

Thoughts For Along The Journey

By J.R. Waller | A Publication of

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The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate in Prayer

Is prayer difficult for you? Do you often find you don't know how to pray or simply what to say? This may be a rare occurrence for some readers and a common one for others. Ultimately I do not know how common something like this is and I am sure it varies, however what I can say is that it is something I have struggled with many times and would imagine all Christians have at some point in their lives.

Nevertheless, its commonality is irrelevant, for having trouble praying is not something to be embarrassed about if you struggle with it. Conversely it is not something to be proud of if you rarely have trouble praying.

The point is that facing challenges in your prayer life is an important topic. While the frequency of difficult seasons of prayer varies from person to person, it will happen at some point or another in the life of every Christian. In fact this very challenge is mentioned in scripture.

Today we will focus our attention on how the Holy Spirit helps us in prayer, including in the difficult seasons. Let's see what scripture says.

Romans 8:26-27 (KJV)

26) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27) And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

One of the most comforting doctrines in the Bible is that the Holy Spirit always prays and intercedes for us, even when we do not know what to say or how to pray. In times of greatest difficulty this rings most true to us.

When the burden to pray for a loved one looms tremendously great on our souls and hearts, when the gravity of a situation is so strong, during the times when our stamina has run its course and we are worn out from waiting for prayers to be answered, in these instances and many others it can be difficult to know what to pray or even to pray at all.

We know that God can handle any situation yet when a situation seems dire or too confusing, sometimes all we can do is cry out or pray through sobs and tears. Once more, prayer becomes a challenge.

There is good news however for this is where the Holy Spirit comes to our aide; remember He is our Helper.

John 16:7 (KJV)

7) Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

In fact, in Greek ‘Comforter’ can also mean ‘Helper’, ‘Advocate’ and/or ‘Intercessor’. Isn’t it amazing how much God gives us? Remember He sent the Holy Spirit to us to help us.

His grace is amazing and it becomes more amazing each and every day of the Christian’s life. Not only does He give us a home in heaven but also the Holy Spirit to help us at all times, even in prayer.

God certainly requires much of us as Christians yet with His aide, His burden truly is light if we allow it to be, that is if we obey. Obedience in prayer means persisting in prayer, no matter what. Even when words cannot come, at the very least try to pray, for prayer is a connection to God Himself and in His infinite power He can certainly understand the intent of the heart. God is not limited; He knows your needs.

Therefore, weary Christian worn out from countless moments of desperate prayer, self-conscious Christian who does not know what to pray when called upon in front of a group, scared Christian whose sin has beset you to hide from God, worried to approach Him for forgiveness, and to all of us who will at times struggle with prayer, let us remain confident and pray with the strength of the Holy Spirit’s intercession for us.

When you do not know what to say or how to say it, pray what is on your heart and mind and let the Holy Spirit handle the rest, for your prayers will be heard just as they should be. Soli Deo Gloria!

A Prayer for All Time

John 17:20-26 (KJV)

20) Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22) And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24) Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25) O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26) And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

This prayer by Jesus is the culmination of what some refer to as His “Farewell Discourses” beginning in John 14 and concluding in John 17 with this prayer.

In fact, John 17 contains three prayers. In the first Jesus prays for Himself, the second prayer is for the disciples and this prayer is addressed to and is for all believers.

It is important to note that this prayer happened moments before Jesus was arrested and betrayed. After this prayer He left for Gethsemane where Judas would betray Him.

It is awe inspiring to think and know that moments before Jesus' trials began He was thinking and praying for us, for His disciples and for the world. It demonstrates the priority of prayer. When trials come we must pray first and foremost for that is what Jesus did. However, in practice many do not start with prayer, instead they rush to their own conclusions and strength in all of its limited power and knowledge.

In addition we must note that Jesus' prayer was not just for the believers and the world at that time in history, but for all believers through all of the human history to come. He was praying for you and me.

The prayer is strikingly powerful in many ways. It gives a glimpse into Jesus' relationship with God the Father, into His future plans for the spread of the gospel and also shows the great care He has for us, His children.

You see in great detail within His prayer the clearly distinctive and beautiful principle of Christianity that sets it apart from any other religion; we can have a relationship with God and He also desires to have a relationship with us.

Our God is not a distant God, for if it were so He would not have had Jesus' prayer to Him preserved for us. Quite the opposite, the preservation of this prayer for us indicates that our God is personal. We must not forget that Jesus also prayed the prayer in person before the disciples as well.

By its very preservation in the Bible and recital in front of the disciples we know that Jesus wanted us to understand things through the prayer. Ultimately there was nothing secret about His prayer that was meant to be kept from us, otherwise we would not have access to it in His Word.

Jesus wants us to know that He cares for us and that God the Father does as well. We must not forget this is Jesus, the Son of God, praying to the God of the universe and the disciples got to hear it and we His followers get to read it.

God is not distant; He is fully involved in our lives and wants us to have a relationship with Him. He knew that by preserving this prayer in His Word it would serve as an awe-inspiring and confidence building account for Christians in all times to come. It is evidential of His great eternal love for us.

We notice that He is praying for all Christians in all times to come when He mentions “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” He is praying for you and me.

Jesus prays that Christians be unified, that the world would come to know that He was sent by God and He prays that He will have relationships with His followers and that they will be loved and see God’s glory.

John 17: 22-23 (KJV)

22) And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Christian unity within the church and among believers is a magnificent picture of the unity of God and Jesus. You can see a structure too— God in Jesus, Jesus in us. There is a hierarchy. This is another reason why Jesus prayed for us publicly and had it recorded.

As Christians we need to know why unity is important. Primarily it is important because it provides a necessary standard of structure for the churches relationship to Jesus, to each other and to God the Father.

That structure is God in Jesus, and Jesus in us. With Jesus within us we can be effective servants in sharing the gospel and in living in harmony with each other. You cannot have unity amongst Christians without this essential ingredient.

The unity that follows allows for individuals to be effectively evangelized (“**and that the world may know that thou hast sent me**”).

A unified church that follows God’s hierarchy is an appealing church to the lost. It is a church that achieves God’s mission, for without Jesus in us and without God in Jesus the church will not be effective.

The prayer is also notable for the qualities of God’s relationship with us that it highlights. First He has given us glory, or glorified us (“**And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them**”).

Second, He desires to be with us and for us to be with Him (“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;”). This is the great relationship we have with Jesus and God.

John 12:26 (KJV)

26) If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

We are always with Jesus and He is always with us as is God who honors us. If there is ever a doubt that Jesus has left your side or that He really does not want to be with you, refer back to His own prayer. Remember always that He prayed and told God that it was fully His desire that we be with Him in both this life and for eternity.

Lastly, regarding the relational aspects of the prayer that are highlighted, Jesus prays for us to receive God’s love (“that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.”). We gain true love from God through our relationship with Jesus.

Again, this prayer is astonishing. Our God is personal; He cares for us, has desires for us, thinks about and for us, and is with us. He is an approachable God. This is why spreading the good news to others is so essential and ultimately Jesus’ prayer helps us do just that. Do not forget that Jesus was praying for us.

When you contemplate the attributes of God in this prayer it shows us a God that we want to tell others about. And we must— it is the task set before us.

We must continually let the world know that God sent Jesus. This was and still is Jesus' desire.

John 17:25 (KJV)

25) O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Do you know this, reader? Christian, if you know this have you shared it?

John 17:26 (KJV)

26) And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

As a Christian it is easy to forget (especially if one has been a believer for a long time) the gravity and importance of Jesus being revealed to man when He first was born and had His ministry here on Earth in person. This revelation and His resurrection are essential to our faith— they are everything.

Remember, when the gospel is presented to a non-Christian, whether they act like it or not, it is a divine revelation to them. Jesus ascended to heaven in 33 A.D., but He continues to reveal Himself now and forever through His Word and witness.

It does not matter how removed we are from the event of Jesus' time on Earth in the flesh. The message remains the same. He has come and though He ascended, He is still in our presence and wants to save and know the lost.

That is a message for every era and for all time. Christianity is not confined to the years between B.C. and A.D.

It is a glorious thing indeed that Jesus' prayer for us is preserved in scripture. Let us remember to pray as He did when challenges are near. Let us remember the importance of Christian unity, the many attributes of Jesus' relationship with us and the unequivocal gravity of world evangelism.

Amen.

The Mature Christian's Desire

Psalm 90: 16-17 (KJV)

16) Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17) And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These powerful words rounding out Psalm 90 are none other than the words of Moses. In fact Psalm 90 is actually the oldest recorded Psalm in the Bible.

Christian, do you desire that God's work *appear* to you? Are you His *servant*? Notice our verse says, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants...".

When we become Christians we become His servants, even if we do not feel like His servant or want to serve all the time. It is however a mark of maturity that a Christian see himself as God's servant. A servant is one who will desire God's work to appear before him.

A servant of God is at God's beck and call. When God says to the missionary "Go" he goes.

You see, when you become a Christian your perspective changes. The dormant spiritual yearnings and desire for meaning that each individual is endowed with (because we were created in God's image) are suddenly awakened when we become His servant. We are now who we were truly created to be— we are no longer slaves and dead to sin.

While before we desired to "make something of our lives" (on our own and on our own terms no less) in order to satisfy a vague search for some sort of meaning and purpose in life, we now know what true meaning is: to serve and work for God, His Kingdom and eternity, storing up treasures in this life for the next. Our newfound perspective re-orient(s) our purpose(s) in life to its truest and real goals.

This true and awakened purpose is ultimately fully meaningful. Investing in a life devoted to God's work pays dividends for us, others and God forever. It is the ultimate return on investment.

We are in fact pilgrims on Earth for our real home lies in the life ahead in heaven. For now we must instill within us the desire to see opportunities for God's work to appear before us. This is a great and ultimate responsibility.

However desiring God's work to appear before you and desiring to accomplish work for God are only the first steps.

The desire for His work to appear before you furnishes your heart with the right attitude, that of the servant who wishes only to serve Him, but we must also *prepare* our hearts and minds for said work.

For surely if you pray that God employ you in His divine work and desire that He present opportunities for you, then He will indeed and you must be prepared.

This involves the responsibilities of preparing your mind, knowing the Scriptures, being able to act out God's love and being able to give an answer "to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15, KJV).

Does the weight of this responsibility trouble you? Do not let it. Simply pray and learn from your church, Godly friends, mentors and from His Word.

Remember it is by no mistake that the author of these words, Moses, is the one to present them to us. For He was the one who when God visited him in the desert replied, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11, KJV).

Moses certainly did not think himself ready for service, but remember God's response, "Certainly I will be with thee;" (Exodus 3:12, KJV). He will be with you too and this includes in the midst of the work He has for you to do.

Desiring for opportunities to serve God in your life and preparing your heart and mind for them is the mark of a mature and maturing Christian.

The mature Christian does not just desire that God present Him with great work to do for Him and His Kingdom however. He also desires that God's glory appear before his children. This is referring to our children.

Sons and daughters will come most eagerly and excitedly to Jesus when they see their parents live in service to Him. Their service, when done with a prepared heart and right attitude, will be winsome to their children and others.

How many times have children gone astray because the burden given them by their parents to "work" for God was nothing more than forced upon them?

How many children have seen their parents follow after God blindly or without the necessary commitment or zeal that is the mark of a genuine servant?

Many parents who have raised their children in a Christian home wonder why their child goes astray and rebels by adulthood, or sometimes sooner.

While ultimately a child can go his own way irrespective of what he is taught, having the glory of God appear before him through the service of his parents to God can certainly help curtail his desire to go astray. Glory is not dogmatic, it is not legalistic, it is not boring, it is glorious! It is winsome!

This then should be the desire of the parent: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children."

When this is accomplished dear reader, children will naturally flock toward God's work and develop a life of service for themselves.

Glory also enables them to stand in awe of God and to share that awe with others. We share the glorious not the mundane. We want more of the glorious not the moribund.

Let us also allow the beauty or favor of the Lord to be upon us.

Psalm 90:17 (KJV)

17) And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

You see, serving God is not always easy, in fact many times it is difficult. However it is the greatest thing you can do in this life.

It establishes the work of our hands. Establishing means giving permanence to and making successful. We want our works to last and through Him they will, for true success comes from God and serving Him. Remember, it is the ultimate return on investment: it pays dividends for all eternity.

Now then let His favor be upon us. Let Him establish the works of our hands. Let His work appear before us, His glory before our children and let us desire and prepare ourselves spiritually and mentally for His service.

Amen.

God Speaks (Part I)

Hebrews 1:1-4 (KJV)

- 1) God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
- 2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
- 3) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:
- 4) Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews was written by a Jewish Christian, most likely either Barnabas or Apollos though we are not 100% certain. It was also likely written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Aimed toward Jewish audiences, it contains many links to the Old Testament with Jesus being the primary theme of the book. It is an astonishingly rich book and in this lesson we will be looking at Hebrews 1:1-4.

Before we begin I have two questions for the reader. To those who claim to know Jesus as their savior, ask yourself before we begin “Has God spoken to me?” Ponder that for a moment.

Now for those who do not have a knowledge of God as their savior this evening please ask yourself this question, “Does God speak?”

I want both sides to ask questions in their minds tonight, to the saved Christian ask so that you may be sure of your salvation, to the lost unbeliever ask yourself purely out of exploration and for the sake of the questioning for discovery's sake.

For your being here tonight unbeliever first is no accident and second it is healthy to freely question these sorts of things to learn about what Christianity is all about. You see Christianity is a reasonable religion; we have great reasons as Christians to believe and know that it is true.

Jesus often reasoned with people by asking questions and others asked them back, such as Nicodemus for example. Therefore questions are always welcomed and encouraged, and that stands for both those who do not know Jesus as their savior and those that do.

Christian, never let the fear of questioning what you believe or peer pressure from other Christians keep you from asking questions, for God welcomes them all and often it is the way by which we strengthen our faith in Him and our beliefs.

Now then the third and final question before the message this evening is also for you, Christian. For I have already asked it to the lost tonight: “Does God speak?” What is more, if He does what are some ways in which He communicates to us?

I posit at the start here that yes, God does speak. He speaks in many ways with an ultimate purpose through Jesus and the gospel message. Jesus is the ultimate way by which God speaks to us and it is for a very specific purpose— for our salvation and redemption.

A quick note, does God speak through the Holy Spirit? Certainly but for tonight’s lesson we will be focusing on God’s speaking to us through Jesus and His message.

Let us look at Hebrews 1:1-2 again for the first part of our lesson.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (KJV)

1) God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

The first thing that is striking about this passage is that in it we can discern two contrasts: the old and the new, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the old revelation of Jesus to the fathers by the prophets and the new revelation of Jesus through His earthly ministry and death on the cross for our sins.

Revelation has come from third parties (prophets speaking for Jesus) to Jesus Himself.

While the New and Old Testaments are different in terms of how Jesus spoke and revealed Himself to us, they contain the same thread that runs throughout all of the Bible, that of Jesus Christ Himself.

The Bible is His story. God is always revealing Jesus and Himself to us, through Jesus Himself, whether it is through the prophets in the Old Testament, by Jesus Himself or by that of natural revelation. You see God speaks about Jesus to us in many different ways.

What is most important for the modern Christian (that is as I define it the Christian who lives after Jesus' ascension into heaven) is that these two verses present continuity within their contrasts. That continuity is Jesus and His message.

We see that "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past." I find it comforting that God has spoken in many ways to the world, through miracles, dreams, prophets, creation and so on.

However things changed for "in these last days" refers to the time when Jesus was on Earth in the flesh. At that time and going forward to today and for forever, God chooses to speak to us through Jesus Himself. Why?

Because there is something we need to hear. The reason for Jesus coming to Earth as 100% man and 100% God divine, was to finish revealing God's purpose for man's redemption.

It is a magnificent thing that God chooses to communicate to us through His Son; there is gravity to this. Not only has God communicated in many ways to us, but chiefly He has spoken to us through His Son. It's magnificent!

It shows the magnitude of our situation and also the great care that God has for His creation and people. He wants to get our attention— He cares. Has He gotten your attention?

Back to our first questions: Christian, has God spoken to you before, has He called you? Non-Christian, is He speaking to you? Has he gotten *everyone's* attention here tonight?

Jesus communicated many vital lessons during His earthly ministry, ultimately though *He* was (and still is) the message, and not just His words but His actions are the message as well.

Paramount to the greatest action in human history, His death on the cross is the greatest message; this is the Gospel, the “good news” for us. You see ultimately God had to speak to us through His Son because that was and still is the only way to get our attention and to save us from our sins.

You see God appointed Him (Jesus) heir of all things. Jesus received the inheritance of God’s estate (all things) through his work of redemption (His death and sacrifice for us and our sins on the cross).

When someone asks you who Jesus was, the very way in which you describe Him, the Redeemer, indicates His message. No matter how you approach Jesus you cannot avoid the fact that He had and still has a purpose; to save that which is lost. That is why He came.

Matthew 18:11 (KJV)

11) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Jesus was and is God’s way of speaking to us in the most direct manner possible. You cannot study Jesus or attempt to by avoiding this critical component; Jesus’ message is to save the lost and that is what God wants us all to know. He wants you to know that.

Some say Jesus was just a man who taught good things. Others acknowledge that He was a great thinker or a mystic. Some say He was just a great leader, but all of these overlook, and many times intentionally so, the reality of who Jesus was.

Jesus was God's Son, sent for an express purpose to save the lost and to provide the way by which we can be redeemed from our sins through His sacrifice on the cross for us.

He is the very way by which God tells us of our fatal condition and the way of escape from that condition through salvation everlasting and freedom from sin's bondage of our life.

Any attempt to portray Jesus without this critical component (His message) is not just giving an incomplete picture of Jesus but a false one.

Do not forget, when you present the message of Jesus you are communicating for God because God speaks through Jesus.

Therefore you must incorporate the redemption message into your conversations with others about Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (KJV)

20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We should not just talk about Jesus with facts, philosophy or miracles. While all of these are good we must be His ambassadors and speak the gospel message; the *why* of it all.

Do you know why Jesus came? To save the lost. God spoke through Him and through His actions that very message and that is the message to share with others.

This message will be continued next time in God Speaks (Part 2).

The Purposed Heart

Daniel 1:8 (KJV)

8) But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

What does it mean that Daniel *purposed* in his heart? How does it apply to us?

The portion of the king's meat and wine mentioned in this verse refers to food offered to idols and that was unclean by Jewish standards.

Consuming such would be a direct violation of the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 11, KJV) and thus of God's commands. Therefore Daniel's stance is one he makes to abstain from sinning.

Daniel was a man of conviction—he stood strong, feet planted firmly within God's will for his life and within His commands and statutes. Through his conviction, Daniel strove to do what was good and right per God's standards, which always represent true goodness.

Deuteronomy 6:18 (KJV)

18) And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers.

As Christians we must often, and may I say always, purpose in our hearts to stand for God, to not sin and to do what is right.

Attaining this attitude of the heart is a difficult and continuous process resulting from a life committed to God, His precepts, commands and Word.

In fact you cannot purpose in your heart any of these responses to life's challenges without great preparation. Daniel followed God, and following requires a process.

You see Daniel did not come to purpose in his heart to not eat of the meat or drink of the king's wine instantly. It took time.

For the Christian, following God and becoming more like Him takes time and purposing in our hearts to follow and serve Him through proper decision-making takes time.

We must spend many hours in communion with God—praying to Him, following His commands and serving Him. This all prepares us for the time when our purposed heart has to make a decision for Him.

In Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Royal Publishers Edition, 1975) the Hebrew word for purposed ("siym" 7760) can also mean commit ("for Daniel *committed* in his heart").

Preparation takes time. Commitment takes time. One does not enter into the commitment of marriage (at least successfully) instantly, it takes time.

The student does not become committed to his calling or vocation overnight; he must toil and learn and struggle first before he becomes committed to earning his degree.

The mother commits in her heart to raise her children in love no matter the cost. Through much loyalty the businessman commits to serve his company. The soldier works in training for years so that he may be committed to the cause.

To commit in your heart to do right is to have a heart committed to serving God for the duration of your entire life and it means committing every day to Him.

It takes learning and failure as well. We might fall seven times....

Proverbs 24:16 (KJV)

16) For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

...but we must always get back up and purpose our hearts once more. We must once more commit our hearts to Him, this time stronger and with greater conviction.

To commit in your heart to love God, to serve God, to not sin and to do what is right, takes time and preparation. It will take much falling and rising back up.

The Hebrew word (“siym” 7760) can also mean rehearsed. Daniel likely envisioned in his mind how he would react in such a circumstance before this instance happened.

The actor rehearses his lines, the athlete her drills and the painter his techniques. This is why going to church, memorizing scripture, reading the Bible and witnessing to others is of such importance. You must practice what you preach. You must rehearse making decisions for Him.

Besides practice, experience can often be the best teacher. For the Christian every minute of every day is a rehearsal for following God.

We battle our old sin natures constantly, we face a myriad of difficult situations all the time and we consistently come face to face with evil.

It is a fallen world and we are citizens of heaven, nothing more than traveling pilgrims in a world that is against us and darkened to God. Our experiences with sin and the world are where our hearts’ true orientation (either toward us or to God) shines or hides.

The *response* to these experiences and situations says everything, for how you respond shows how rehearsed and practiced you are.

How many times are we confronted with a moral or ethical dilemma and we fold? We chose not God’s way but ours? What will we do next time?

There is a reason we use the term “confronted” when it comes to situations. For it is a spiritual war we are engaged in and many situations scare us, try us and test us.

We do not just encounter life's difficult experiences and situations, rather we confront them and if we confront them the right way, with hearts purposed and committed to God, we can yet make it and choose to do what is right.

Whether you chose right or wrong in a given situation that you confronted or that confronted you, you now know, based on your response, how rehearsed and prepared and purposed you really were.

This knowledge you are now equipped with is there to aide you in making the right decision next time.

Or maybe you did make the right decision? Does it seem easy to you now to stand for what is right in God's eyes?

Be careful if you have this lax attitude toward the things of God, for this provides a foothold for the enemy to creep in and for pride to lull us into a false sense of strength.

For instance next time you may not see the same situation as that big of a deal or you might not hold to as strong a conviction. It may seem that since you were a "hero" before it will be easy to be the "hero" a second time.

Or perhaps a "been there done that" attitude will take hold and again you will not take the situation seriously enough.

Do not let this be your attitude for the purposed heart only gains its strength and sustains its strength from God working in you and by your following Him.

Remember it takes time, preparation, commitment and rehearsal to make right decisions for Him. It also takes His strength.

In fact this is the critical element for developing the ability to purpose in your heart to serve Him and not sin. It is the principal way by which we handle the difficult experiences of life. It is the linchpin that holds it all together.

It supplies the preparation and commitment with patience and strength through every rehearsal and when the times arrive it lets us follow through by doing right.

You see God gives the purposeful stance of the heart and conviction therein the strength to develop within us.

God is a God of confidence; He is our confidence and we must remember that His ways are ways we can be confident to follow. This gives us and our purposed heart strength.

Proverbs 3:26 (KJV)

26) For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

When we purpose in our heart, it is the result of countless hours of spiritual development and sanctification of character.

However it is all the result of God providing clarity in our lives about how things in life really are including how we should respond to challenges and sin in life.

This comes from us no longer being slaves to sin and rather being new men able to see the world through God's eyes once we've come to Him in belief and repentance of sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

17) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

and

Ephesians 4:22-24 (KJV)

22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Ultimately it is God who gives our hearts the strength to be committed and purposed for Him.

Finally, Strong says purposed can also mean to determine and/or consider. Christian you must think on the things of God, His desires for your life and about being like Him. You must consider.

Do not approach following Him lightly, arrogantly or without gravity. Determine in your heart to follow Him, seek out Him and what He desires for you. He has already laid things out for you to accomplish, now go and find them, not blindly but expectantly and through great consideration.

Ephesians 2:10

10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Christian consider in your heart to serve Him, to stay away from sin and to choose right.

When you consider, you look at both sides, you learn in so doing that sin does not even compare to living spirituality. When considered you learn that sin is temporary, and God is eternal. When you consider you learn that sin brings pain even if there is temporary pleasure, while following God brings joy everlasting.

It is important to note that you cannot appreciate or follow God until you see yourself for who you are (a sinner) and repent.

Romans 3:23 (KJV)

23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Romans 10:9-10 (KJV)

9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Nor can you, Christian, appreciate the value, worth and gravity of following God without considering where you have been (lost) and where you are going by choosing to follow Him (heaven) and who you are working to become (like Him) by purposing in your heart to serve Him.

Therefore I ask you, non-believer, consider what it means to be a Christian, and Christian consider in your heart to serve Him so that in the end you can be not only like Daniel but like Him.

May your heart be purposed, committed and rehearsed so that you may not be defiled by sin and so that you may do what is right and do what is for God. Amen.

God Speaks (Part II)

This message is a continuation of God Speaks (Part I).

Jesus came to save the lost and God spoke through Him and through His actions that very message. That is the message to share with others.

We must not forget or downplay the immense power of this. We see back in Hebrews 1 verse 2 “by whom also he made the worlds;” that God’s speaking to mankind did not end with Jesus, in fact it started long before.

This is vitally important, for Jesus’ ministry and death on the cross represents the fulfilling of God’s plan of redemption for man; a plan that began when mankind first rebelled in the Garden of Eden.

Here is another question for the reader this evening, was Jesus present at creation? Let us look at John 1:1-3.

John 1:1-3 (KJV)

1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2) The same was in the beginning with God.

3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

“The Word” here refers to Jesus so the answer is yes, Jesus was present at creation and has always been present and will always be present with God. He was the agent of creation. The Creator. Let us look at Romans 1:19-20.

Romans 1:19-20 (KJV)

19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

And

Psalm 19:1 (KJV)

1) The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

The heavens and creation also speak for God. This is called the natural revelation of God. His creation is a direct revelation, though not a final revelation, of Jesus that speaks to God's glory.

From the very beginning of the Bible with Jesus as creator, to the New Testament with Jesus as redeemer, there is a single theme and again a single message: God speaks about Jesus, be it through natural revelation, prophesy or Jesus' own ministry on earth.

Again we see a contrast in our main verses (creation and Jesus' ministry, Old Testament and New Testament) that leads to continuity (Jesus was there at the beginning, was on Earth and is still with us and will be forevermore) and also completion in the fulfillment of His ministry (His death, burial and resurrection).

There are deep ramifications here regarding our position as breakers of God's law as well— we are without excuse because God has been revealed in creation. This is our standing with God: that of rebellions sinners without excuse.

So it begs the question, do Christians that see God's glory in creation go to hell because they know of God but are yet without the gospel message?

Is an intuition of God through the glory of Him that is spoken through His creation that which makes me guilty even if I have not heard the gospel before?

No, though many of God's attributes can be discerned through His creation, the salvific gospel message is not within natural revelation, it is within God's Word, it is through Jesus Himself and his message, the gospel message, the final revelation.

It is important to note here that people do not go to hell because they do not hear the gospel; they go to hell because they have broken God's law, because all have turned away from Him. Back in Romans and following the verses in Romans we looked at before is verse 21.

Romans 1:21 (KJV)

21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

This explains why we are without excuse, we rebelled and our hearts are darkened. However Jesus' death is fully sufficient to save and redeem us. Again, this is the gospel message that saves us from the law that we all have broken.

God speaking in creation is important because again it provides continuity with Jesus' life on earth and completion of His ministry. Creation alone, or natural revelation, was and is not enough. Creation (that is post-fall creation) needed Jesus. Jesus was, is and will always be the only way of salvation.

We have seen how God speaks to us in variety of means such as creation and through Jesus Himself. Let us return now to Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:3-4 (KJV)

3) Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

4) Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The next two verses contain so much about who Jesus is. The details are not only truly awesome (awe inspiring) but also are written for us so that we may always know the standing of who Jesus is— that He is our redeemer and deserves the utmost reverence because of all that He is. He is God in the flesh.

Notice He is “the brightness of his glory”. I want to center our attention on the word brightness for a moment. Many times in scripture light is given as a descriptor of the Christian life. For instance:

John 8:12 (KJV)

12) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Jesus is the light of life; He is bright. He casts out darkness and shines upon our lives.

This is inherent in Jesus being the express (or exact) image of God’s person. You see Jesus is not only radiant but God Himself and His brightness shines upon your life when you come to Him.

Jesus’ brightness reflects God’s glory His image reflects the person of God and His Word reflects the power of God.

Going back to what was mentioned earlier; do you realize who is speaking to you when God speaks (whether it is God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit)? It is God himself who is to be reverently glorified and who is full of power.

When we speak of Jesus we again are not speaking of a good teacher or wise man, but of God Himself who is “upholding all things by the word of his power”, referring again to Jesus as Creator.

Jesus was not an ordinary man; he was an extraordinary authority. I find too often today that Christians do not approach God in an attitude of awe, especially in regards to church life and worship.

The author of Hebrews goes to great lengths in his descriptions of Jesus to make a very important point. He is demonstrating to the reader that Jesus is God and that in Him is all manner of glory and power.

Since the Scriptures are God breathed, that is they were inspired by the Holy Spirit which is also God, God wants us to know these important truths about Him. He is in fact speaking to us through the author of Hebrews.

I say all of this to emphasize, recognize Jesus' authority and react accordingly. Do not live in fear of this beyond reverential respect but also do not trivialize Him in any manner whatsoever.

Remember that He "by himself purged our sins" through His death on the cross and then "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Why did Jesus sit down? Because, in His words on the cross, it was finished. His mission was complete; He took His rightful place for all eternity next to God the father. Why?

Because He purged our sins and took them all upon Himself to save us. We cannot even fathom the unbearable pain and burden of that. He offered Himself for us.

Picture Jesus after His death on the cross, after His resurrection three days later and after His ascension into heaven, standing before God the Father and taking His place next to Him forever, truly magnificent!

This is also why He is greater than the angels, and not just the angels but He is greater than any person.

Never take for granted that we have these details recorded and preserved for us. They are vital. Think upon them and that Jesus obtained a greater inheritance because of His death, because of what He did for you and for me and for all that will be saved. What is the significance of that?

The significance is that His mission, dying for our sins, taking our place so that we may also have eternal life and be redeemed to freedom from sin, was complete and final.

His sitting down represents that, His name above the angels signifies that, His power to uphold all things and create the universe confirms that, and His brightness extols that.

Let God then speak to you through Jesus, for He wants you to know Him, and be saved. Amen.

In Need of Each Other

Acts 20: 36-38 (KJV)

36) And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37) And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38) Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

In the midst of his third missionary journey the apostle Paul visited with the elders of Ephesus, for what he thought would be the final time, before moving on toward Jerusalem and then Rome.

Paul would in fact return almost a decade later (I Tim. 1:3, KJV) however this was considered by all in attendance a time of farewell and, in hindsight, it more or less was for an entire decade.

I find this an important ending to Acts chapter 20 and one not to be overlooked. It is fraught with intense human emotion. It is a solemn scene signifying the departure of a preacher who was deeply influential in the lives of his friends, the elders of Ephesus.

For the elders, at its simplest level their teacher was leaving and at its most significant level they were losing a close friend, a fellow brother in the faith.

In the departure of this teacher and friend lay many feelings: fear, doubt, anguish, sadness and others.

This was not an easy goodbye. In fact when a Christian says goodbye to another Christian, be it literally or figuratively, it often creates much the same type of situation.

I have found that the Christian life is filled with entrances and departures. Many times other Christians enter into and depart from our lives be it from death, relocation or just drifting apart.

As we march toward heaven the cast of characters that inhabits our life's story and journey changes along with the scenery of our lives (jobs, churches, homes, etc.).

As Christians we can certainly empathize with the Ephesian elders above. They were distraught; Paul was leaving and he was no less concerned.

In reading these verses we are reminded of those Christian friends, family and mentors in our own lives— our own “Pauls” who have come and gone. Some may be already in heaven and others may have simply moved on from our cast of characters and are contributing to the spiritual development and well being of others.

Perhaps they inhabited one act of our lives or multiple. Perhaps they were engaged in the prologue of our Christian life, maybe they presented to us the Gospel for the very first time. Or maybe they were involved in a crisis in our story— a time of sickness or distress. Maybe even in the conclusion of one of our life story arcs such as a graduation. Maybe all of the above, maybe they were a major character in your story. Duration does not necessarily correlate directly to the level of impact they have had on your life.

It is interesting that sometimes those whom we remember most as having a positive influence on our lives might have only been with us for a very short season and others for possibly many years.

Regardless, we know how they helped us along and we do not forget them. And many times we long for that time back, nostalgic for the community, for the friendship or for the season of spiritual growth that abounded in our connection with said person(s).

While not minimizing the feelings we have for those who are no longer pouring into our spiritual lives we must remember to be that person in the lives of those whom we are around too. In turn we become the friend, mentor or leader in their lives.

It can often be easy when reading the Bible to overlook the emotions of the scenes being recorded for us. Sometimes there is distance between us and the recorded events taking place but we must always pay attention to what is going on.

This is an instance where we can see great emotion taking place. Look at the words: “prayed”, “wept sore”, “fell”, “kissed”, “accompanied” etc.

When we read and reflect upon these verses, they speak to us at a deep level emotionally. Why do they speak to us so much?

We have already demonstrated why— because we have faced the exact same departures of dear Christians in our lives. We get it and in turn it hits hard.

However why does it hit us so hard? There is often a different sort of feeling when it comes to the reminiscence of the departure of a Christian in our lives who has meant something to us. (Though I am not devaluing for a second the relationships we have with non-Christians in our lives, for many mean the world to us.)

I posit an interesting question for the reader. To whom are friends and family more important? The non-Christian or the Christian?

Of course they are important to the emotional, psychological, social and spiritual well-being of everyone, but I suggest they are even more so to the Christian for reasons unique to our standing as Christians. But why is that so?

The first reason is that we are under attack and soldiers for Jesus engaged in spiritual warfare. Remember...

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)

12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

In addition...

I Peter 5:8-9 (KJV)

8) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9) Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

This is why we must put on the armor of God and why having other Christians in our lives is so important. This also explains why it can be so sorrowful when they exit from our lives or circles.

We find ourselves left alone on the battlefield with a source of support gone yet with the battle continuing all around us. You see, while loneliness and isolation are good for no man...

Genesis 2:18a (KJV)

18) And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone;

...they are especially not good for us. Our adversary prays on the solitary and the isolated for alone we are weak.

Christian friends, family and mentors are essential to our success and commitment to Jesus in this life. Notice that “the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

It’s not just us; it’s all Christians who undergo the same calamities in this life. Therefore, we cannot go it alone; we need other Christians in our lives. It makes us stronger.

Matthew 18:20 (KJV)

20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

This leads right into the second reason why Christian friends, family and mentors are so vital to the Christian; we are made for community.

Hebrews 10: 24-25 (KJV)

24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We are commanded not to forsake being together. This is referring to church and meetings but it also highlights the tenant that Christianity is not meant to be a solo endeavor.

The benefits of being together are far more numerous than those of being alone; provoking us to good works being just one of them.

Having Christian friends and mentors outside of your church family is also significant and vital. This is the third reason why Christian friends, family and mentors are so important for us.

You see, even outside of your local church family any other Christian you meet is part of your and Jesus' family. Jesus said this Himself and it is reason number three: we are part of God's family...

Mark 3: 33-35 (KJV)

33) And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34) And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35) For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

You see, all Christians are brothers and sisters and parents to us. This is truly magnificent but also carries with it much great importance.

It explains a reason for why it can be so difficult to move forward after a Christian is no longer a part of your life. It is synonymous and unique to the Christian in that when another Christian departs from him he has lost a spiritual family member from his life.

You see, those not born again do not look at others in this manner. Even those whom they consider family (apart from biological family) cannot compare to the fact that other Christians are our brothers, sisters, mother and fathers and ultimately that Jesus is our Heavenly Father.

Back at the dock in Ephesus, the Elders were not just saying goodbye to a friend but a brother and the same went for Paul.

Moreover, these are family not just for “life” but for eternity. The fact that we will see them again also shows the significance of our relationship with them, it’s an eternal one.

Christian friends, family and mentors are all truly family for eternity. We are all part of God’s family and these individuals are vital to our well-being as Christians. They provide community and, additionally, help keep us from falling pray to sin and the devil, for family members do not let other family members go astray.

Therefore celebrate those Christians who have helped you along, kept you from evil and established you in community. At the same time continue your commitment to build up, envelope in community and keep your fellow believers from harm.

Lastly and ultimately thank God for adopting you into His great and glorious family of which He is King. Amen.

A Lost Desire

Romans 6:14 (KJV)

14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

What does this verse mean? To answer this we first need a bit of background to give us the proper perspective and correct interpretation.

The Christian life is a life unlike any other because it is a new life. It begins much like the human life, at birth; that is a new birth.

This is the context and background from which the term “born again” comes from. More specifically it stems from John Chapter 3 in which Jesus meets with Nicodemus, a Jewish Pharisee.

John 3: 3-6 (KJV)

3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The new birth is a spiritual one which supernaturally takes place when we come to Jesus in belief and faith, asking Him to save us and forgive us of our sins.

From the moment we receive His gift of salvation we become embodied with the Holy Spirit and our lives begin to change, for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

When our new life as a Christian begins (with our new spiritual birth) we gain citizenship in heaven (“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot **enter** into the kingdom of God.”) and an eternal perspective (“Except a man be born again, he cannot **see** the kingdom of God.”).

This new perspective enables us to see things as they really are. We see ourselves for what we really are and all the things in this world take on an entirely new meaning.

We see people as they really are, souls lost in need of a savior, and we view life goals differently for now storing up treasures in heaven is our new goal and our new desire.

Matthew 6:20-21 (KJV)

20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Time for an important note; the change that takes place when one is born again, while instant in its effect of saving us, is not always an instant one when it comes to changes in our lifestyle and habits.

Even though we are born again at the moment of faith it often takes time to come to terms with and understand our new life in Christ, the Christian life that is.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV)

6) Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

From the point of salvation until we leave earth for heaven, our new Christian life is a constant refining process of sanctification, or becoming more like Jesus, which will be perfected when we meet Him in heaven.

Sanctification along with our new standing in Him (being redeemed and justified) and the Holy Spirit working in our life are what bring about change in the long term in terms of our earthly life.

Even if the change is not instant it is nonetheless dramatic. Why? Because being born again allows us to no longer be under the dominion of sin. How is that?

Our old self has died, for you cannot become a Christian without having the person you once were put to death and the new person born.

Romans 6:6-7 (KJV)

6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Those are magnificent words; death leads to freedom from sin!

However the death of the old man, that is our sinful unregenerate man, can be scary to some. Just why though would that be?

Because salvation involves a transaction. Jesus died for you so that you may be saved, justified, redeemed and sanctified. This though comes at a price.

Matthew 10:38-39 (KJV)

38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Salvation involves leaving behind all that you know, all of the things familiar and comfortable to the old man, to your old life. You must and will lose things. That is scary for some.

The potential is there to have to put to death your old life, friends and family if they do not align with your new life in Christ. It also means putting to

death your old lifestyle and, what is more, it means putting to death what you love; your natural inclination to sin.

Romans 5:12 (KJV)

12) Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

You see everyone is infected by sin at birth. Ever since Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden of Eden man has been plagued by his natural sinful condition. No matter what we say or do, no matter if we are Christian or not, sin is always there.

Those who deny sin call it a mistake, those who are overwhelmed by it seek relief from guilt and those enslaved by it know not of how it is destroying them and are ever more allured by it.

Sin is what we are born into; it is the great problem of man brought on by the first man, Adam, due to his rebellion (original sin) against God.

Colossians 3:5 (KJV)

5) Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Sin is a very enticing thing. It holds us all in its grip from our first birth until we come to Jesus and even then we are still left in mortal and sinful bodies (the flesh).

Becoming a Christian means giving up the inclination or desire to sin, it also means consistently putting sin to death in your life as a Christian. Those are hard words but true words.

Ask yourself this? Am I ready to have my sinful man crucified with Jesus when I believe on Him and ask Him for forgiveness and to be Lord of my life? Am I willing, as a born again Christian, to consistently battle against my own lusts and sins?

Sin is powerful, so much so that it separates us from God for all eternity if not forgiven through us coming and asking Jesus for forgiveness and placing our faith and trust in Him. You see, in spite of all of sin's power, Jesus is the only remedy!

1 Peter 2:24 (KJV)

24) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Jesus is the only remedy for our sin problem, both the natural sin we are born into the world with and the sinful flesh that we still wrestle with in this life even though we have been born again as Christians.

Just before, I asked if you were ready to have your sinful natural man crucified with Jesus and consistently live battling sin in your life as a Christian. Now you must reverse that equation.

Do not ask if you are ready to give up sin, ask if you are ready to live unto righteousness. You must change your desire, lose the desire to sin and cultivate the desire to be righteous, to be born again. By His stripes we were healed. Ask yourself, am I willing to give up sin for healing?

Every time, no matter how strong the pull of sin in your life is, no matter what you have ever done, salvation is worth it.

Healing is worth it, eternity is worth it, righteousness is worth it and being restored in relationship to your original Creator who loves you and is for you is worth it, beyond anything else in the world.

Let us now return to our main verse.

Romans 6:14 (KJV)

14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Once you are born again and become a new man in whom all things are becoming new, sin no longer has dominion over you. Grace enables us to live free from sin's dominion over us as Christians.

That is true freedom. Freedom from slavery to sin's destructive habits, freedom from guilt, and freedom from death. Remember:

Galatians 2:20 (KJV)

20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Reader, once more if you desire to become a Christian, that verse is what it is all about.

Jesus loves you and gave Himself for you to save you from sin. Christian, if you are still struggling with sin, and you always will in this life, look at our next verse.

Galatians 5:16-18 (KJV)

16) This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Where are you at in your Christian life right now? Does sin have dominion over you? Now you might be wondering why I am asking that, for doesn't the Bible say it shall not have dominion over you?

We need to understand what dominion means; it refers to sin as lord or master over you (Greek 2961 "kurieuo" in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible Royal Publishers Edition, 1975).

Our main verse then is saying that sin shall not be lord or master over you. When we view the verse with this in mind it demonstrates a way by which we can fall into sin while still a Christian.

Besides a lack of putting sin to death in your life and the flesh's constant battle against the spirit, is that we allow sin to have dominion and lordship over our lives. Why would we do this?

Because Christian we have not fully lost our desire to sin. Our old man has died yes, but we still live in the flesh while on earth. The difference is we are no longer slaves to sin as before, now we have the way out through service to a new Lord of our life. Let's finish by looking at our main verse in context of its surrounding verses.

Romans 6:12-14 (KJV)

12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Here is the solution, Christian. Do not let sin, in whatever form it may be, be the lord of your life and instead yield to God.

Do not let sin reign as a lord in your life that you should obey it as a lord and master of your life. Rather obey God and righteousness.

Let His grace be your help and guide through the Holy Spirit. Remember, you are alive from the dead.

Is the desire to sin still present with you? Lose that desire each time it comes back to you, lose the desire to sin and replace it with a desire to serve your true Lord, Jesus Christ.

And to the reader who is not yet a Christian, lose the desire to sin and instead desire righteousness and healing and come to the Savior Jesus who is waiting with open arms for you. Amen.

A Collection of *Thoughts for Along the Journey*

The Christian life is not just the journey of a lifetime; it is the journey of an eternity! In light of this reality it is important that Christians remain confident, encouraged and educated for whatever might come their way.

In this collection of short sermons from *The Greater Heritage* J.R. Waller touches upon topics that will uplift, encourage and help Christians with spiritual growth as they travel along their own Christian journeys.

With subjects ranging from prayer, to sanctification, to Christian maturity and more, every lesson herein is meant to provide the reader with greater understanding of essential Biblical principles and doctrines.



About the Author

J.R. Waller became a Christian at The Wilds Christian Camp at age 13 and over the years has developed a passion for apologetics and theology. He enjoys writing sermons in his spare time and seeking opportunities as a lay preacher.

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