Devil for forty days, not for just a short period of time.

Because thee three examples of temptation, which are given in Luke 4, are probably the highlights, or the summary, of the major temptations that Satan brought against our Lord, let’s take a look at them:

In the first temptation, which took place in the wilderness (Luke 4:3-4), Satan, speaking to Jesus as though He didn’t have a choice, commanded Him to tell the stone to turn into bread. Jesus, Who elected not to “prove” to Satan that he was the Son of God, answered Satan by saying, “Because I can live by the Word of God, it is not necessary for Me to turn stone to bread.” Satan was tempting Jesus to provide for Himself, rather than His trusting in the sustaining provision of His Father, by essentially saying to Him, “You don’t have to humble Yourself and ask God to provide for You, do it Yourself.” (So, often Satan tempts us with the same line of thinking).

In this first temptation, because Satan attempted to commanded Jesus to use His power to satisfy His soul’s wants, the real question was, “Would Jesus be ruled by His fleshly appetites, and be controlled by His self-life, or, would He be committed to His Heavenly Father’s will?”

Realizing that Jesus had won the victory over self’s fleshly appetites, Satan decided to tempt Jesus with prideful ambition – with the soul’s desire for the things of this world.

Verses 5-8 tells us that this second temptation of Satan took place on an “exceeding high mountain” where, “in a moment of time,” Satan displayed all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus and told Him he could know the power, and glory, of owning these kingdoms if He would switch gods and worship him,

Satan’s offer to Jesus meant that, as a man, He could have had physical, financial, political and military control of all world systems. If Jesus had accepted Satan’s offer by agreeing to worship him, He would have to had to, in exchange, give up all His spiritual control over man’s hearts, and destinies, because the people of all thee kingdoms would still be subject to, and dominated by, Satan.

In other words, if Jesus had yielded to Satan’s temptation, He would have had all the outward glory, prestige, position, wealth and grandeur the world could offer, however, Satan would have had “spiritual” control over man’s hearts, and destinies.
Jesus’ answer to Satan was, “Get thee behind Me Satan: for it is written. Thou shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.”

Having failed in his first two temptations to Jesus, that He be a slave to His soul’s fleshly, and worldly, desires, Satan then engaged on his tired temptation to Jesus, which was to get Jesus to give in to the soul’s desire to be a spiritual extremist.

Verse 9-12 tells us that Satan’s third temptation took place in Jerusalem where he had Jesus stand on the highest point of the temple, saying to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.” In response to Satan’s trying to get Jesus to prove Himself, by asking Him to presume upon His Father’s power, by foolishly testing God’s faithfulness, Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Despite the fact that, just a short time before this took place, not only has the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, but, also God the Father, spoke through the heavenlies, saying, “This is My beloved Son,” nonetheless, Satan still tried to tempt Jesus to show forth more confirmation of what had already, dramatically, been confirmed.

While Satan might not tempt us to jump off a tall building, to display our great faith in God, he, nonetheless, because he knows that self can be served – gratified – under the guise of spiritual achievement, tempts one’s soul to seek gratification, and recognition, by some pseudo spiritual happening, to use God, and His power, to exalt self.

Now that we have the background of what Jesus’ temptation entailed, let’s look at how James defines temptation:

James 1:14, “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” The fact that Scripture tells us that Jesus, when He suffered, or experienced, temptation, was tempted in all points just as we are, helps us, as we identify the lusts, or desires, that Satan arose out of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. When we understand just what enticements Satan used on Jesus, we can glean understanding of, and insight into, the enticements he uses on us.

Those “points,” or areas, in which Jesus, and we all, are tempted, are listed in 1 John 2:16 – they are:

1. **The Lust of the Flesh**;
2. **The Lust of the Eyes** and
3. **The Pride of Life**

These temptations do not come from God, but rather, they are vulnerable areas within one’s soul where Satan can tempt him.

Luke 4 tells us that Jesus’ first temptation took place in the wilderness when “Jesus hungered.” Satan’s first enticement to Jesus was that he satisfy His yearning for food by turning the stones into food, because, since the flesh does not enjoy being separated from food, Jesus, in fact, had the desire to eat. It can be said, then, that Satan’s first temptation to Jesus was that He satisfy the lust of the flesh.”
Luke 4 tells us that Jesus’ second temptation took place on a high mountain where Jesus was exposed to a panoramic view of all the kingdoms of the world with all their power and glory. Satan’s second “enticement” to Jesus was that he take, and enjoy, for Himself all that he could see by bowing His knee to Satan. Satan’s second temptation to Jesus, the, was that he satisfy the “lust of the eyes,” all the splendor, pomp and grandeur that He was perceiving through His eyes.

And, finally, Satan’s third temptation took place on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem where he tried to entice Jesus to decide the course of His life by leaping off the temple so that He could prove that God would save Him. It can be said that Satan’s third temptation to Jesus was that He satisfy the “pride of life,” which is the soul’s desire to ascribe to one’s self more, or better, things than he has, or, perhaps what he does not possess at all. The “enticement” that Satan posed to Jesus was that He take control of the future, a control that Jesus, as a “man,” had no right to assume, because, this control belonged to God the Father. (The word “pride,” in the expression, “the pride of life,” is translated from a Greek word that means “to boast – a boaster.”)

James 4:13-16 states “Now listen, you say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.”

This passage in James describes the attitude of one who is full of the “pride of life,” who, because he is guilty of this attitude, does not seek God’s direction as to what His will is for his life, but rather, attempts to take the position that he, himself, may sovereignly decide what course his life will take. This person who is full of the pride of life lives his life as though he, rather than God, is in control of his life – his future.

When James 1:16 states that such people “rejoice in boasting,” the English word “boasting” is translated from the same Greek word that is rendered as “pride of life,” in 1 John 2:16.

In the same way that Satan tried to entice Jesus to claim, or exercise, a right that was not His, he endeavors to entice us to claim, or exercise, rights, abilities or possessions, that are not ours because, that than belong to us, they belong to God. This temptation to the soul’s pride of life is exactly what Satan appealed to in Eve when he said to her, “You can be as God.” This temptation, to “to one’s own god,” to impose one’s will on God, is one of the prominent visible sores that is festering in the souls of men today. One of the most noticeable evidence of the pride of life in our society is the reality of abortion, because, when one makes the decision to abort a babe he assumes the right to take human life, thereby, determining, and redirecting, the course of life itself.

Satan tried to get Jesus to take His life into His own hands, to ignore the will of His Father and, had Jesus given into this temptation, He would have been forcing His will on His Father, thereby, forcing His Father to conform to what He (the Son) had decided would be the course of His life. Had Jesus given into Satan’s temptation, He would have presumed upon God’s power in a self-willed circumstance that His Father had not ordained.
Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet, He never once sinned!

Despite the fact that Jesus faced all the enticements that we face, sin, lust, was never “conceived.” In other words, the egg of enticement was never allowed to unite with the sperm of the “soulish desires” in His mind.

O state it one more time – despite the fact that temptation, in itself, is not sin, because Satan can never compel anyone to sin, nonetheless, he can pressure one, by using his own desires, to sin.

We must recognize our desires for what they are, for the potential they have to be used by Satan to draw us away from God’s will for our lives – away from intimate fellowship with Him!
Lesson Nine

**Man, His Fight and His Weapons**

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 states, “For though we walk in the flesh [Although we live in the world] we do not war after the flesh [it is not with human strength that we fight our battles]; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [merely human], but mighty [divinely potent] through God to the pulling down of strongholds); Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” [The words in parenthesis are from the 26 translations of the Bible]

This Scriptural passage tells us that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare and that the way one wins this war is that we must cast down all our thoughts, imaginations, reasons, teachings and philosophies that have exalted themselves to a position equal to, or above, the knowledge of the Word of God. Romans 12:2 validates the truth of this reality when it states, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

When the Apostle Paul reflected on his life, he didn’t call it a continuous walk of good fortune and pleasure, but rather, he called it a “good fight.” One must realize that, in order to maintain control of his mind – its contents and what it produces – he must put up a good fight by pulling down, casting down, and bringing into captivity, his thought life. For a Christian to so bring his thought life into captivity is an aggressive endeavor that makes Christian warfare an offensive, rather than a defensive, proposition for the Christian who hopes to be “more than a conqueror.”

Many Christians have been deluded into believing that when the enemy of their souls, Satan, attacks them, the best that they can hope to do is “hang on” until Jesus comes to rescue them. However, this does not need be the case because, in fact, God has given every believer mighty weapons with which to do battle.

In view of this, then, rather than “holding their own,” Christians should be seizing territory for the glory of God, because, we, as Christians, are called to fight for the cause of Christ! We are called to be the Lord’s army, to advance the blood-stained banner of the Cross.

The second chapter of 2 Timothy it states that those truly engaged in warfare for the Lord, “will not be entangled in the affairs of this life” because being so entangled takes time and physical and mental energy that distracts one from fighting the fight of faith for Jesus.

Entanglements are a diversion of the enemy because he uses them to keep one focusing his attention, and resources, on circumstances. Of course, Satan knows that one who is so focused has little time, or energy, left to attack him.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 10, Paul does some reconnaissance, as he surveys the battlefield and reports that, along the way to obtaining final victory, the soldier of the Lord must aggressively move against enemy positions of strongholds, imaginations, high things and thoughts. Every child of God should determine that he will not be dragged from the field of battle by becoming entangled in the things of this world.

When soldiers of Paul’s day attacked, and laid siege, to a stronghold, a fortress, (which was a place where the enemy was entrenched) they took possession of it and everything, and
everyone, that was within its walls became their prisoner. In the same way, because, one of the strongholds of the Christian’s enemy is the imaginations, and thoughts, of his mind, we must pull these imaginations, and strongholds, down.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the word “imaginations” is translated from a Greek word that refers to the computations, reasonings and mental processes that are involved in one’s reaching a conclusion. The word was used in classical Greek as it applied to arithmetic, the science of computing with numbers.

When Isaiah 53:12 states, “He (Christ) was numbered with the transgressors,” the word “numbered” is translated from this same aforementioned Greek word, translated “imagination.” Luke 22:37, when Luke writes, quoting Jesus, as He read from the Old Testament scroll of Isaiah, translates this same verse as, “He was reckoned among the transgressors.”

The literal meaning of the Greek translated as “numbered” and “reckoned,” – and in 2 Corinthians 10:5, rendered as “imagination” – means; “to take the facts and data available” – “to compute” – “to use logic to reach a logical conclusion” – in very much the same way that a mathematician would do so to work out – or compute – the answer to a mathematical problem.

When Paul speaks about “imaginations,” he is not referring to just mental images that flash across one’s mind, but rather, he is talking about an individual’s thought processes where he weighs out factors and circumstances – or – where he “reasons” out why he has done a certain thing – or – why he holds a certain opinion about something. If one’s conclusions, upon reasoning something out, is in opposition to the truth stated in the Word of God, his “reasonings” – or – “imaginations,” are to be cast down and done away with. If one does not do away with them, these imaginations become the reason, the basis or justification, in one’s mind for taking a particular action, even if that action is, according to God’s Word, considered to be sin.

It is because imaginations exalt, or raise, themselves up in opposition to the knowledge of God that they are so dangerous.

In Isaiah 1:18, God says, “Come now, and let us reason together,” and, if we say “yes” to doing our reasoning with God, it will serve to be a safeguard against the imaginations of our soul exalting itself above Scriptural truth – the medium of measurement by which we should assess the validity of our reasonings.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 states, “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God.”

This passage clearly tells us that the enemy (Satan) works in the minds of those who are lost, those who possess “carnal” minds – a mind that, according to Romans 8:7, is opposed to God and the things of God. Isaiah 8:20, speaking of unbelievers, writes; “They speak not according to this Word, because there is no light in them.” Minds are darkened because the light of the gospel has not penetrated into them.

If people do not speak, and act, according to God’s Word, it is because there is no light in them. David wrote that when the Word of God enters into one, it brings light.
When one is born-again, the light of the Word has “shined unto him.” enabling him to offsets the imaginations, computations and reasonings of his mind that would, ultimately, affect his behavior. That is why Scripture teaches that God’s people are destroyed for lack of knowledge – a lack of knowledge of His way – a lack of knowledge of His Word – and – a lack of knowledge of God Himself (Hosea 4:6).

2 Corinthians 10:5 very specifically states that one is to take captivity of his thoughts and he is to base his behavior on the knowledge of God. If one does not take captive his thoughts, but permits them to climb the ladder of influence of his life, the knowledge of God will vanish from his life. Without the knowledge of God, one will become dominated by his natural soulish thinking that will, eventually, cause him to perish.

Isaiah 5:13-14 states, “Therefore My people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst. Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and open its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.”

One’s failure to take his thoughts into captivity, and to obtain, and grow in, the knowledge of God, can result in his being taken into captivity. The truth of this is validated by the fact that history is full of individuals who rejected the knowledge of God and became captives of their own imaginations.

For instance, because Hitler was so captive to his own thoughts, and could not imagine Germany being defeated, he refused the advice of his generals, that their armies must be withdrawn from Russian front. Even in the final days of the war, when the American, and Russian, armies were only blocks away from his bunker, Hitler still believed mythical armies would rust to his aid. He became a captive of his own thoughts, and his glory, and pomp, descended into the enlarged mouth of hell.

Many, today, are held captive by the thoughts, and the philosophies, of this world, and they must cast down these “thoughts and imaginations” from their exalted positions.

Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, said that He had come to preach deliverance to the captives. By being grounded in the Word of God, and by living the Word of God, one can be set free! John 8:32 tells us that, if we continue in His Word, we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free.

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us that we must “Bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” What does it mean to bring every thought into “captivity?”

To answer that question, let’s take a look at the meaning of the word “captive.” When someone is taken captive – brought into captivity – he becomes a prisoner. When one is a captive his movements are restricted, and there is someone who exercises authority, and control, over him and makes sure that he makes no attempt to escape – depriving him of his liberty.

Therefore, to bring one’s thoughts into captivity means to imprison, shackle and restrict, the thoughts and images in one’s mind that are not of God, that are not in line with the Word of God.
Before one can hold ungodly thoughts captive, making them prisoners so that they are not free to roam across his mind at will, he must pull down their entrenchments and cast them down from their exalted positions. These thoughts must be dislodged from a place of prominence, sophistication and credibility. Thoughts, or conclusions, that are not in accord with the knowledge of God must not only not be given credibility or stature, but they must also not be looked upon as being satisfying or pleasurable – *This is the real battle!*

If one has been taught that a certain things is not wrong and then, later, finds out that Scripture tells him otherwise, he has to resolve in his mind that God’s Word on the matter, rather than his own thoughts, or “reasonings on the matter, is what he has to adhere to as to what the truth is in the matter. After one accepts this fact – and the fact that what he had been taught, initially, was incorrect – then he must pull down previously formed ideas that were based on this untruth and put these ideas into captivity that will allow him to progress, and move on, in the fight of faith. The “renewing” process of the mind is nothing more than this, putting into captivity, and abandoning, all reasoning in one’s mind that produces an action, or a behavior, that is not in line with the Word of God.

Let’s examine the role “memory” plays in one’s mental imaginations and thoughts. An experience that one has had will come across his mind again and again and, often, the recollection of this experience will entice one to have, or want to have, that experience again. Because one’s memory can entice one to want to sin, it is necessary that one exercise control over his memory.

Throughout the Bible, God is called on “to remember” something. He is called upon to remember His people, or to remember His covenant with His people. In these Scriptural passages that use the word “remember,” this word is translated, from Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament, from a word that actually means, “to pay attention to something.”

Therefore, when Scripture speaks of God’s “remembering” something it means that He paid attention to something and brought forth some sort of action, or response.

In Genesis 8, we are told that God “remembered” Noah and, therefore, He caused the waters of the flood to subside. In Exodus, God is called upon to “remember” His people and God’s remembering resulted in their deliverance. King Hezekiah, in 2 Kings, asked God to “remember” His past faithfulness and, as result of God remembering, it brought forth Hezekiah’s healing.

In the same way, when God remembers something and it brings forth some sort of action, we, too, when we remember something, should be moved to action. When at the Last Supper, Jesus instructed us to partake of communion “in remembrance” of Him – (an instruction that Paul also gives us in his writings) – He meant that we were to do more than simply bring something to our minds – or – just to “remember” what He did. When Jesus tells us to partake of communion “in remembrance” of Him, He is telling us that our “remembering” – recalling – what He did for us should evoke a response from us that serves to make us reenact what He did for us.

One needs to grasp the distinction between *having* memory and *using* memory in the act of remembering. Memory is a retention of knowledge within the grasp, or confines, of the mind. Remembering is having what is known, or what is housed, in the memory *consciously displayed*
on the screen of the mind. To recollect, or reminisce, involves a distinct effort on one’s part to bring to his mind what is housed in his memory, and, as a result of doing so, he fixes his attention on what is recalled.

The thoughts in one’s memory, that he actively brings to the surface and reflects upon in the process of “remembering” will influence his behavior, because, remembrances, dwelt upon, will produce action!

In 2 Peter 1, the apostle provides a list of things that will “keep you from falling,” or will make you fruitful. In verse 12, Peter wrote that, although the believers knew these things, it was important that these things be called to their “remembrance.” Then he wrote that, by bringing these things to mind, by actively recalling them, one is stirred up.

2 Peter 3:1-2 states, “Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you, I have written both of them as reminders (ways of remembrance) to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words (remembrance) spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.”

Here, Peter says that, by being mindful of the words of the prophets and apostles, one’s mind is “stirred up” – stimulated to wholesome thinking! By way of remembrance, one can stir up a pure mind. In contrast to this, by remembering, and reflecting upon, impure things, or sinful experiences, one can stir up, produce, and impure, polluted or a mind that has not been renewed.

The word “stimulate” – (translated as “stir up” in the King James Version) – is translated from a Greek word that means, “to around,” – “to become active,” – or – “to be alert,” and it pictures someone awaking from sleep. Perhaps that is why Paul wrote that one should “awake to righteousness and sin not” (1 Corinthians 15:34).

The recalling to one’s mind the Word of the Lord, the Spirit-breathed Word of God, will cause one to shake himself and to alert his mind to think of things that will produce godly behavior, or responses.

When 1 Corinthians 15:2 states that one is to “keep in memory” the gospel that has been preached, the phrase “keep in memory” is translated from a Greek word that means, “to hold fast,” – “to keep,” – or – “to possess.” Since recalling, and thinking on, what is stored in one’s memory will cause him to take action, it is important that one have stored in his memory the things of God, His thoughts, that is why one must meditate on His Word – on the words of the apostles and the prophets. In order to never allow the resurfacing, from one’s memory, of thoughts and experiences that would prompt one into unfruitful, or, even, sinful, behavior, he must recall, and hold on to, God’s Word that has been preached.

Because the “reasonings” in our mind – whether they are from our memory or from our regular thought-life – possess the potential to produce an action on our part, and, if they are not in accordance with God’s Word, must be abandoned.

When one is born-again, he acquires a different standard – a different basis – upon which to think, act and respond. The mind of the born-again Christian must be “renewed” because he is not to be conformed to this world. That means that he is not to allow his mind to feed on, or
accept, just any thought that slides into his mind, as the world does, but rather, he is to be transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:2).

Since to “renew” something means to “renovate” it, one can only be transformed as his mind is renovated, as the basic existing structure of mind is changed. When one is born-again, parts of the old framework, and supports, of his mind have to be removed, and replaced, by new ones.

One keeps adding to the framework of his mind those things that have to be “taken captive,” even as the process of renovation is going on. Satan would have one to throw dark paint on the freshly painted wall – to nail a rough board to a finished doorframe – however, the renovation process must always be on-going because there is always rough places that need to be sanded, and smoothed, by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:8 states, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”

Despite the fact that most who read this verse do not received it as a command, nevertheless, Paul does issue a command to us when he instructs us to “think on these things,” and, as one does, it will bring about the renovation of his mind. As one think on these things – (the things listed in Philippians 4:8) two things take place – These two things are:

1. This type of thought life will block the entrance of, and the opportunity for, more rough framework to be added to the framework of one’s mind.

2. This type of thought life will point out, by comparison, those areas that still need to be renovated.

One often does not see something for what it is, until he sees its counterpart. In other words, some idea, or attitude, that seems to be illuminated, is shown t be dim when it is placed beside, compared to, a Christ-like attitude that is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

God states in Ezekiel 11:5, “I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.” And, in 1 Chronicles 28:9, we are told that, “the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts.”

Are you being obedient to the Word of God by thinking of those things that are pure, true, and of a good report? Are you being obedient to cast down the reasonings and computations of your mind? Are you taking captive every thought? God knows what crosses your mind and whether or not you are trying to be obedient to His Word, which is the means by which we are to renew, and renovate, our minds so that we may be changed into the image of His dear Son, which is God’s goal for us as Christians.
Lesson Ten

Man and Decisions

Everyone, at one time in their life, or another, comes to points of decision that end up being watersheds. There is an invisible line in every watershed. Water that falls on one side of a watershed may end up thousands of miles from water going down the other side. The Continental Divine is a line of mountain peaks in the Cocky Mountains, water falling on one side of the summit will end up in the Gulf of California, or the Pacific Ocean, however, water falling only a few feet away, on the other side of the summit, will end up in very different locations, thousands of miles apart.

There is a high school in Ohio that stands on the watershed of Ohio. The rain water that falls on one side of the roof runs into headwaters of the Sandusky River, travels down the Sandusky River into Lake Erie, on into Lake Ontario, down the St. Lawrence River and, finally, out into the North Atlantic Ocean. The rainwater that falls on the other side of the roof goes into the headwaters of the Scioto River, travels down the Scioto River into the Ohio River, down the Ohio River into the Mississippi River, down the Mississippi River until, finally, it arrives in the Gulf of Mexico.

For the purpose of illustration, let’s imagine a drop of rain about to fall right above the ridgepole (the peak) of the roof. The slightest breeze, either from the north or from the south, could change the entire future history of that drop of water. If the breeze is a warm southern breeze, the drop would fall on the north side of the roof and start on its long journey to the North Atlantic Ocean. While, on the other hand, if the breeze happens to be a cold northern one, that drop of rain could fall on the south side of the roof, and start on a long journey that would take it all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico.

In the same way that the ridge on the roof of this Ohio high school constitutes a deciding point in the life direction of this little rain drop, there are crisis ridges that come into one’s life that function as deciding points as to which direction one’s life will take.

There have been decisions in history that have proved to be watershed decisions that have changed the course of history. Gettysburg changed the course of the American Civil War. The Battle of Waterloo diverted napoleon’s attempt at world domination. Martin Luther decided in the sixteenth century that faith apart from works was sufficient for salvation. Jesus decided to submit to His Father’s will and go to Calvary. Each of these and many more were a watershed decision of history.

Making right choices, connected with faith, ends in obedience to God, whenever one is faithful. Abraham made the decision – by faith, believing God – to go forth, looking for a city. Then came the incident of offering Isaac on the altar, nevertheless, Abraham made the decision to do it – to obey the Lord. After he had made the decision to sacrifice his own son, Abraham had three days to think about it because that is how long it took to arrive at the place where he had been instructed to go.

Abraham saw his only son, the son of his old age, stretched out on the sacrificial altar. The hint of rose was gone from his youthful cheeks, his eyes searching the deep lines of his father’s firm face. Abraham avoided eye contact with Isaac, knowing that there were questions in his son’s eyes that he could not answer. However, Abraham overcame the desires, and emotions,
of his soul! Abraham made a watershed decision and, in doing so, he completely denied his own desires and will.

Joseph was enticed by Potiphar’s wife, who had great position; power, money and she could have bestowed favor upon Joseph, her husband’s servant. This must have been a tremendous lure, nevertheless, Joseph overcame the desires and cravings of his soul to touch, or have any connection with this wealth, power and pleasure. He also refused to give in to the sexual enticement because the Lord had already, though dreams, given Joseph a vision of where he was headed with God.

There was something in Abraham’s, and Joseph’s, lives that usurped the desires that rested in their hearts, something that subdued the desires and enticements of their souls. The sacrifices of Isaac, and Potiphar’s wife, were watersheds in these men’s lives. God brings every one of us to watersheds. We all come to points of decisions that will prove our faithfulness.

One’s performance decides which side of the watershed he goes down on, that in turn decides how, and where, he will end up. Let’s look at another Biblical example.

Mark 10 gives the account of a rich young ruler, who was brought to the point of decision by Jesus. Although he had kept the law since childhood, he could not say not to the desire to keep his wealth. It meant more to him than spiritual wealth. He had kept all the commandments from his youth, so than, why couldn’t he turn away from temptation, as Joseph did? If Abraham could sacrifice his son, why couldn’t this young ruler sacrifice his wealth?

This rich young man desired eternal life, or, he would not have approached Jesus in the manner in which he did. Mark 10:17 states that he came running, kneeling at the feet of Jesus, he inquired of the way of eternal life. There is no question but that he desired life eternal, however, the problem was that his will did not line with his desires. His desire for eternal life was not strong enough to influence his will.

One may “desire” something but not “will” it. He may DESIRE to go out to a restaurant, nevertheless, because of the crowd, or some other reason, he may not WILL to go. One may DESIRE to be used of God, however, he may not be WILLING to pay the price – of prayer, diligent work study, and meditation on God’s Word. One may not DESIRE to do something, yet he can WILL to do it anyway. One may NOT DESIRE to be in some service of the church, however, he decides to exercise his WILL and goes.

One’s desires, aligned with his will, create a powerful force, either positive, or negative. WILL and DESIRE, do not always run down the same path of life.

However, whenever both go in the same direction, hand in hand, then one will be as Jesus was en route to Jerusalem. The Bible says that he had His face “set like flint,” that means that Jesus could not be swayed, sidetracked, nor enticed to go somewhere else.

He was like the American pioneers who hung a sign on the side of their covered wagon: “California or bust” because they had both the desire and the will to go in that direction, and to accomplish that feat/
When one moves into areas of spiritual service where he exercises his will above his desires, he moves into an area of *sacrifice*. That’s what happened to both Abraham and Joseph, nevertheless, Abraham’s desire to save his son was not powerful enough to prevent him from “*willing*” to do what God commanded. The desire for Joseph to give in to the enticement of Mrs. Potiphar wasn’t strong enough to influence his will to follow God. These are examples of *negative* desires when compared to following the will of God.

The rich young ruler, on the other hand, is an example of one who had a *positive* desire in relation to spiritual matters, but his *will* would not follow. There are those who have been presented the gospel, brought to a decision to accept, or reject, Jesus Christ, however, they say, “*I know I should accept Christ as my Savior. It is something I’d really like to do, BUT . . .*” They *desire* salvation, however, they are not *will* to be saved. A right, and positive, desire is rejected because it does not line up with the will.

Whenever one *does not feel like* doing something, maybe, because he is tired. For example, he has no real desire to go to church, to read God’s Word or pray, however, *as an act of his will*, he does it anyway – then he is putting himself in a position to be blessed. That is when one moves into areas of obedience and blessing, like Abraham, or Joseph, did. Whenever one sets his *will* to obey, or to do those things he knows are pleasing to God, even in the face of *desires* that are contrary, he is training his soul to be submissive – dominating the soul and exercising his spirit. He is giving his spirit first place and, as he does this over a period of time, he is training his negative desires, and bringing them in line with his will – and the will of God.

Matthew 26:35, “Peter said unto Him (Jesus) though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. *Likewise also said all the disciples.*”

The disciples had been with the Lord more than three years. They loved Him and were *willing* to follow Him. Peter declared his *WILL* when he said, “*I will not deny You.*” Peter did not *WILL* to renounce his association with Jesus, however, in just a few short, critical, hours, Peter, three times was confronted with the fact that he was an acquaintance of Jesus and, each time, he denied any associated with Jesus. If Peter, and all the disciples, were telling the truth about not being *WILLING* to deny Jesus, then why, did they deny Him? Matthew 26:56 states that, when the guards arrested, and bound Jesus, “*all the disciples forsook Him and fled.*” *Why?* What was the problem?

Peter, and the other disciples, did not desire to be arrested and put into jail. Peter did not desire to suffer humiliation, and rejection, from the people outside the palace that night. He had no desire to be accused of acting cowardly; nevertheless, he desired to save his skin. He want to live and find out how all this was going to turn out, but, at the same time, he wanted to be free just to be a spectator. Peter’s *WILLINGNESS* to follow the Lord is exhibited in the fact that he had followed at a distance and he was there – outside the palace. His *DESIREs* were not in line with his *WILL*. At that crucial, decisive point, the *DESIREs* of Peter’s soul outweighed the influence of his spirit on his *WILL*.

One’s desires may either be for, or against, spiritual matters and doing God’s will. One’s will, in relation to being obedient and doing God’s will, may, at times, be in, or out of line. However, the door is opened to God, whenever, one sets his *will* to obey and please God, especially when he does it in the face of contrary desires. As one works to bring his desires, and
will, in line with God’s will, in order that they are working together for His glory, he unleashes great potential in his life.

It is necessary that one identify the areas of his life where WILL and DESIRES are causing friction or, even disobedience.

Have you been brought to points of decision – watersheds – where either your desires or your will have prevented you from submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, or hindered you from being obedient?

Abraham was a human being like we are, and so was the young ruler. We need to be an Abraham and sacrifice negative DESIRES on the altar of our WILL. Put your soul in its rightful place – under the supervision of your reborn spirit.
Lesson Eleven

Man and the Influences on His Will

Luke 23, that records Pilate’s disposition of Jesus, tells us that Pilot really only wanted to have Christ scourged, after which Jesus would be released. However, because the people wanted Him crucified, and disposed of, he decided to grant them their demand. Verses 24-25 states, “And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him [Barabbas] that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

Note that this passage states that the people “desired” Barabbas, but Jesus was delivered to their “will.”

One’s will involve discretion and disposition, a concept that is seen in a legal document known as a person’s will, or testament. This document reflects an individual’s discretion as to how his property, and possessions, will be disposed of – what his final “disposition” is to be. To be “discreet” means “to make judgment,” or “to determine by conscious choice,” – while “to dispose of something” means “to apportion,” “to distribute,” or, “to assign.”

One’s will is affected by both outer, and inner, influences. Those influences that come from outside one include society’s influences – such as one’s desire for social status and prestige – the things of the world (such as wealth) – and Satanic influences. Those influences that come from within one include one’s mind – conscience – emotions – soulish desires (the flesh) and – one’s spirit.

As long as a person’s will is intact, that is, as long as it is not broken or violated, it can remain strong, and flexible, despite the affect of these outer, and inner, influences.

If permitted to, Satan will violate, and dominate, one’s will – which is why many crimes are alleged to be committed as “willful acts.”

Society is constantly attempting to influence one’s will with its pressure to succeed, to attain status, or position – in order to gain acclaim, or acceptance, from the world, and, when society thrusts these desires on a person, they usually come to him by way of five physical senses.

One’s will is influenced by his mind as it weights certain factors to determine whether or not something seems good, or reasonable, and, if so, the, one “wills” to do, or not to do, that which has been evaluated by his mind.

One’s will does not have the capacity to make decision, because decisions are always made in one’s mind. However, once one’s mind has reached a decision, it must have one’s will go along with that decision for an action to take place because one’s mind, by itself, cannot cause action.

In times of trauma, unexpected tragic events, or pressured situations, bordering on panic, the mind may not be able to weigh, or evaluate, circumstances and, very often, during these times, goes blank. When one’s mind does go blank, it has no influence on his will, as to what he will do, because his response is a totally emotional one that may cause him to cry, scream, run,
or just close his eyes. When one is so totally controlled by his emotions, his will is confused because it is waiting for stimuli to move it one way, or the other. However, because one’s mind cannot make itself up – cannot provide direction – or determine what stimuli it should impose on one’s will – the will does not receive the sufficient stimuli it needs to move one to act appropriately. At this point, one’s soul shifts into neutral and the soulish man is out of control.

And it is when the soulish man is out of control that, during a fire, he will jump from a window instead of using an accessible door, or – when one is involved in an auto accident, he will just wander around the middle of the street aimlessly – or – when one is about to be shot, he may hold a piece of paper up in front of his face to protect himself. If sudden events force the soul to shift into neutral, it makes the will particularly susceptible to outside influences. If the believer’s reborn “spirit” has been developed, it will surge forth and come to the forefront, applying appropriate direction for one’s will. Obviously the person is far better off, because, when one’s spirit is not developed – and full of the Word of God – then, in times of trouble, outside forces will, most likely, become so strong that he will be moved to do something that is contrary to his will – or what he would have “willed” to do if his soulish man were not out of control. This is why, in situations like this, people say things like, “I just don’t know what came over me,” “I lost control,” or, “I just couldn’t help myself.”

The point is that God designed man’s will to be influenced, and directed, and, if one does not strengthen his spirit, to so provide that influence and direction, one will be totally controlled by the “irrationalism” of his emotions.

We learned in a previous lesson that the mind is the womb of the soul because it is where thoughts – “seeds” – are conceived. That is why thoughts are spoken of as “concepts.” One’s mind is not only the processing center where thoughts, information and data, is received (the place where the “seed is sown”) but, it is also the place where one’s thoughts develop, and mature, as the mind begins to ponder the information it has receive – begins to “roll over” the thoughts that are contained in hiss mind and consider them. The word “ponder” is translated from a Greek word that literally means, “to consult together,” or, “to confer.” The mind compares all the various “seeds,” or data, with each other, matching up those seeds that seem to resemble each other – or seem to have some relevancy – or relationship – to one another. This matching, or sorting, process is called “reasoning,” or arriving at that which is logical. The mind then communicates its logical reasoning to the will to provide it with the stimuli that is needs to move it to action.

When Scripture says that a born-again believer must have his mind “renewed” what it is saying is that new “seeds” – new data – or information, based upon God’s Word (His laws and precepts that are stated in His Word) must be sown in the mind so that when the mind is faced with having to “reason out” the logic it will present to the will, this logic is based on God’s logic – his way of looking at things. God’s perspective becomes more and more of a reality as more and more of the new seeds that are sown in the mind are God’s thoughts, the medium of measurement by which the mind compares, and evaluates, one’s thoughts.

Titus 1:15 states “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”

The word “corrupted” (“defiled” in the King James) is translated from a Greek word that means “stained”, or, “tainted.” This verse in Titus, then, is saying that a mind, or conscience,
that is defiled sees everything from a distorted point of view. When garbage is sown as seed into a corrupted mind, it will reason by comparing, and weighing, this garbage with other garbage. In other words, if the seed that has been sown in the mind is garbage, that makes it logical garbage, it turn, then, the action the “will” take takes will also be garbage.

James 1:8 tells us that a double-minded person is unstable in all his ways, because – a double-minded person is one who has been born again but has not had his mind renewed – that means that godly seed has not been sufficiently sown in his mind. As a result, since the seed of the Word of God and the seed of the world are contrary, when the mind attempts to integrate both of these kinds of seed – (because both kinds are present in the one who is double-minded – the logic that is fed to the “will” is conflicted and, therefore, causes one frustration and consternation.

What is the answer to this dilemma?

James 1:21 states, “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you.”

This passage in James was written to “believers,” those who had been born-again. The book of James begins by extending greetings to “the brethren,” and verse 19 is addressed to the, “beloved brethren.” We are told that the engrafted, the planted, Word, which is in one’s life, is able to save, or to deliver, one’s psyche, his mind, will and emotions.

The renewed mind, that is in a pivotal position, will lean toward the outside pressures of worldly thinking, or, that which is acceptable, and agreeable, to society. However, the renewed mind, on the other hand, will lean toward the guidance of the Holy Spirit by way of His leading through the renewal of the mind by the engrafted Word. The conscience is, basically, an ally of the “spirit” of the one who is born-again, when it comes to persuading the “will.”

The will is like a needle, hung on a thread and dropped in a circle surrounded by magnets – the magnet of social states – the magnet of one’s spirit – the magnet of one’s soulish desires – etc. All these magnets are exerting their pull on the “needle,” one one’s will. Because each of the magnets is trying to move the till in its direction, the magnet that creates the strongest pull is the one that will influence the will as to what action it will take.

The key to living a Spirit-led life is to have one’s “magnets” of influence aligned together so that they pull in the same direction. As one’s mind is renewed, the Holy Spirit, as it diminishes the pull of one’s soulish desires – and worldly influences – can more, and more sway the will to do its bidding.

One is responsible to do those things that will assist the working of the Holy Spirit in bringing his will in line with the will of God. Developing one’s reborn spirit – renewing his mind – denying the desires of self – and – keeping a clear conscience – will positively affect the discretion, direction and disposition, of one’s will.

When one brings his will into submission to his spirit, and the Holy Spirit, he then moves his life more in the direction of God’s will for him, which is our ultimate goal as Christians, to bring our own wills to a place where they are absorbed into God’s will. This struggle within (the
battle between one’s soul and his spirit) is fought on many fronts and, in order for one to be “more than a conqueror,” his will must be captured, and control, by his spirit.

My prayer for you is that, in all circumstances, you will pray what Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father in Mark 14:36, “Not what I will, but what You will, be done in My life.”
Whenever one accepts Christ it is his “spirit” that is born-again – John 3:6

This circle is an attempt to picture man’s make-up. The outer circle represents man’s physical body; the three “shaded” circles symbolize his “soul” – mind will and emotion; the center circle signify his “spirit.” When one accepts Christ as his Savior, his spirit is made a live, born-again. However it is God’s plan and desire for the Holy Spirit to “save the soul” – bring into subjection man’s mind, will and emotion to the will of God. The Christian walk is a struggle between man’s “soul” attempting to rule – and man’s reborn “spirit” desiring to lead and guide the person.
Man and the Salvation of His “Soul”

The moment anyone accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior his “spirit” is immediately. He is given new life by the Holy Spirit. John 3:6 states, “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit...or...That which is born of the Holy Spirit is man’s ‘spirit’”...that is, the third-dimension of man’s being is made alive by the Holy Spirit!

God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, “In the DAY that you eat thereof you will die” (Genesis 2:17b). They did eat of the forbidden tree, and they did DIE that very day. They were alive physically, as well as, soulishly...(that is, they still had a mind, will, and emotions) ...however, they were dead spiritually.

The Hebrew word, translated “death” in our King James Translation of the Bible, comes from the word meaning “to be separated from.”

Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God, were not “separated from” their physical life, nor were they “separated from” their mind, will and emotions, however they were “separated from God,” the source of their spiritual life!

When one receives Jesus Christ as his Savior, his “spirit” is united back to God again...it is “born-again”...made alive by an act of the Holy Spirit!

The moment anyone receives Jesus Christ as his Savior he is forgiven of all his sins ...he receives “eternal life”...the very divine life of Jesus Christ Himself. He is a child of God! However, he still experiences conflicts and struggles in his mind, will and emotions. Why?

God desires each born-again believer to “present all his members...(all of his being)...and faculties, as a living sacrifice, consecrated and worthy of His acceptance, and, not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of one’s mind,” (Romans 12:1-2)...that is, the dimension of his “soul” – (his mind, will and emotions) needs maturing to be “conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.”

Scripture speaks of the “saving of the SOUL.”

James 1:21 states, “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your ‘souls.’”

1 Peter 1:9 states, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Verse 22 of this same chapter states, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth,” and 1 Peter 4:19 states, “Commit the keeping of their souls to Him...God...in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Hebrews 10:38-39 states, “Now the just...(My righteous one)... shall live by faith: But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition...(draw back to their ruin)...but of those who believe to the saving of the ‘SOUL.’”

The context here makes it very clear that this passage is written to the Christian! For instance, verse 23 states, “Let US hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” and, verse 24 states, “Let US consider one another,” and again, verse 25 states, “Not forsaking the
assembling of OURSELVES together.” The writer of Hebrews includes himself in the word “us,” and “ourselves,” and such exhortations are not written to the unsaved.

Hebrews 10, the chapter under discussion, is vitally connected with the proceeding chapter, chapter 11, and chapter 11 is for the purpose of showing the biographies of those who “lived by faith.”

An amazing statement is found in verse 39, of chapter 10, where it states, “We are ...of them that believe to the saving...(preservation)...of the SOUL.” This “saving of the soul” referred to here cannot be the sinner's conversion, or his salvation from condemnation he receives when one is first saved from sin because this “salvation” from condemnation is the gift of God freely bestowed when one accepts Christ as his personal Savior...however...the “saving... (preservation) ...of the soul,” mentioned in Hebrews 10:39, is the reward of living by faith, walking by faith, continuing in the faith, and fighting the good fight of faith!

It should be noted very particularly, that this is the very same thing that Jesus referred to in Matthew 16:26-27, when He said to His disciples...not to the crowds... “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own SOUL? Or what will a man give in exchange for his SOUL? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

It must be noted that this passage in Matthew 16 is referring to the ‘believer’ who makes the choice to deny “SELF,” take up his cross, and steadfastly follow the Lord, Jesus Christ!

This is what the great heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 did, they believed God... embraced the promises...obeyed Him...and through their faith, obedience, and a steadfast walk they received “the salvation of their SOULS.”

Scriptures abound with statements confirming the fact that “the saving of the soul” referred to in Hebrews 10:39 is a future reward to the child of God. Surely this is the salvation Paul had in mind when writing Romans 13:11: “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed,” and, it is also this same “salvation” that is referred to in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, where it states, “For God did not appoint US to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note that believers are appointed to “obtain salvation” which is yet to come ... referring, not to one's eternal salvation of his “spirit,” but to “the salvation of his SOUL.”

A comparison of this passage with 1 Peter 1:5 and 9 should convince any doubtful mind that this is the correct interpretation. In Peter's epistle we read of those “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” This salvation that is ready to be revealed in the end times, is definitely, and clearly, described in verse 9, where Peter writes, “Receiving the end of your faith; even the salvation of your souls.”

The point is that when one believes on Christ...accepts Him as his personal Savior...he is saved from guilt, condemnation, and the power of sin...however...the final salvation of his “soul” is conditional upon the believer's living by faith.

Another passage, in confirmation of this very important fact, is found in James. Let it be clearly noted that James addresses his book to “my beloved brethren,” and, therefore, the
statements found therein are applicable to real, born-again Christians! Note the passage in 1:19-20, where James states, “Let every man ...(Christian believer)...be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your SOULS.”

There are two alternatives confronting all believers that is given in Hebrews 10: either:

(1) “drawing back to their own ruin” or
(2)“living by faith and believing to the salvation of their souls!”