

# In His Image

## 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature;  
the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. NASB

### God's great purpose in Salvation

God has many purposes for which He made the creation. Indeed everything He has made has a specific purpose to fulfill in the grand scheme of His plan for the ages. Everything has a very wonderful and significant reason for existing, and all things ultimately work out into conformity with the purposes of God, according to His Providence. In fact everything that God does has its own purpose.

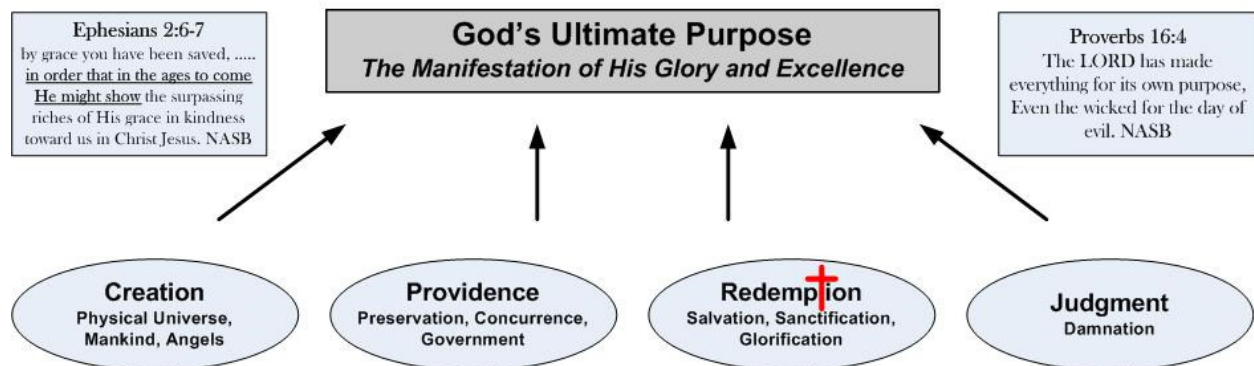
**Proverbs 16:4 - 4** **The LORD has made everything for its own purpose**, Even the wicked for the day of evil. NASB

And this includes salvation. Consider these verses in Ephesians 1.....

**Ephesians 1:11-12** - 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 **to the end** that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NASB

Here, the salvation of the saints is seen to be *“predestined according to God's purpose,”* but notice that this is not God's highest purpose. Oh no, here it says that the predestination of salvation is *“to the end that we.....should be to the praise of His glory!”* Learn then that the salvation of people is NOT God's highest purpose, but it works to the higher purpose of the *“praise of the glory of God!”* So when we ask the question, what is the **highest** purpose of God in saving rebellious sinners, the answer is that His glory should be praised! Why did God create the earth? Why does God save fallen sinners? Why does God rule over history with a mighty Providence? What great purpose is it which makes all other purposes of God subservient to it? What is the chief end for which God created all things? I think it can be most clearly summed up in the statement.....

*“The chief end of God in the creation of all things is to manifest the Glory and Excellency of His own nature as God, and to express through creation, providence and redemption the manifold perfections of His divine character”*



**ALL PURPOSES OF GOD SERVE THE HIGHER PURPOSE OF THE DISPLAY OF HIS GLORY!**

Dear reader, God is a being of such awesome wonder and infinitely profound beauty that the expression of His being is the highest and most glorious idea or concept that can be conceived. Further, the experience of KNOWING GOD IN AN INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP is the most

fulfilling and exhilarating reality that exists for mankind, and it is the highest purpose for which mankind was created, because through this God displays His own glory. As the Westminster Catechism states, *“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”* The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians .....

**1 Corinthians 10:31** - 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**  
NASB

Here the Apostle sums up all our human purposes, he says *“whatever you do.....do it all to the glory of God!”* Dear Reader, here we have purpose, here we have meaning! This is in fact also what the Lord Himself taught us when He gave us the great commandments. He said all the Law and Prophets depend on these two commandments. In other words, you can sum up the entire Old Testament in this.....

**Matthew 22:36-40** - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** 38 **“This is the great and foremost commandment.”** 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."  
NASB

Here Jesus tells us the chief purpose for our existence. It is to *“love God”*, to worship Him with everything that is within us. Consider the meaning of **worship**, [to ascribe worth or value to something] in relation to God’s highest purpose. God seeks to manifest or show forth the excellency of His character, and we are **commanded** to **“love Him and praise Him and revere Him.”** This is why sin is such an abominable failure on the part of mankind, because people thereby fail to glorify God, the highest purpose for which he was made and also the highest purpose God has for making Him.

Therefore whenever we consider God’s purpose specifically in our salvation, we must remember that this fits into the grand scheme of God’s ultimate purpose, **to manifest His own glory** and excellency as God!

### God delights in Himself

Why has God chosen to use a **creation** of this planet earth, including **people and angels**, and a massive rebellion of both, govern it with a mighty **Providence** and glorious judgment in the **ages of history** through the rise and fall of kingdoms and powers and authorities, having worked an amazing **redemption** from that rebellion through His own **incarnation** into human flesh resulting in His own crucifixion, burial and resurrection, and through this central act to play out the great **saga of salvation from sin and from death**? Why does the God of all people bring everyone in judgment before His throne to give an accounting for their own life before Him, and judge each one as individual creatures He has made, according to His holy Law? The whole of **redemptive history** from **creation** to the **eternal state** exists **to manifest His own glory** and excellency as God!

But why is it so important to God to manifest His own glory? This is a profound consideration indeed. The short answer is He delights in the display of His own glory and excellency as God because **He is the paragon** of all that is **good**, the **highest expression of beauty and virtue** in His own nature as God. But how can we explain this. The answer can be seen in the word **“glory”** itself. It can mean **praise** or **honor** or even **fame**....and with God it certainly has that sense about it because His is the **highest** and **most worthy** praise and honor and fame. But it is more than that. **The glory of God is His outshining magnificence, His radiant splendor, His**

**effulgent brilliance and resplendence!** It is seen in His nature as Light! And His glory is much like light in that it shines out, it moves out from the center, much like the sun. The sun cannot help but shine forth because of its very nature. So it is with God, His nature is “**glorious,**” that is it shines outward from center in brilliance and radiant splendor! Like the magnificence of jewels, refracting light in beauty and resplendence, so is God’s nature, with all the facets of His attributes, each one beaming the brightness of glory! This is seen for example with the Shekinah glory of God which was present at the Tabernacle and Temple. When God’s presence was among the people, there was an outshining of glory from His being which could be seen and felt so strongly that it would keep men from performing their duties!

**Exodus 40:34-36** - 34 Then the **cloud covered** the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle**. 35 And **Moses was not able to enter** the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle**. NASB

**2 Chronicles 5:11-14** - 11 And when the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), 12 and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets 13 in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice **to praise and to glorify the Lord**, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and **when they praised the Lord saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,"** then the house, **the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, 14 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God**. NASB

But **God’s glory** is more than this. It is more than just the outshining radiance of His beauty, honor and fame. The **reason His glory shines out** is because of His entire **nature as God**. His nature is the sum total of all His attributes which all exist in His **perfection and excellency** as God which we call His **Goodness!** He is the paragon of all that is good or virtuous. He is in His very nature **virtue**, or Goodness. There is no attribute of God which is not “**good,**” they are all together summed up in the idea of **Goodness**. His love and mercy are good, His justice and wrath are good, His power and knowledge are good, and His self-existence and immutability are good, His immanence, transcendence and infinitude are good as is His eternality and personality! All of His attributes come together in His Goodness! And because this Goodness exists in its highest form in God, it **must shine outward like bright Light**, it must manifest, it must radiate in splendor with brilliance and brightness because it is in itself “**Glorious**” or full of **Glory!** This then is to say that God’s Glory is related to His Goodness in its very nature, or that God’s glory radiates outward because His Goodness is of such magnificent quality that it is glorious by nature, or outshining and radiant because of its overflowing Goodness! This can be seen in many places in Scripture where **God’s Goodness is related** to His **moral perfection**, or His commandments, and these are seen as glorious or even seen in manifestations of His glory.

**Exodus 33:18-34:9** - 18 Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, **show me Thy glory!"** 19 And He said, "**I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you;** and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" 21 Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." 34 Now the Lord said to Moses, "**Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered**..... 5 And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. 6 **Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty**

unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." 8 And Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9 And he said, "If now I have found favor in Thy sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate; and do Thou pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Thine own possession." NASB

See here where Moses asked God to **show him His glory** and God responded first by protecting Moses from the intensity of His full unveiled glory by placing him in the cleft of the rock. Moses brought the two stone tablets as God intended to repeat His commandments during the encounter. Then as God's passes by, He recounts in a spoken **"word"** the glory of His person or nature saying, ***"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."*** But consider what it is that God reveals **AS** His own glory. It is a list of some of His attributes, the virtues of His own moral perfection. See here what the nature of God and His glory are intrinsically. They are the perfection and excellency of His nature, the attributes that make up the divine being. Therefore we should **not** think of the glory of God as **separate** from the moral perfection of ALL of His attributes or the beauty of His holiness [otherly character], or any other aspect of His nature. They are all intrinsically tied together. All of His attributes are equally glorious and good! For a detailed study of this encounter and the meaning of this specific "Word" from God see the appendix "The Gracious Name of God."

So when we consider what **God delights in**, we need to understand that **there is nothing more profound, or beautiful, our pleasant than God's own glory and Goodness**. Therefore He delights in His own glory above all other things, which are all created things and only reflect His glory partially, or veiled images of God's own original Goodness. There are actually numerous biblical texts which explicitly state that God seeks His own glory. In fact, there are so many, it would be exhausting just to list them all much less examine them. But here are a few.....

**Isaiah 48:9-11** - **"For the sake of My name** I delay My wrath, And **for My praise** I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off. 10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 **"For My own sake, for My own sake,** I will act; For how **can My name be profaned?** And **My glory I will not give to another.**" NASB

**Isaiah 43:7** - Everyone who is **called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory**, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made. " NASB

**Jeremiah 13:11** - 11'For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD,' that **they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory;** but they did not listen. NASB

**Psalms 106:7-8** - Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Thy wonders; They did not remember Thine abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 8 Nevertheless **He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.** NASB

**John 7:18-19** - 18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but **He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him,** He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. NASB

**Matthew 5:16** - 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, **and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**" NASB

**John 12:27-29** - 27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But **for this purpose I came to this hour.** 28 **"Father, glorify Thy name."** There came therefore a voice out of heaven: **"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."** NASB

**John 17:24** - 24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, **in order that they may behold My glory,** which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. NASB

**Romans 9:17** - 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and **that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.**" NASB

**1 Peter 4:11** - 11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory** and dominion forever and ever. Amen. NASB

Learn then, the **Bible plainly declares** that **chief** among the **purposes of God** is the **pursuit of His own glory** and the fame of His great name!

And God is the only being for who it is **right** and **proper** to delight in Himself, because He Himself is the paragon of virtue and goodness. All other beings derive their goodness from the Creator and are in their best display, only vague **reflections** of the **source** of all virtue which is God. Therefore it is **improper**, even sinful and blasphemous for creatures to delight in themselves **above the Creator**, who is far more, yes infinitely more delightful than the **creature**. This is what God calls **idolatry** and it violates the first commandment of God's standard for worship, the Ten Commandments. This is the same reason why the second commandment **forbids the creating of images or idols** to represent God, because He cannot be represented by any created things for He is infinitely higher and more beautiful and profound than anything created or that the creature can conceive.

**Exodus 20:2-6** - 2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "**You shall have no other gods before Me.** 4 "**You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.** 5 **You shall not worship them or serve them;** for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. NASB

Grudem comments.... *"Someone might object that it is wrong for God to seek glory for himself in creating man. Certainly it is wrong for human beings to seek glory for themselves, as we see in the dramatic example of the death of Herod Agrippa I. When he proudly accepted the shout of the crowd, "The voice of a god, and not of man!" (Acts 12:22), "immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23). Herod died because he robbed God of glory, glory that God deserved and he did not....But when God takes glory to himself, from whom is he robbing glory? Is there anyone who deserves glory more than he does? Certainly not! He is the Creator, he made all things, and he deserves all glory. He is worthy of receiving glory. Man may not seek glory for himself, but in this case what is wrong for man is right for God, because he is the Creator. It is right not wrong, that he be glorified—in fact, if he did not receive glory from all creatures in the universe, that would be horribly wrong!"* (from **Systematic Theology**, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

Therefore, God delights in His own glory and has made the creation as a means of displaying His Goodness in all of its various attributes.

Now we have laid some ground work to understand **God's purpose in salvation**, which serves the higher purpose of the display of His own glory and excellency as God. In salvation, God displays and manifests His own glory.

**Ephesians 3:8-11** - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and **to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 **in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.** 11 This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus** our Lord, NASB



## Salvation and the image of God

Now as is the case with everything God does, He created people to display His **glory**. He achieved this by making people in **“His own image and likeness.”** Here in the text of Genesis God explicitly tells us that we were made to **bear His image** and to show forth His **likeness**. See here the reason **why** people were created by God.

**Genesis 1:26-27** - 26 Then God said, "**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness**; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 And **God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** NASB

But what does it mean that we were created in the **“image and likeness of God?”** It really is a very simple concept and means that people are like God and represent Him in many divers ways. Grudem comments.... *“Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made “in the image of God.” What does that mean? We may use the following definition: The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God. When God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26), the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to himself. Both the Hebrew word for “image” and the Hebrew word for “likeness” refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an “image” of. The word image can also be used of something that represents something else.... Because “image” and “likeness” had these meanings, Scripture does not need to say something like, The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God in the following ways: intellectual ability, moral purity, spiritual nature, dominion over the earth, creativity, ability to make ethical choices, and immortality [or some similar statement]. Such an explanation is unnecessary, not only because the terms had clear meanings, but also because no such list could do justice to the subject: the text only needs to affirm that man is like God and the rest of Scripture fills in more details to explain this. In fact, as we read the rest of Scripture, we realize that a full understanding of man's likeness to God would require a full understanding of who God is in his being and in his actions and a full understanding of who man is and what he does. The more we know about God and man the more similarities we will recognize, and the more fully we will understand what Scripture means when it says that man is in the image of God. The expression refers to every way in which man is like God.”*  
(from Systematic Theology, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

In this idea of **bearing the image of God**, we see the **reason** and **purpose** for which we were created and **why we exist**. Here is the **significance** and meaning for human life, it is to **be like God** and **bear His image**. And it is for this reason that we know that mankind is the highest created order of beings and has the unique role and responsibility to **bear God's own image**. And as a result, we have also been created to experience God in profound ways. We are created with a capacity to **enjoy the pleasantness and beauty** of the virtue and **Goodness of God**.

**Psalms 16:11** - 11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; **In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.** NASB

**Psalms 17:15** - 15 As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; **I will be satisfied with Thy likeness** when I awake. NASB

**2 Corinthians 4:17** - 17 For momentary, light affliction is **producing for us an eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison NASB

**Ephesians 2:4-7** - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 **in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** NASB

**Ephesians 3:16-19** - 16 that He would **grant you, according to the riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 **may be able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and **to know the love of Christ** which surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled up to all the fullness of God**. NASB

**1 Timothy 6:17** - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, **who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy**. NASB

He created us to be both **receptors** and **reflectors** of **His virtue** and **glory**. Receptors so that we could be **“satisfied”** and **“filled up to all the fullness of God”** so that in **our full satisfaction** we would then seek after and **sound forth the praise of His glory** as an overflow of the enjoyment of His Goodness, the excellency of His own virtue or the pleasantness of His attributes.

**Reflectors** so that we would then **seek after** and **sound forth the praise of His name** and **worship Him** for His own profound excellency, the highest and most worthy glory, the Glory of the Triune God! We were created to put on display the Glory of God and this is the great meaning and purpose of our lives, to **bear His image**. In this we will both glorify and enjoy God! Grudem comments... *“The fact that God created us for his own glory determines the correct answer to the question, “What is our purpose in life?” Our purpose must be to fulfill the reason that God created us: to glorify him. When we are speaking with respect to God himself, that is a good summary of our purpose. But when we think of our own interests, we make the happy discovery that we are to enjoy God and take delight in him and in our relationship to him. Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). David tells God, “In your presence there is fulness of joy in your right hand are pleasures for evermore” (Ps 16:11). He longs to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, “to behold the beauty of the LORD” (Ps 27:4)... Fullness of joy is found in knowing God and delighting in the excellence of his character. To be in his presence, to enjoy fellowship with him, is a greater blessing than anything that can be imagined. How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God....For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. (Ps 84:1-2,10).”* (from Systematic Theology, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

## Enjoying God, Worshipping and becoming like Him

God wants to make us happy and blessed in the enjoyment of Himself so that in our enjoyment of Him we would overflow with praise and worship. Then as we increase in the enjoyment of God’s nature, as we worship Him we become more like Him, displaying with even greater intensity the glory of His virtue in ourselves as we take on and participate in the very nature of God.

**2 Peter 1:2-4** - 2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus** our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

This cannot truly happen in us until we truly appreciate the virtue and Goodness of God’s own nature through the **“true knowledge of Him.”** We must come to know Him personally and intimately, to **“know”** Him truly in our heart. It is **“through”** this **“true knowledge of Him”** that His virtue is **“multiplied”** to us as Peter states, **“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** And this he tells us is how we become like God. We have **“everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him.”** This is to say that we become like God or we **bear His image** and **likeness** in an increasing way, we **“participate in the divine nature,”** in **“godliness,”** through coming to know Him as His

character is “**multiplied**” to us “**in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.**” Therefore Peter tells us to “**apply all diligence**” in the exercise of our “**faith**” to become like Him and take on His wonderful virtue.

**2 Peter 1:5-8** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

Thus the manifest glory of God is increasing in intensity through our lives as we become more like Him, because in becoming like Him we therefore **bear His image**, with greater intensity we manifest and display His excellent goodness as **reflectors** of His image. This is why we were both created and saved. Consider Jesus words in Matthew 5:16 with this in mind.

**Matthew 5:16** - 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, **and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** NASB

And so God calls us to both **worship Him** and to **become like Him**, to bear His image, so that we might put on display His glory through our lives.

The meaning of **worship** is to “**ascribe worth or value to something.**” As we worship God, if it is truly motivated from the heart, we are praising Him because in our hearts we truly value the worth of His person. We value His glory, the sum total of His Goodness, the excellency of His attributes. We value and cherish His patience and mercy, His wisdom and love, His power and knowledge. As we grow in the personal knowledge of God and experience of Him through that knowledge, we grow in our appreciation of His glory, and because in our hearts we truly valuing His Goodness, we seek therefore by default to **become more like Him** because we truly value His nature and want to be like that ourselves. We **value His love**, so we want to be **loving**, because we appreciate love and seek after it to possess it fully. We **value His wisdom**, so we seek to become **wise**, because we have eaten the good fruit of wisdom, and experienced the pleasantness of her who is more valuable than rubies (Prov 3:13-18)! In this way we become what we worship. We long and thirst for Him, and glory in Him, then we long for Him again, and glory in Him again. We feast on the table He has prepared for us in His Word!

**Psalms 42:1-2** - 1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So **my soul pants for Thee, O God.**

**2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;** When shall I come and appear before God? NASB

**Psalms 63:1-5** - O God, Thou art my God; **I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.** 2 Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, To see Thy power and Thy glory. 3 Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise Thee. 4 So I will bless Thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name. 5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. NASB

**Psalms 84:2** - 2 My **soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.** NASB

This process of enjoying, worshipping and becoming like God is very pleasing to God. Grudem comments... “*As we glorify God and enjoy him, Scripture tells us that he rejoices in us. We read, “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isa 62:5), and Zephaniah prophesies that the Lord “will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival” (Zeph 3:17-18).”* (from Systematic Theology, Copyright © 1994 by Wayne Grudem)

But consider that even the wicked become what they worship.

**Psalms 115:1-8** - 1 Not to us, O Lord, not to us, But **to Thy name give glory Because of Thy lovingkindness, because of Thy truth.** 2 Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their God?”



3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. 4 **Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands.** 5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; 6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; 7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. 8 **Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.** NASB

See here how the “nations” are described as having “*god’s that are idols which are the work of man’s hands,*” dead lifeless things made by men. He says in verse 8, “*those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.*” See here that even the wicked become like what they worship, even if it is a dead and lifeless image made with their own hands. But notice here that the prophet told us where the glory and praise properly belonged, “*to thy name give glory, because of thy lovingkindness because of thy truth.*” Here we are told to worship God and give Him glory because He is worthy of our devoted worship. And there is also this element of **trust in God**. Not only do we value and worship Him, but **we earnestly trust in Him** to be our God and **provide** for us, **deliver** us, **heal** us and **meet all of our needs** and even our deepest spiritual needs. We were made as **receptors to experience and enjoy** the Goodness of God and also as **reflectors to shine forth His virtue** in our own being as we become like Him. See in these things that we ultimately begin to take on the nature of what we value, worship and trust in the most.

### Jesus Must be Supreme in Our Affections

What do you love? What do you treasure? Of what can it be said about you that you long for and desire it above all other things in your life? Whatever that thing may be, it can be said that this is what you *worship*. That is because the word *worship* originates from the idea of “*ascribing worth*” or “*value*” to something. So then, that which you **worship** is that which you **value** or ascribe worth to, that which you **treasure** or **adore**. It is that which you **revere** or **honor**, that which you **venerate** or **idolize**, it is that which you **glorify** or consider to be highly **valuable**. Now if Christ is supremely valuable in reality, and there is truly nothing that even comes close to being as infinitely worthy of all glory and honor, worship and adoration as Him, it only stands to reason that to fail to give Him this proper place of honor in our hearts and affections is to be sorely mistaken and **self-deceived** in our **value system**. This is because He is the One who is worthy of Glory and honor!

**Revelation 4:11 - 11 "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power;** for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created." NASB  
**Revelation 5:12-14 – 12 Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."** 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, **"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."** 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped. NASB

If we love something more than Christ, we have **misplaced affections**. He is altogether lovely, therefore not to love Him is to have a **degraded mind**, and to throw contempt on the highest manifestation of human excellence and Divine love. This is why the Scripture pronounces a curse upon those who fail to love Christ.

**1 Corinthians 16:22 - 22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.** Maranatha. NASB  
This is to say if you do not love Christ, you are accursed already! In fact, the very state of being accursed is the state of not properly valuing that which is truly valuable. If we love and adore that which is wretched and worthless, we are then by virtue of this, wretched and worthless. If we truly love what is supremely lovely and virtuous and valuable, we will then become lovely and virtuous in ourselves, because we properly value what is *truly* virtuous. More than this, as we **trust in** and **rely upon Jesus**, our great God and King, **enjoying Him** and our daily

relationship with Him, it has a **transforming** affect that propels us with increasing intensity toward Christ's likeness. We live out this **union in Christ** that we have with Him.

Knowing this, we should be all the more **eager to worship** the Glorious Creator, **Jesus Christ!** Even Jesus Himself taught us that **our love for Him was to exceed all other loves** and affections in our lives.

**Luke 14:25-27** - 25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 **"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. NASB

The word **"hate"** here does not suggest positive antagonism but rather "to love less". Our love for Christ must be so strong that **all other love is like hatred in comparison** to it. In fact, we must hate **"our own lives"** and be willing to lose our lives and **"carry our own cross"** to follow Him. We must love Him more than our own very lives because He is more valuable than our very lives themselves. When we **trust** Him and **rely** upon Him and **enjoy** Him, following Him in obedience to His Lordship, we show forth the genuine character of our love for Him and living for Christ becomes our main life purpose. When we do this, we have **properly placed our affections** on that which is worthy of our love, and our trust in that place where it properly belongs, and we will then become like Him because we value His virtue and long to possess it more than anything else. As we truly love to follow Him and obey His commandments, we begin to live out His virtues and His character which is being created in us by the Holy Spirit. If you **treasure joy**, you will **seek to be joyful**. If you honor and **esteem justice**, you will **seek to be just** in all your affairs. If you esteem love and compassion as most valuable, then you will become loving and compassionate. If **you trust in, honor, esteem, venerate, treasure and glorify God** more than anything else, in all of His glorious virtue, then you will **become like Him**, because you seek to possess Him above all other things. Consider how loving, hungering and thirsting for God takes on a new meaning in this context.

**Psalms 143:5-6** - 5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy doings; **I muse on the work of Thy hands.** 6 **I stretch out my hands to Thee; My soul longs for Thee,** as a parched land. NASB

The most loving and beneficial thing that God can command us is to treasure, esteem and love Him more than anything. This because **He is what is in reality most worthy of being loved**, and this causes us to become like Him because we seek His virtue and want to possess it more than anything else. Thus we see the reason why the greatest of all commandments is to love God! In other words **the highest of priorities for our lives is the love and honor of God**. It is imperative to understand that He must have **first place**, or **preeminence** in our hearts and affections. We must **love Him above** all other things.

**Matthew 6:33** - 33 "But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;** and all these things shall be added to you. NASB

**Matthew 22:36-38** - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment.** NASB

**Philippians 2:12-16** - 12 So then, my beloved, **just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more** in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 **that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach** in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you appear as lights in the world,** 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. NASB

Now as Christ holds **first place** in our affections, and as we live out the **obedience of faith** in Him, we will indeed become like Him, and with increasing intensity we will **bear His image**. We will in fact *“participate in the divine nature”* and **godliness**, or **true piety** will begin to define our character. In this we will be **reflectors of God’s very own glory** in which we will shine through us as *“lights in this world,”* the very purpose for which we were created.

### The Work of the Holy Spirit

One last point to grasp in this whole idea of being **image bearers** as God’s purpose in our salvation is that this is the work of the Holy Spirit in us through regeneration and our ongoing practical sanctification.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** - 17 Therefore **if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.** NASB

Not only were we created **generally** like God in our human nature in the **first creation with Adam**, but when we were powerfully **born again** by the **Holy Spirit** in **regeneration**, we were created more **specifically** like Him as a **new creation in Christ**. And now being **in Christ**, or having **union with Christ**, we have been fashioned like Him in such a way that His divine life and nature have been re-created in us (re-genesis...regeneration), delivering us from the power of sin and death under which we became slaves in the fall. In this new liberty from sin and death, God is powerfully working in us by the Holy Spirit to fashion us in His likeness so that we become **image bearers** in much greater degree and intensity. This process in us is what we call **practical** or **progressive sanctification**. This powerful sanctification by the Spirit is an essential part of salvation and the outworking of our **election** and **regeneration** in our everyday life.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14** - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has **chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** NASB

**1 Peter 1:1-2** - 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit,** that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. NASB

**Titus 3:5-7** - 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,** 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. NASB

Consider how the New Testament describes this **image bearing** as God’s very **purpose** in saving us. It speaks of us being *“conformed to the image of His Son”* as the chief reason for our **predestination, election** and **calling** in salvation, that we would be a people to the *“praise of the glory of His grace!”*

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are **called according to His purpose.** 29 **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,** that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

**Ephesians 1:3-7** - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ,** 4 just **as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 **to the praise of the glory of His grace,** which He freely bestowed on us **in the Beloved.** NASB

**Ephesians 1:11-12** - 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,** 12 **to the end** that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NASB

Here, the salvation of the saints is seen to be *“predestined according to God’s purpose,”* but notice that this is not God’s highest purpose. Oh no, here it says that the predestination of salvation is *“to the end that we.....should be to the praise of His glory!”* And this purpose of God is being powerfully worked and fulfilled in us through our **union with Christ** by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament explicitly connects this **purpose in salvation** as the **work** of the **Holy Spirit** in causing us to **bear God’s image**, having already, past tense, been *“created like God”* in regeneration. As **new creations** in Christ, He has created us in His **image** and **likeness**, and we are now **becoming in practice** what **we already are in reality**, children of God fashioned after the image of our Father and His Son Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49** - 45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a **life-giving spirit**. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; **then the spiritual**. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and **as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly**. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly**. NASB

**Ephesians 4:22-24** - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on **the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth**. NASB

**Colossians 3:10-11** - 10 and have put on **the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him** 11 — a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. NASB

Consider how the Scripture speaks of our *“being transformed”* progressively into God’s image from *“glory to glory”* because we have been created like Him already.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB

See in these Scriptures how the very **work of the Holy Spirit** in salvation is to not only **powerfully re-create** us in regeneration, but also to **powerfully transform** us in progressive sanctification, causing us to be conformed to the image of Christ practically throughout our life.

## Glorification

When He is finished with the work of **progressive Sanctification**, the process of conforming us to His image practically, we shall ultimately take on His image in much fullness and be *“like Him”* at the resurrection, on the day of Glory! We call this **glorification**.

**1 John 3:2-3** - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is**. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. NASB

**Philippians 3:20-21** - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54** - 50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed**. 53 **For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality**. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. NASB

This is the eternal state, to experience the **fullness of the glory of God** (as receptors) and to sing forth the praises of His glory as an overflow of the enjoyment of His Goodness (as reflectors).



## Virtue, Vice and the nature of God

Having considered that the purpose of God in salvation and the process of **practical sanctification** is for God to **conform us into His image** by the work of the Holy Spirit, it is important to understand how the image of God and His character is related to how we live our Christian lives in practice, and how that relates to both God's character and ours. In becoming like God, we are taking on His character and "*participating in the divine nature*" and growing evermore in His likeness by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Let us now consider the important truth that **God is Holy**. That is, He is **set apart** from all other created beings in **moral purity, perfection and self-existence** as the Holy Creator God. The holiness of God is one of God's attributes, and one in fact that characterizes all of God's other attributes. Therefore God's love and mercy are holy, as is His wisdom and justice are holy, that is, they possess a **divine quality** that is **infinite, perfect and complete** in such a way as to be set apart from other kinds of love and mercy, wisdom and justice in the creation. God's majesty and beauty are holy majesty and holy beauty being infinitely and perfectly majestic and beautiful beyond all other things that exist. Moreover, all of God's attributes are **set apart from evil** in every way because of the moral purity of God's holiness. All of God's attributes are completely **pure and untainted** by any kind of impurity of evil. In fact **God's own holiness is the antithesis of evil** and the very standard by which evil is seen and understood. Therefore God hates what is evil and loves what is good, and this is a major theme in the Bible and it is major theme in God's relations with people and His purposes throughout redemptive history. Kevin DeYoung comments... *"There is no question that holiness is one of the central themes in the Bible. The word 'holy' occurs more than 600 times in the Bible, more than 700 when you include derivative words like holiness, sanctify and sanctification. You can't make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God is intent on making a holy people to live with Him forever in a holy heaven. The whole system of Israel's worship revolves around holiness. That's why you have a holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle/temple), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by a holy law, so that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* Make no mistake about it God is holy and He expects His people to be holy as well. This He accomplishes through the holy work of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit within us!

Now this **holiness of God** has everything to do with our **image bearing** and our **Christian practice** as God seeks to **sanctify us** (make us holy) in our character and in our practice, just like He is and just like He does. Therefore He commands us to be holy, just like Him. He calls us to live a holy life and emulate His holy character. This then becomes a major theme in the New Testament as it was given to us by our Lord Jesus and the Apostles.

**Matt 5:48** - 48 "Therefore **you are to be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

**2 Corinthians 7:1** - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 **instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly** in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds**. NASB

**1 Peter 1:14-16** - 14 As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the former lusts** which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior**; 16 because it is written, **"You shall be holy, for I am holy."** NASB

Now because God is holy, perfectly pure and undefiled in every part of His character, He expects holiness from us, His holy people who He has set apart to reflect His character and bear His image. Jerry Bridges comments; *“God rightfully demands perfect holiness in all of His moral creatures. It cannot be otherwise. He cannot possibly ignore or approve of any evil committed. He cannot for one minute relax His standard of holiness. Rather He must say as He does say, “So be holy in all you do”...1 Pet 1:15...”*

It is important to remember the **glory of the Gospel** when we start to focus on **God’s expectation of our personal holiness**. We have a **positional righteousness** or **positional sanctification** before God on the basis of Christ’s life and death (discussed in detail below). We cannot forget that **we have been cleansed** once for all by the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross, and His perfect life of righteousness has been imputed to us by faith. We stand in the spotless righteousness of Christ, God’s wrath toward our sin has been appeased (**propitiation**), our guilt has been removed (**expiation**), Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to us by faith (**imputation**), and all of this has brought about **reconciliation** with God. God has now **declared us righteous** in His sight on the basis of Christ’s perfect life and death. This is called **Justification by Faith**. We are now in a state of grace having all our sins forgiven and possessing the hope of eternal life. If you have been born again by the Holy Spirit and believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ as a result, all of these wonderful blessings from God are surely yours! But now that we have been saved by the grace of God through faith in our Lord Jesus alone, **God expects us to live in holiness** and prove the reality of our faith and love toward Him in obedience to His holy Word! At the same time that our sins are forgiven, God is commanding us to forsake our sins and behave in a holy way.

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 **instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly** in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds**. NASB

**1 Peter 1:14-16** - 14 As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the former lusts** which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves also in all your behavior**; 16 because it is written, **“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”** NASB

But **what does holiness look like in our lives?** In short, it is conformity to God’s holy character and also His practice. We are to be holy in our hearts and that in turn produces holiness in our practice, our daily lives. Therefore **God’s Word is very specific** about what **holiness** actually looks like both in our heart and in our life. The Word is filled with instruction and exhortations toward this end. The New Testament therefore calls us to **“put off”** the evil deeds of the flesh, the old nature of sin which still lives in us, and to **“put on”** Christ, or the new nature which has been re-created in us at regeneration.

**Romans 13:12-14** - 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. **Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light**. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts**. NASB

**Colossians 3:8-11** - 8 But now you also, **put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, **since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices**, 10 **and have put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him NASB

These **deeds of the flesh**, or **acts of the sinful nature** are called **vices**. They are thoughts, words and deeds that the Bible identifies as **evil**. One thing is sure, God's Word calls out sin by name and explains that it is deadly, destructive and contrary to God's commanded will and very displeasing to Him. Vice is sin and evil and God hates it and God judges and reproves those who commit it. Therefore God's Word is crystal clear about what sin is, giving whole **lists of vices** and telling us to forsake them. The **vices** are **contrary** to the character and **nature of God**. In contrast to these vices are the **virtues of God**, which give to us a very specific definition of what holiness looks like. **Virtue** manifests itself in thoughts, words and deeds just like vices. **Virtues** are extolled as pleasing to God, beneficial to ourselves and our neighbor, and opposite of vices. Therefore God's Word is crystal clear about what virtue is, giving whole **lists of virtues** and telling us to perform them and allow them to define our character. **Virtue** is **consistent** with the character and **nature of God**. And so we see both virtue and vice described in detail in the New Testament giving us instruction as to how to live and please God, what TO do and what NOT to do in order to live a holy life. Holiness looks like a life lived in virtue instead of vice. Growing in **personal holiness** and **practical sanctification** are effectively the **same thing**. We grow in holiness as we are conformed to the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Holiness and wickedness are held in stark contrast in the Christian life, as the below **virtue** and **vice lists** put on display.

**Vice lists** - Here is a **list** of Scriptures that define **vices** for us and show us what the character of the **evil** and **wicked** people are. These vices do not please God and are the kind of behavior that characterize the wicked and unbelieving people of the world, who do not know God, obey Jesus Christ, and will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

**Mark 7:21-23** - 1 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the **evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.** 23 "All **these evil things** proceed from within and defile the man." NASB

**Romans 1:26-32** - 26 For this reason God gave them over to **degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned **the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts** and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all **unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;** 32 and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also **give hearty approval to those who practice them.** NASB

**Romans 13:13-14** - 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in **carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.** NASB

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - 9 Or do you not know that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; **neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.** 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

**Galatians 5:19-22** - 19 Now the **deeds of the flesh** are evident, which are: **immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these,** of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that **those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.** NASB

**Ephesians 4:31** - 31 Let all **bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.** NASB

**Colossians 3:5-9** - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to **immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** 6 For it is on account of these

things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: **anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another**, since you laid aside the old self with its **evil practices**, NASB

**1 Timothy 1:8-10** - 8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are **lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers**, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, NASB

**Revelation 21:8** - 8 "But for the **cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars**, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." NASB

These vices are in fact the wicked deeds that characterized our former life as unregenerate sinners and as Christians we are called to forsake these sins, to make war against them and **"put off"** these acts of the sinful nature, through faith in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Virtue lists** - Here is a list of Scriptures that define **virtues** for us and what the character of **godly** believing born again **Christians** should be like. These virtues are very pleasing to God and are the kind of behavior that should characterize the lives of Christians, who are **image bearers** being conformed to God's image by the power of the Holy Spirit within them.

**Romans 12:9-19** - Let **love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge**, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. NAS

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** - 4 **Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;** 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. NASB

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Ephesians 4:32** - 32 And **be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other**, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. NASB

**Colossians 3:12-15** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And **let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**. NASB

**2 Peter 1:5-7** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence**, in your faith supply **moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**; 6 and in your knowledge, **self-control**, and in your self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, **godliness**; 7 and in your godliness, **brotherly kindness**, and in your brotherly kindness, **love**. NASB

These virtues are in fact the character and nature of the Holy Spirit who lives in us and the **end goal** of our **growth in holiness** for our daily lives. These **virtues** should now begin to **characterize** our life as Christians with ever **increasing intensity** as we take on the **image of God** more and more by the work of the Holy Spirit in us. In our struggle against the sinful nature we are to renew our minds with the beautiful and wonderful thoughts of the virtues of God, longing for and pursuing His righteousness in our daily life as children of God, born from above.



In his book, “The Hole in our Holiness,” Kevin DeYoung gives these virtue and vice lists and goes on to describe a few other important things that define personal holiness. He adds;

- Clean Conscience
- Obedience to God’s Commands
- Christlikeness

Surely our **conscience guides** us by the prompting of the Holy Spirit to **obey God’s commandments** and be virtuous. And as we have discussed, **becoming like Christ** in our character and practice is what bearing the image of God means. DeYoung makes the contrast of virtue and vice in the Christian life really clear. He writes, “*You can think of holiness, to employ a metaphor, as the sanctification of your body. The mind is filled with the knowledge of God and fixed on what is good. The eyes turn away from sensuality and shudder at the sight of evil. The mouth tells the truth and refuses to gossip, slander, or speak what is coarse or obscene. The spirit is earnest, steadfast, and gentle. The heart is full of joy instead of hopelessness, patience instead of irritability, kindness instead of anger, humility instead of pride, and thankfulness instead of envy. The sexual organs are pure, being reserved for the privacy of marriage between one man and one woman. The feet move toward the lowly and away from senseless conflict, divisions, and wild parties. The hands are quick to help those in need and ready to fold in prayer. This is the anatomy of holiness,*” end quote. This is why the **Bible** is so **specific** about what **virtue** and **vice** really are. This is so we can discern **vice** in our live and **mortify** it or put it to death, or **put it off**. It is also so we can clearly see what **virtue** is and **vivify** or express the life of God which is in us by **putting on** these virtues.

**Colossians 3:5-9** - 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to **immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry**. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: **anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth**. 9 **Do not lie to one another**, since you laid aside the old self with its **evil practices**, NASB  
**Colossians 3:12-15** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; 13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And **let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**. NASB

Notice the pattern in these letters to New Covenant Christians concerning the practice of Christian life. **Put off the old nature** of vice and sin and **put on the new nature** of virtue and righteousness.

**Ephesians 4:20-24** - 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, **in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit**, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and **put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth**. NASB

**Ephesians 4:25-32** - 25 Therefore, **laying aside falsehood, speak truth**, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 **Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need**. 29 **Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear**. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice**. 32 **And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you**. NASB

Further, these are **moral** issues. A common word used to describe virtue in our culture is **morality**. **Virtue** is by nature **moral** and **vice** by nature **immoral**. So when we speak of morality we speak of that which is consistent with God, His nature and His holy standard in the Bible. The Bible gives the only **objective truth** concerning morality. The culture may seek to define its own standard of morality, either by emotions, feelings or just what is popular. But the only true and proper **standard** for **morality** is of course God and His nature, which defines what virtue and vice, sin and righteousness, right and wrong are. **Good** and **evil** are **defined** by the *holy character and nature of God* who made the world and governs it by His Providence! People in the culture may think what they will, but ultimately they will give an account of their morality in life to God, who **judges** all people impartially, **according** to His own *holy moral standard*. Therefore God desires our lives to be **holy**, reflecting His **holiness** as His own **holy** people. This is why the sanctification process and the Christian life in general is essentially about **personal holiness**, as we seek to both glorify and enjoy God. We **glorify** Him when we put off sin and put on virtue by the prompting of the Spirit and the Word, and we also **enjoy** Him as we take on His nature and begin to bear His image in greater likeness. Living a life of true virtue is in fact glorifying and enjoying God to the fullest.

**1 Peter 1:14-16** - 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but **like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."** NASB

Consider then that God has made our ability to discern good from evil, virtue from vice very easy throughout the Bible. The below chart summarizes much of this discussion and clarifies the dichotomy between good and evil and some elements of how it relates to God and to the Christian life.

Virtue	Vice
God's Nature	Violates God's Nature
Good – Moral Righteousness	Sin – Evil – Immoral Wickedness
New Nature	Old Nature
Put on	Put off
Pleases God	God hates it
Vivification	Mortification

As we have learned, **God's great purpose** in **salvation** is to fashion us **in His image**. This He does because He ultimately delights in His own character and nature above all other things and is zealous to see His glory expressed in and through His creation, of whom mankind is the pinnacle. The salvation of mankind from the fall into sin is God's chief way in which He makes His glory known in the course of History, including the eternal state in the New Heavens and Earth. Therefore we are said to be His **"New Creations"** in Christ and **"predestined to be conformed into His image"** and likeness. As God will ultimately accomplish this at **Glorification** finally for us, He has told us to pursue it with our whole heart as we love Him and serve Him because of Christ. This **sanctification** pursuit is the main goal of the Christian life.

## Sanctification

### 1 Peter 1:15-16

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;  
because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." NASB

In the “*ordo salutis*” or **order of salvation**, **sanctification** is that part of **salvation** that begins at **regeneration** and continues until the resurrection, being terminated by **glorification**. It follows **conversion** (faith and repentance), **justification**, and **adoption**, all of which are birthed by regeneration and happened apparently simultaneously. Sanctification then issues forth until death. **Sanctification is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time.** In this process God by the Word and the Spirit, molds us more and more in our whole person so that we take on His very character in greater degree over time. We are said to “*become partakers of the divine nature*” by “*His magnificent and precious promises*.” Through this divinely ordered process, God “*multiplies His grace and peace*” to us “*through the true knowledge of God*.” God **increases His virtue** in us as we come to truly know Him.

2 Peter 1:2-4 - 2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus** our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

Not only this, but as a result of God working by the Word and the Spirit in us, He calls us to “*work out our salvation*,” making every **effort** by faith, or “*applying all diligence in your faith*,” cooperating with God because God is at work in you to do His will and pleasure.

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** NASB

2 Peter 1:5-8 - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

And this sanctification affects the **whole person** throughout our life, until when we die, when we are ultimately **glorified** in His presence (see page 12). John Murray comments; “*When we speak of sanctification we generally think of it as that process by which the believer is gradually transformed in heart, mind, will, and conduct and conformed more and more to the will of God and to the image of Christ until at death the disembodied spirit is made perfect in holiness and at the resurrection his body likewise will be conformed to the likeness of the body of Christ’s glory. It is biblical to apply the term “sanctification” to this process of transformation and conformation.*” **John Murray – Definitive Sanctification**

<http://reformedaudio.org/audio/murray/Murray%20-%20Definitive%20Sanctification.pdf>

**Sanctification** has at its core the idea of purity or **holiness**. The root idea of the words for holiness and holy is, to be **set apart** for God’s own special use. God’s people are therefore called **holy**. The biblical term [GK. haggios] “*saint*” by which Christians are called in Scripture, means “**holy ones**.” Christians are God’s holy people set apart for His own special use.

I repeat Kevin DeYoung's statement here; *"There is no question that holiness is one of the central themes in the Bible. The word "holy" occurs more than 600 times in the Bible, more than 700 when you include derivative words like holiness, sanctify and sanctification. You can't make sense of the Bible without understanding that God is holy and that this holy God is intent on making a holy people to live with Him forever in a holy heaven. The whole system of Israel's worship revolves around holiness. That's why you have a holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle/temple), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by a holy law, so that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* end quote ... In the Old Testament the language of holiness is typically reserved for religious and ceremonial practice, although it is used in a moral sense as well. But in the New Testament, it is strictly moral and ethical. Bruce Demarest comments; *"Holiness...In everyday living, inner freedom from evil thoughts and attitudes (Eph 5:27, Heb 3:1), abstinence from immoral acts (1 Thes 4:3-4, 1 Pet 1:15), and a positive commitment to good and neighbor (Col 3:12-14, Tit 1:8). Following Pentecost, holiness manifests itself in the fruit of the Spirit in redeemed lives. Holiness, in a word, is Christlikeness daily manifested in the midst of a godless world."* The Cross and Salvation by Bruce Demarest – Crossway

**Holiness** in the New Testament concerns our **position** before God based on the finished work of Christ (**Positional Sanctification**), AND how we behave in the practice of the Christian life (**Practical Sanctification**). When we speak about **holiness** we speak about **sanctification**.

### Positional and Practical Sanctification

*"Sanctification,"* writes Wayne Grudem, *"is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."* This of course is a biblically accurate definition of the part of salvation we call **sanctification**. Much of the language of the New Testament speaks of **sanctification** as this **progressive process**. However, it also speaks of sanctification, in certain texts, as a **completed work** which has **already taken place**. This is what we call the **"Positional"** aspect of sanctification, or **Positional Sanctification**. This is because God's people have been cleansed **in the sight of God** or **before Him**, having been made **holy** or **sanctified** by the work of Christ. In other words, we hold a **position before God**, which is **"in Christ"** and therefore we have been cleansed, washed, made holy, and purified by the work of Christ alone, and this has been appropriated to us by faith in Him. The New Testament makes reference to this **Positional Sanctification** in several places.

**Hebrews 10:10, 14** - 10 By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**..... 14 For by one offering **He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified**. NASB

**1 Corinthians 1:30-31** - 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, **who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption**, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." NASB

**Colossians 1:21-22** - 22 But now he has reconciled you **by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation** NASB

**1 Corinthians 6:11** - 11 And such were some of you; **but you were washed, but you were sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB

See in these Scriptures that there is an **aspect** of **sanctification** which is **already accomplished**. In fact, what Christ accomplished for us was a **perfect righteousness** before God by His perfect life and death, which is applied to us **by faith** when we believe. We were in fact completely **purified** and **cleansed** from our sins, **past, present** and **future** by what Christ accomplished.



This **Positional Sanctification** is very much like Justification and differs from **Practical or Progressive Sanctification** in its nature. The following chart is depicting Grudem's view of the differences between Justification and Progressive Sanctification.

Justification & Positional Sanctification	Sanctification Practical or Progressive
Legal Standing	Internal Condition
Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate with God
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than others

In summary, because **Positional Sanctification** has already been completed by Christ, it is therefore **perfect** and **complete**.

However, the Bible also speaks about **Sanctification** as an **ongoing process**. This is the common use of the word sanctification (and doctrine) which speaks of the Practical or Progressive and ongoing process which continues in our life until the resurrection. As we said earlier, **Sanctification is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time**. But as we have said, it is a **cooperative process** where we are also called to exert effort and diligence to see it come to fruition. Concerning the fact that **sanctification** is a **“cooperative”** and/or **“synergistic”** process, consider this quote by JI Packer; *In sanctification, the Holy Spirit "works in you to will and to act" according to God's purpose; what he does is prompt you to “work out your salvation” (i.e., express it in action) by fulfilling these new desires (Phil. 2:12-13). Sanctification, however, is in one sense synergistic – it is an ongoing cooperative process in which regenerate persons, alive to God and freed from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:11, 14-18), are required to exert themselves in sustained obedience. God's method of sanctification is neither activism (self-reliant activity) nor apathy (God-reliant passivity), but God-dependent effort (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10-14; Heb. 12:14). Sanctification* – Consider how Packer explains how the synergism works. He says that **God prompts us** by the Spirit, having already freed us from the dominion of sin and made alive to God in regeneration, we put forth God-dependent effort. See then that **God is the primary agent** and **our effort is secondary**. John Murray comments about this cooperation with God. *“While we are constantly dependent upon the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, we must also take account of the fact that **sanctification is a process** that draws within its scope the conscious life of the believer.... Neither is the relation **strictly one of co-operation as if God did his part and we did ours** so that the conjunction or co-ordination of both produced the required result. **God works in us and we also work**. But the relation is that **because God works we work**.”* *Redemption Accomplished and Applied page 148*...Now see how both Packer and Murray are very careful to describe **God** as the **primary worker** in this **cooperative process**. The truth is without God first giving us the Spirit and regenerating us, freeing us from sin's dominion, and Christ having brought about reconciliation through His active and passive obedience, we would be hopelessly lost, remaining dead in our transgression and sin. Let us acknowledge then that God is indeed primary, even in

sanctification, and because of this fact, He gets the glory for it. In fact all three members of the Godhead play a role in sanctification (1 Thes 5:23-24, Heb 12:5-11, Heb 13:20-12, 1 Cor 1:30, 1 Pet 2:21) although the Holy Spirit has the specific ministry of applying redemption to us in sanctification. This is why we say that **sanctification is wholly the work of God**, because He is the **primary cause** of it and the one who determines to what **degree** we will be practically sanctified in this life (Rom 12:3-6). The Bible explicitly states that God is so sovereignly in control in sanctification that He ***“is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”***

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** NASB

In fact **God’s role** in Sanctification is emphasized in several places in the New Testament. Peter and Paul both tell us that our being ***“chosen for salvation”*** is **wrought by the Holy Spirit in sanctification**, that is, that our **election** is **applied** by the **sanctification of the Spirit** in the course of life.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-15** - 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit** and faith in the truth. 14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. NASB

**1 Peter 1:1-2** - 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **by the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. NASB

And God’s role in sanctification is seen in large degree in the book of Hebrews. In chapter 12 God is seen as a **disciplining Father** working His righteousness in us through the trials and hardships of life, ***“that we might share in His holiness.”***

**Hebrews 12:5-12** - 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; 6 **For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.**" 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; **shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?** 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.** 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. NASB

And in chapter 13 we are told that God both ***“equips”*** us to do His will and is ***“working in us.”***

**Hebrews 13:20-21** - 20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 **equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. NASB

Of course we have statements that explicitly tell us that sanctification is wholly of God and entirely brought about by Him.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** - 18 But **we all**, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.** NASB

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** - 23 Now may **the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely**; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.** NASB

See then that **God** is the **primary cause** and **agent** in Sanctification, He makes us holy.

## **Our Role – Active and Passive**

However, as we have seen, **God works in sanctification and we work**. It is an ongoing cooperative process. God's work is primary and **our effort is secondary**. Therefore we are called to **God-dependent effort** throughout the New Testament. This can be seen in several places. Consider that we are "**led by the Spirit**" indicating that our very lives are directed by the Holy Spirit as we progress toward Christlikeness.

**Romans 8:12-14** - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; **but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** 14 **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God,** these are sons of God. NASB

**Galatians 5:16-18** - 16 But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another**, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 **But if you are led by the Spirit,** you are not under the Law. NASB

Moreover, we are commanded by God to "**work out**" our "**salvation**" and in a very ardent and reverent way he says, "**with fear and trembling**" (Phil 2:12).

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** NASB

And when Paul says "**work out your salvation**" he uses the term **salvation** here NOT as the **initial justification** that occurred when we believed, but as **the ongoing process** of further realizing the blessings and benefits of salvation (or sanctification) in our daily lives. We are to **exert God-dependent effort** to press on toward Christlikeness, thus **bearing His image** in greater degree, and experiencing the enjoyment of Christ's virtue more and more as a result.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

**Philippians 3:10-14** - 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 **Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.** 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and **reaching forward to what lies ahead,** 14 **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** NASB

**Hebrews 12:14** - **Pursue** peace with all men, **and the sanctification** without which no one will see the Lord. NASB

Notice here in these Scriptures that we are to "**cleanse ourselves**" and to "**press on toward the goal**" and to "**pursue...sanctification,**" clearly showing that we are called to exert effort by the Spirit to "**perfect holiness**" in this life. Many passages in the Bible describe different aspects of our role and explain it as an **active role** on our part.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body,** you will live. NASB

**1 Thessalonians 4:3-8** - 3 For **this is the will of God, your sanctification;** that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that **each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,** 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For **God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.** 8 Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. NASB

**1 John 3:2-3** - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. 3 And **everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.** NASB

**1 Corinthians 6:18-20** - 18 **Flee immorality.** Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy

Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body**. NASB

Further, this **active role** that we play is also seen with hearty images in the New Testament which show the **Christian maturing process** as one of **great difficulty**. These images are but not limited to:

- **Struggle/Race –**

**1 Timothy 4:10-11** - 10 For it is **for this we labor and strive**, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. NASB

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** - 24 Do you not know that **those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win**. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but **I buffet my body and make it my slave**, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. NASB

**Hebrews 12:1-2** - Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NASB

- **Conflict/Tension –**

**Romans 7:15-23** - 15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for **I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate**. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for **the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not**. 19 **For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish**. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, **I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me**. 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind**, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. NASB

**Galatians 5:17** - 17 For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another**, so that you may not do the things that you please. NASB

- **Battle/Warfare –**

**Ephesians 6:10-13** - 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 **Put on the full armor of God**, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places**. 13 Therefore, **take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day**, and having done everything, to stand firm. NASB

**1 Timothy 6:12** - 12 **Fight the good fight of faith**; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. NASB

**2 Timothy 2:3-4** - 3 **Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus**. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. NASB

- **Chastening/Suffering -**

**Philippians 1:29-30** - 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, **but also to suffer for His sake, 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me**, and now hear to be in me. NASB

**Hebrews 12:10-11** - For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness**. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; **yet to those who have been trained by it**, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. NASB

**1 Peter 4:15-19** - 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but **if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that**



**name let him glorify God.** 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, **let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right. NASB

And so we are called to **strive and exert God dependent effort** to see the battle or race won and the process of becoming like Christ completed to greater and greater degree.

**2 Peter 1:5-8** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB  
**Hebrews 6:9-12** - 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and **things that accompany salvation**, though we are speaking in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget **your work and the love which you have shown** toward His name, in **having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.** 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 **that you may not be sluggish, but imitators** of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. NASB

Our role is very much active and this **active role** is the **major goal of Christian life**. This of course is because God's chief purpose in our salvation is to manifest His own glory and excellence as God, and **He does** this in us **through sanctification, causing us to bear His image in greater degree** throughout the Christian life. This is emphasized again and again in large sections of the New Testament such as Romans 12-14, Ephesians 4:17-6:20, Phil 4:4-9, Col 3:1-4:6. 1 Pet 2:11-5:11, 2 Pet 1:5-8, 1 John 2-3). Since this is the major goal of Christian life, see then how important it is that **we continue to actively pursue holiness** in our lives until we achieve the goal, Christlikeness.

Now there is also a **passive role in sanctification** that we play and it is a very important part of the process. This passive role is seen in texts that encourage us to **yield ourselves in faith or trust in God**, and **looking to Him in prayer** for strength and in **dependence upon Him** for the grace and help that we need to become like Him and obey Him. In fact, most everything we do in Christian life, if it is to be done to the glory of God is an **act of faith and trust in God's strength** to accomplish. This is surely true about the process of mortifying sin and behaving in a godly righteous way.

**Romans 6:11-14** - 11 Even so **consider yourselves to be dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and **do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin** as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. NASB

**Colossians 3:5** - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. NASB

We are **dependent** on the Holy Spirit's work to grow in sanctification, and this can be clearly seen in texts like Phil 2:13-13 and Romans 8:12-13.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live. NASB

Grudem comments on this passive role in sanctification; *"Unfortunately today, this "passive" role in sanctification, this idea of yielding to God and trusting him to work in us "to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13), is sometimes so strongly emphasized that it is the only thing people are told about the path of sanctification. Sometimes the popular phrase "let go and let God" is given as a summary of how to live the Christian life. But this is a tragic distortion of*

*the doctrine of sanctification, for it only speaks of one half of the part we must play, and, by itself, will lead Christians to become lazy and to neglect the active role that Scripture commands them to play in their own sanctification.” (from Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem)*

Nevertheless we not only yield and submit ourselves to His divine will, but we are called to **exert God-dependent effort to press on** toward Christlikeness, as He molds and fashions us, thus **bearing His image** in greater degree. Below we will talk further about the role of the Gospel and of faith in Sanctification.

### **Sanctification Continues throughout life**

Some have maintained that the idea of attaining **sinless perfection** in the Christian life is a **real possibility**. But the Bible nowhere teaches this, in fact it clearly teaches that sanctification continues throughout life until death and **only at the resurrection will we be finally free** from the constraints of mortality and bodies subject to temptation and sin. This erroneous teaching of **“perfectionism”** is founded on certain scriptures where we are given the goal of sanctification, which is to mortify and vivify (put off-put on) calling us to seek after the perfection of God’s holiness in our lives such as;

**Matthew 5:48** - 48 "Therefore **you are to be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB

**2 Corinthians 7:1** - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

**1 John 3:4-6** - 4 **Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness**; and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; **no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him**. NASB

In the case of Matthew 5:48 when Jesus calls us to God’s perfection, we see the clear and obvious goal of all Christian character and conduct, which is the very nature of God Himself. Shall the God who is holy and seeks to conform us to His character call us to less than is own perfection? We are called to strive for perfection, that is clear. But **nowhere** does the Scripture say or **even imply** that **such a goal can be obtained**, but on the contrary it clearly teaches that we are **not capable of attaining** such a goal (Rom 6-7, Gal 5:16-24, Phil 3:10-14), but are in many places **urged to strive** for it (Eph 4-6, Col 3, Rom 12:9-21, 1 Pet 1:13-5:9).

**James 3:2** - 2 For **we all stumble in many ways**. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. NASB

**1 Peter 2:11** - 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers **to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul**. NASB

Both James and Peter acknowledge (as does John 1 Jon 3:7-10) that we sin in various ways because we are at war with **“lusts”** in our soul and we therefore **“stumble in many ways.”** And Paul gives this warfare an extensive treatment in Romans 7, but elsewhere is continually urging us to strive against sin and press on to the goal of heavenward perfection.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness** in the fear of God. NASB

But the context of 1 John 3 clearly debunks the idea of sinless perfection. For if verses 4-6 were teaching sinless perfection, then verses 7-10 would disqualify every single Christian from salvation because we all continue to sin in the course of daily life.

**1 John 3:3-11** - 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; **the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil**; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 **No one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and **he**

**cannot sin**, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

When John discusses the idea of “**practicing sin**” he refers to the idea of ongoing serious unrepentant sin and not the daily struggle against sin that every Christian faces. The present tense of the Greek verbs here speak of **continual** or **habitual activity**. This is seen clearly in the severity of the language of the context. When he says that “*no one who is born of God practices sin*” and “*cannot sin*,” the statement could not possibly be true, since all of us who are born of God do in fact continue to sin throughout life. Consider the idea, do you ever sin? What John refers to is the person who lives in licentiousness wherein they have no will to struggle against sin but continue in the practice of serious sin unabated by a desire to surrender to the law and Spirit of God. The subject of John’s reference is a person ruled and dominated by sin, but Christians have been freed from the ruling or dominating power of sin (Rom 6:5-10, 22). It is the **antinomian** attitude which Paul denounces in Romans 6:1-2, “*shall we continue to sin that grace may abound?.... may it never be*” is his answer.

Romans 6:1-2 – 1 What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 NASB

Paul later describes the great **warfare** in the Christian life **against sin** which seeks to dominate us, but inwardly we “*delight in the law of God*” struggling against sin both without (word and deed) and inwardly (thought).

Romans 7:19-25 - 19 For **the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.** 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, **but sin which dwells in me.** 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. 22 **For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.** 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. NASB

It is very apparent that Paul generally characterizes the Christian life as having a **struggle between the flesh and Spirit** as a **normative** and **ongoing** reality, to which he gives the directive for Spirit dependent self-denial, “*so that you may not do the things you please.*” These “*things you please*” he describes as “*against the Spirit*” as he describes the ongoing “*desire of the flesh*” or sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16-18 - 16 But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another**, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18 But if you are led by the Spirit**, you are not under the Law. NASB

He further describes the **ongoing mortification** of the flesh in Spirit led effort as our **obligation** to God as His sons.

Romans 8:12-14 - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; **but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** 14 **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God. NASB

Of course the struggle against sin has always been a struggle for the people of God, a fact to which the **Old Testament** is a glaring witness. The righteous man **Noah** was not free from sin as his drunkenness testified (Gen 9:21). **Abraham** the friend of God also did not fully believe God’s promise to give Him offspring through Sarah, and sinfully sought it another way with Sarah’s handmaid Hagar (Gen 16:1-4). **Isaac**, the man of faith (Heb 11:20) lied to Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister (Gen 26:7). **Jacob** deceived his father Isaac (Gen 27:18-29). **Moses** displayed his sinful anger against the people (Num 20:10) and his lack of trust in God’s Word

(Num 20:12) and struck the rock twice rebelling against God (Num 20:24). **Job** was the “*righteous*” man who was “*blameless and upright*” by God’s own testimony who said of him “*there is no one on earth like him... a man who fears God and shuns evil*” (Job 2:3). Yet Job himself acknowledged his own personal sins (Job 9:20, 14:16-17), admitted that he was not innocent but guilty (Job 9:28-29) and that he needed God’s mercy and forgiveness (Job 7:20-21, 9:15). King **David** of whom the Bible says he was “*righteous and upright in heart*,” was man who fell into the serious transgression of adultery, deceit and murder, and in the Psalms regularly admitted to many more trivial sins (Ps 19:12). **Isaiah** the prophet upon the sight of God in His throne room said, “*Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips*” (Isa 6:5). Even the righteous prophet **Daniel** confessed his sins and wickedness (Dan 9:4-16). There are several statements in the **Old Testament** that flatly **deny** the idea of **perfectionism**.

**1 Kings 8:46** - 46 "When **they sin against Thee (for there is no man who does not sin)** and Thou art angry with them and dost deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near; NASB

**Proverbs 20:9** - 9 **Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin"?** NASB

**Jeremiah 17:9** - 9 **"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;** Who can understand it? NASB

The **New Testament** also adds clarity to this issue in many places. Jesus urged the disciples to prayer and watchfulness so they wouldn’t yield to temptation and then added, “*the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*” (Matt 26:41). The Lord’s prayer of Matthew 6:12 declares, “*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.*” This implies that the **daily life of disciples is characterized by an ongoing need for divine forgiveness**. Paul also speaks of his own ability in the pursuit of perfection as “*not having yet attained*” to it.

**Philippians 3:10-14** - 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 **Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.** 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and **reaching forward to what lies ahead,** 14 **I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** NASB

In fact Paul says, “*I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet*” clearly stating the he presses on to the “*upward call in Christ.*” See in these that we are to **exert God-dependent effort** to press on toward Christlikeness, and this is the aim for which we strive but will never quite attain in this life. In this striving after Christlikeness we glorify God and have a **sure goal** that is always before us calling us heavenward to **progress in bearing His image**.

We have been **set free** from the **reigning power of sin to dominate our lives**, but it has **not been completely eradicated from us yet**.

**Romans 6:5-11** - 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, **that we should no longer be slaves to sin;** 7 **for he who has died is freed from sin.** 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; **death no longer is master over Him.** 10 **For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.** 11 **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** NASB

**Romans 6:17-22** - 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and **having been freed from sin,** you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For



when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 **But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification,** and the outcome, eternal life. NASB

Only in the promises of the **resurrection** do we see the ultimate **liberty from this warfare** and struggle **against sin**, when death shall be destroyed and we shall be transformed into immortality by God's power at **Glorification**.

**Philippians 3:20-21** - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory,** by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

**1 John 3:2** - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.** NASB

**1 Corinthians 15:51-55** - 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed,** 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we shall be changed.** 53 **For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.** 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" NASB

**Revelation 22:3** - 3 And **there shall no longer be any curse;** and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; NASB

See in these proofs from Scripture that **perfectionism** or sinless perfection is a **grave error** indeed. It denies the essence of the Christian struggle against sin during the process of Sanctification. Since this is the nature of our daily struggle to bear the image as Christians, we must avoid this serious error and remain steadfast in our struggle both to identify and mortify sin in our lives. For further study on Sinless perfection or Perfectionism read Grudem pgs 750-753 and Demarest The Cross and Salvation pgs 416-420.

### Enjoying Christ and the goal of sanctification

Let us consider that as we **exert God-dependent effort** to press on toward **Christlikeness**, we will in fact by the Spirit's transforming power attain ever increasing degrees of holiness and experience His virtue in our character. In this striving after Christlikeness we glorify God and have a **sure goal** that is always before us calling us heavenward to **progress in bearing His image**. We must actively fix our eyes on Jesus and seek to imitate His likeness.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** - Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you,** and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

We are called to pursue this character actively in our Christian life, for it is God's purpose to conform into Christ's image. The New Testament puts this forward as an **imperative** again and again. Putting on Christ's virtue is **not optional** but **mandated** by Jesus and the Apostles.

**John 15:10-12** - 10 **"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love;** just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that **My joy may be in you,** and that your joy may be made full. 12 **"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.** NASB

**Colossians 3:12-15** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other,** whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And **beyond all these things put on love,** which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 And **let the peace of Christ rule** in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful.** NASB

As we **look to God in faith** in seeking these virtues, and seek the **filling** of the **Holy Spirit**, we receive power from God both to put off the old nature and to put on the new. God's Word calls us to **careful** and **calculated God dependent effort** to accomplish this.

**Ephesians 5:15-19** - 15 Therefore **be careful how you walk**, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 **making the most of your time**, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; NASB

As we experience the **daily renewal** of the filling of the Holy Spirit, these virtues increase in our character and we come to enjoy the very **goodness of God** in our own selves and relations, and become nourished by the good fruit of His Spirit in our daily lives. In this transforming process we experience the **beauty of Christlikeness** in a rich and powerful way as it seasons our life with the very character of Christ and we fulfill our **chief end** of **glorifying and enjoying God**.

**Galatians 5:22-25** - 22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 **If we live by the Spirit**, let us also walk by the Spirit. NASB

This **fruit of the Holy Spirit** becomes the very experience of our days, filling our life with the beauty of God's nature. Bruce Demarest points out that these 9 rich and powerful virtues (which are the **single** fruit of the Spirit) are given to us in three **triads**, each expressing a different relation to our lives. These are to be actively **cultivated** in us by **God dependent effort**.

- **Love, Joy Peace** – These virtues affect our **basic disposition** or if you will the foundation of our **attitude, demeanor** and **mindset** in daily life. **Love** here is the *agape* love of God which is self-giving, sacrificial and supernatural (**John 15:13, 1 Cor 13:4-8, 1 John 3:16-18, 4:7-11**). **Joy** is that inner delight and felicity in the heart that, being focused in faith on God's goodness to us in Christ, is immovable and constant regardless of negative circumstances (**Psa 31:7, Neh 8:10, Acts 13:52, 1 Pet 1:6-9**). **Peace** is that abiding calmness, serenity and rest in the heart and mind which results from reconciliation with God in Christ, and provides us with freedom from anxiety and distress in daily circumstances (**John 14:27, Rom 5:1, 15:13, Phil 4:7, Col 3:15, 2 Thess 3:16**).
- **Patience, kindness, goodness** – These graces concern our **relationship to others**. **Patience** is that forbearing temperance of attitude that suffers long or endures with difficult circumstances or troublesome people (**Rom 15:1, Eph 4:2, Col 3:13, 1 Thes 5:14**). **Kindness** is a charitable and generous disposition toward others that manifests in gracious acts of free benevolence to others (**Luke 6:35, Eph 4:32, Col 3:12-13**). **Goodness** is not sinlessness but an integrity and uprightness of heart and mind that reflects God's goodness (His righteousness, holiness, justice, kindness, grace, mercy, and love) in our relationships with others (**Luke 6:35, Gal 6:10, 1 Thes 5:15, Heb 13:16, 3 John 11**).
- **Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control** – These qualities regard our **individual selves**. **Faithfulness** is a steadfast and reliable integrity and loyalty to others in our word, priorities and commitments (**Luke 21:16-19, 1 Cor 4:2, 2 Tim 4:7-8**). **Gentleness** is a humble consideration toward others which gives preference in honor (**Rom 12:16, 1 Thes 2:7, Tit 3:2**). **Self-control** is that self-discipline or self-restraint which is temperate under temptation and emotional duress or excitement (**Acts 24:25, 1 Cor 7:5, 9:25-27, 2 Pet 1:6**).

Let us then **actively cultivate** these virtues and to the degree that we do, we will **enjoy Christ!**

**2 Corinthians 13:11** - 11 Finally, brethren, **rejoice**, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, **live in peace**; and the **God of love and peace shall be with you**. NASB

## The Gospel - Faith, Promises & Motives

Let us consider the **relation** of **faith** to **sanctification**. As we have seen, **sanctification** is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time. We have noted that it is a **cooperative process** where we are also called to **exert effort** and **diligence** to see it come to fruition. **God works** in **sanctification** and **we work**. It is an ongoing **cooperative process**. God's work is primary and **our effort** is **secondary**. Therefore we are called to **God-dependent effort** throughout the New Testament. Now what we mean by God dependent effort is that we are dependent on God's power to give us the **necessary energy** and **divine enablement** to both forsake the old nature of sin and also to exercise the virtues of the new nature within us by the Holy Spirit. As we **look to God in faith** in seeking these virtues, and seek the **filling** of the **Holy Spirit**, we receive power from God both to put off the old nature and to put on the new. This calling to exert effort is what we call **imperatives**. They are commandments, **exhortations** and **admonitions** to obedience.

This **dependence** of looking to God for His power is **an exercise of our faith** in God's promises to lead us, guide, us and fulfill His good work in us and through us. And this faith is **belief** in **God's Word** and **based** upon the grace that God has shown us in Christ, through His good work in the Gospel, and the **sufficient grace for us to persevere in faith** to the end of our life that is our possession because of Christ. Not only has God promised that we are now justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone, but He has promised to fulfill His good work of **sanctification** in us causing us to **bear His image** in greater degree over time until the Day of Christ when we are finally glorified.

**Philippians 1:6** – 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus**. NASB

**1 Peter 1:3-5** - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable** and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are **protected by the power of God through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

These **promises** to us are what we call **indicatives**. They *indicate* to us all of God's promises that are ours because of Christ and are also sometimes expressed as **warnings** and warnings with consequences. So we believe the powerful Word of God with all of its promises and warnings to us (**indicatives**), and we seek to obey its exhortations and admonitions to us (**imperatives**).

### Imperatives always grounded in Indicatives

In believing the Gospel, we have been justified by grace, through faith in Christ alone. This justification we could not have achieved by legal obedience to the Law because all have sinned. He has merited God's favor for us, we have laid hold of it by faith, and Christ's life, death and resurrection have sufficiently covered all of our sins and provided perfect righteousness for us, reconciling us to God so that he has adopted us into His family as His own children, having caused us to be born again by the Holy Spirit resulting in eternal life (Rom 3:21-28, 5:8-10, 5:19-21, 6:23, 1 Cor 1:30, Eph 2:5-9, Col 1:21-22, 2:13-14, 1 Pet 1:3-5). These are the **indicatives** which indicate the fullness of the grace that we now stand in. Nevertheless, in the Gospel we have **imperatives** from Christ to repent of our sins, to trust in Him and believe Him fully for righteousness, and to go and sin no more, pursuing a life pleasing to God which expresses both love toward God and love toward our neighbor. These are the **imperatives** that are non-negotiable exhortations and admonitions to become in practically who we already are in

position. We have been set free from legal obedience for justification and righteousness, and yet we have been commanded to live a life of love toward God and neighbor.

Moreover, the Gospel of free grace also undergirds us in the midst of our own **personal failures** and the **great trials** and difficulties that we face in our daily lives. The hope and assurance (the confident assertions of faith) that God is in control of our circumstances and that He is working everything for our ultimate good in order to conform us into the image of Christ, is a **bulwark against despair and discouragement**. The fact that our forgiveness and redemption is an accomplished reality that can never be changed gives us much faith in the midst of the doubt that personal sinfulness and failure can cause. The indicative promises of God's favor toward us in Christ and His ultimate triumph in sanctifying us **reminds us that God loves us** in spite of our struggle with sin and that **He forgives us** and is **using even our failures** to conform us into Christ's image.

**1 John 1:6-10** - 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but **if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** 8 **If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** 9 **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 10 **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.** NASB

**Romans 8:1-4** - 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, **He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us,** who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB

**Romans 8:28-36** - 28 And **we know that God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For **whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,** that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and **whom He justified, these He also glorified.** 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?** 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us.** 35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ..... 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, **nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** NASB

**1 John 5:4-5** - 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.** 5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** NASB

See in these indicative promises the great triumph and victory that is ours no matter what we face or how we fail if we believe in Christ holding fast our hope in Him and His righteousness alone.

However, the **imperatives** are the fruit of having benefitted from the **indicatives**. They are the proper expression of the powerful grace of God that changes us into the ever increasing likeness of Christ. This is clearly taught in the New Testament.

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For **the grace of God has appeared,** bringing salvation to all men, **12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,** 13 looking for the blessed **hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and **purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.** NASB



Grace has appeared and brings us salvation, this is **indicative**. But notice that this grace “*instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires*” and to “*live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age.*” This is an **imperative**.

2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1 - 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 **Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** NASB

God will be a father to us, and we will receive all the benefits of having the Almighty as our Father. This is **indicative**. But Paul reasons, “*having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” This is an **imperative**. This idea appears many places in the New Testament. Since we have been given such **great** and **precious promises**, then our **proper response** is one of conformity to God’s will, and here that is cleansing “*ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” Our work of cleansing ourselves is rooted and grounded in the fact that God is a father to us to shepherd us, and provided for us and to protect and care for us as His very own children. The **imperatives** are **grounded** in the **indicatives** so that we won’t lose heart and that our **faith and hope** are **in God** as the primary worker, working His good purpose in us, causing us the **bear the image** in greater degree and so partake in the divine nature and both **glorify** and **enjoy Him** in a rich and full way.

It is important then to understand that a right **balance** must be navigated continually between **indicative** and **imperative**. It is important to emphasize indicatives. The indicatives are the fuel and motivation for the imperatives. Kevin DeYoung comments on this; “*We ought to positively glory in the indicatives of the gospel. The indicatives ought to fuel our following of the imperatives. Our obedience must be grounded in the gospel. Sanctification is empowered by faith in the promises of God. We need to be reminded of our justification often and throughout our Christian lives. Our pursuit of personal righteousness will not go anywhere without a conviction that we are already reckoned positionally righteous in Christ. So let’s be passionately and repetitively gripped by the gospel of free grace.*”

But equally important is to insist on the imperatives that flow out of the indicatives. The “*grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness.*” They go together and work for our sanctification. DeYoung comments further; “*Imperatives must be rooted in indicatives. The question, however, is whether we betray the indicatives by insisting directly and explicitly for Christians to work hard at obeying the imperatives. No one denies that obedience to the imperatives is crucial. But can we demand obedience to those imperatives? Or is that falling back on law? The central question in this discussion is not just a matter of emphasis between the indicatives and imperatives, but whether emphasizing the indicatives accomplishes the goal of the imperatives without ever insisting upon them. Or to put it another way, is sanctification by faith alone in our justification by faith alone? I think not. The last thing I want is to be the guy who says “stop making the gospel so important.” I never want to encourage people to emphasize the gospel less. But it is possible to emphasize the gospel in a wrong way. The Reformed confessions understand that obedience to God’s commands—which we all want—is not accomplished merely by insisting on indicatives, but also by insisting directly and explicitly on the imperatives that flow from them.*” End quote. See then why the New Testament is loaded full of imperatives calling us to the work of faith and the heavenward call of both mortifying the “*defilements of flesh and spirit*” and living in or putting on the virtues in very practical ways.

Let us see then that a healthy understanding of the grace of God in all of its **promise** and fullness is important and should be **constantly emphasized** in our Christian life. These **indicatives fuel** and **motivate** our **faith**. But equally important is the desire for God's people to be holy and **conform practically** to God's will and desire for our lives. These **imperatives express** our **faith** and put the glory of God on display in our lives so that we **bear the image**. This also then addresses the issue of the role of the Law for us. The Law is holy and good and rightly used when it is given to inform us of God's will and also of His character. It helps us to understand who He is and what His purposes are for us in the world. DeYoung comments on this as well; *Let's not be afraid to land on law—never as the means of meriting justification, but as the proper expression of having received it....The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, "We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith" (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience without shame. The law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace."*

It is NOT **legalism** for the church to preach obedience to explicit commandments from Scripture, when rightly applied. Rather it is the duty of pastors and teachers to bring imperatives consistent with the Word to bear upon our lives and our consciences. However it is **extremely important** that these **imperatives not be confused with the indicatives** of the **Gospel**. Imperatives are now the proper expression of worship and godliness as a **RESULT of our justification, and never a MEANS to it**. We are not saved by the works of the Law, or even obedience to New Testament commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is Himself our righteousness before God (Rom 3:28, Gal 2:15-16, 1 Cor 1:30). Therefore, the **indicatives** are where we rest by faith in the sovereign work of God through Christ and the Spirit for our righteousness and assurance of salvation. And the **imperatives** are the obedience which God fully expects of those of us He has called, saved and justified as an expression of the fact that we have indeed been saved and justified, and are now longing to **bear His image** and become like Him, pleasing Him in all our ways and in the thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

**Colossians 3:12** - 12 And so, **as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** NASB

### **Believing the promises for future grace motivates**

Now here is where it is crucial to see how faith relates to sanctification and image bearing. As we hear about the beauty and glory of God's free grace to us in the indicative promises of the Gospel, our faith is bolstered and strengthened like a great bulwark against the world, the flesh and the devil. As we **believe or exercise faith**, that is **trust in** and **rely upon God** who gives us the promises, our **faith is motivated** to give expression so that the imperatives are fulfilled. This literally **involves us** in the **working and power of God**, as we are powerfully **changed by the Spirit** and bear the fruit of the Spirit in the midst of a wicked culture, shining as lights in the darkness of this world putting the glory of God on display.

**Philippians 2:12-16** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 that **you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of**

**God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life,** so that in the **day of Christ I may have cause to glory** because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. NASB

In Philippians 2:12-16 Paul is calling the Philippians to **continued obedience** of the imperatives of the Christian life, and so reminds them of the great promise that God is **“at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”** As a result, he calls them to obey, **“do all things without grumbling and disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”** Notice he says, do the **imperatives** of not **“grumbling or complaining”** because **“God is at work in you”** and so you will glorify Him, as His own **“children,”** in the midst of the shameful and wicked world that you live in putting His glory on display as **“lights”** in the dark world. And this happens as we **“hold fast the word of life,”** that is, as we **believe or have faith** in the **“word of life,”** that is, the **Gospel**. Our **faith** is **fueled and motivated** by the promise that we are His children and He is at work in us, and this gives expression in our obedience of not grumbling and complaining and this temperance and serenity of **Christian character** puts God’s glory on display in our life like lights in the darkness of this world. This faith in the God of the promises has **involved us** in the very **working and power of God**, conforming us into **His image**, causing us to **participate** in the **divine nature** itself.

**2 Peter 1:4 - 4** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.** having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

### **Faith expects God to intervene in the affairs of our daily life**

And so we should expect God to show up and intervene in the affairs of our daily life because He is in fact at work in us and through us to cause us to bear the image and put His glory on display, the thing He loves and seeks for above all other things, the manifestation of His own glory and excellence as God. This is God’s main purpose in our salvation, to cause us to bear the image and be powerfully sanctified and transformed, and therefore we should expect that this is what God will do in our lives. **We expect God to show up powerfully and change us!** Let us not see the difficulty of trials and tribulations as some strange thing happening to us (1 Pet 4:12), but the hands of the Potter molding us into the image of Christ. God by His loving Providence is **“conforming us into the image of His Son”** (Rom 8:29). Therefore we are to **find joy even in the difficulties of life** because we know that they are working the exceeding great privilege and blessing for us of sanctification, causing us to **bear the image**. What greater privilege can there be in this natural world that God would conform us into His supernatural image and cause us to become **“partakers in the divine nature”** (2 Pet 1:4) and so come to enjoy the highest and best of experiences, even becoming like God and Christ in our very own character, as children of God? And so we are exhorted in the Scripture to **“rejoice”** in this process knowing that **“God is at work in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure”** (Phil 2:13). We should count it **ALL JOY!**

**Romans 5:3-5 - 3** And not only this, but **we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;** 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. NASB

**James 1:2-4 - 2** Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.** 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NASB

**1 Peter 1:6-7 - 6** In **this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith,** being more precious than gold which is

perishable, even though tested by fire, may **be found to result in praise and glory and honor** at the revelation of Jesus Christ; NASB

Everything that happens is working toward this good end of God conforming us into Christ's image. The trials and sorrows, the joys and happiness, the blessings and the discipline all work together for the good of true Christians.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.** 29 For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB

Thomas Watson comments; "*Observe the happy condition of every child of God. All things work for his good, the best and worst things. The most dark cloudy providences of God have some sunshine in them. What a blessed condition is a true believer in! When he dies, he goes to God: and while he lives, everything shall do him good. Affliction is for his good. What hurt does the fire to the gold? It only purifies it. What hurt does the fan to the corn? It only separates the chaff from it. God never uses His staff, but to beat out the dust. Affliction does that which the Word many times will not, it " opens the ear to discipline " (Job 36:10). When God lays men upon their backs, then they look up to heaven. God's smiting His people is like the musician's striking upon the violin, which makes it put forth a melodious sound. How much good comes to the saints by affliction! When they are pounded and broken, they send forth their sweetest smell. Affliction is a bitter root, but it bears sweet fruit. " It yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness " (Heb 12:11). Affliction is the highway to heaven; though it be flinty and thorny, yet it is the best way. Poverty shall starve our sins; sickness shall make grace more helpful (2 Cor 5:16). Reproach shall cause " the Spirit of God and of glory to rest upon us " (1 Pet 4:14). Death shall stop the bottle of tears, and open the gate of Paradise. A believer's dying day is his ascension day to glory. Hence it is, the saints have put their afflictions in the inventory of their riches (Heb 11:26).*" End quote. **WOW! Our afflictions are our riches?** Indeed they are! And we are to **count them joy** in the process of becoming like Christ! Normally, our trials are not many, but when they do come, let us rejoice in the goodness of God to change us, and remember that if they were not necessary, they would not come. Consider that normally, our days are filled with the rich and abundant blessings of God and His hand is rich with blessing!

**1 Timothy 6:17-19** - 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to **fix their hope** on the uncertainty of riches, **but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.** 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.** NASB

Indeed God shows up each day with abundant blessings of provision, and health and sunshine and family and friends and work and happiness and rich enjoyment of everything He created! Through these, as well as our trials and difficulties **He powerfully molds us into thankful, obedient, joyful, patient, and loving children of God.** When we pray, He hears and answers. When we share the Gospel, others get saved. When we make disciples and love and serve the church, the saints are edified and encouraged and built up in the most holy faith. When we worship through the preaching of the Word, the taking of the Table, the joyful singing of saints in assembly, and we read the Word and fellowship and encourage one another, **God powerfully shows up and changes us into his image** by the work of the Holy Spirit. Our **faith** in Christ has **involved us in the working a power of God**, who is fetching glory for Himself and putting it on display in the church to all of mankind, as well as the angels both holy fallen.

**Ephesians 3:8-12** - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,** 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which



for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 **in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.** 11 This was **in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.** 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. NASB

The **church** is a “**city on a hill,**” the very “**light of the world,**” carrying the good news of the Gospel to each generation and powerfully displaying God’s glory by the way we live our lives!

**Matthew 5:14-16** - 14 “**You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill** cannot be hidden. 15 “Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; **and it gives light to all who are in the house.** 16 “**Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father** who is in heaven. NASB

**2 Corinthians 3:2-5** - 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, **known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.** 4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, NASB

Now summing up **the relation of faith to sanctification**, and how God through the Word and by the Spirit is changing us, let us consider 2 Peter 1:2-11. Let us see here how God richly supplies for us the **indicatives** of the **Word (the promises)**, and how the Spirit uses these as the resource to motivate the **imperatives** in our lives and change us in our character and behavior so that we “**become partakers of the divine nature,**” being conformed into the image of Christ. 2 Peter 1:2-4 describes the resources that are ours through “**the true knowledge God**” and provide for us “**everything**” we need to be like Christ (godliness). Also how through Word, here the “**magnificent and precious promises,**” we might “**become partakers of the divine nature,**” which is another way of describing being changed into the image and likeness of God.

**2 Peter 1:2-4** - 2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus** our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature,** having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

These verses, 2-4, are **indicatives** telling us of the wonderful **resources, and power, and process** that are ours in the “**true knowledge of God**” and the “**magnificent and precious promises.**” Then when we get to verses 5-8, we see a section of imperatives which are firmly rooted in these indicative promises of verses 2-4. As we **believe**, that is **exercise our faith**, out of the abundance of resources that are ours in faith, (that is the true knowledge of God), we are able by “**His divine power**” (divine enablement) to appropriate the resources to experience and exercise the very virtues of God, that is the “**divine nature.**”

**2 Peter 1:5-8** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence,** and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** NASB

And so the imperative is to “**put on**” the “**divine nature**” of “***moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.***” In this we are to “apply all diligence,” or if you will, **exert God dependent effort.** This is because you apply this diligence “**in your faith**” or out of the resources of your faith, the very resources described in verses 2-4. The **imperatives** of verses 5-8 are grounded in the **indicatives** of verses 2-4. So God does not expect you to create the virtues in yourself with your **own ability or the arm of flesh**, but rather by **believing** and

exercising **faith**, supply out of that faith the virtues of God's divine nature. **"In your faith supply moral excellence."** That is, **exert God dependent effort** by drawing upon the resource of God's power and nature, supplying it out of your faith, and **put on "moral excellence."** And to this of course we are to add **"knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."** See here by **believing the promises** (the Word), that these resources of God are ours, we **apply diligence to put them on**, and become partakers of the divine nature ourselves, having **appropriated them by faith**. See here the relation of faith to Sanctification. Faith is vital to the appropriation of divine resources for God's purpose of image bearing to come to full fruition. And if we simply obey this imperative, God says we will be a **fruitful and effective Christian**. **"For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."** In verse 9-11 He reaffirms that this **fruit bearing is grounded in the Gospel** (v-9), and through our diligence in faith, grant us an abundant experience of assurance in our faith (v-10), as we see the demonstration of His divine nature in our experience.

**2 Peter 1:9-11 - 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.** NASB

Notice how in verse 9, **"if you lack these qualities"** he says, you are **"blind and short-sighted,"** that is, **"having forgotten your purification from former sins."** Here he explains that a Christian who bears little fruit has little cognitive remembrance or knowledge of the richness of our forgiveness in Christ and the Atonement. He has **"forgotten"** how clean he has become through the Gospel, and instead of living in an appropriating the resources that are ours through the Gospel, we wallow in the mire and muck of a fruitless and lacking Christian life. Our faith or belief in the Gospel is greatly lacking and this lack or **unbelief is the root and core of the problem** of a **fruitless and ineffective Christian life**. If you lack **"these qualities"** (the virtues of verse 6-7), you are **"blind"** to the **richness of the Gospel** and what is yours in Christ, and have **"forgotten your purification from former sins."** But on the contrary if you believe with lively faith and therefore apply diligence and appropriate the resources of the Gospel, and actually **"practice"** the virtues (v-10), **"you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."**

So the text structure develops like this;

2 Pet 1:2-4 - Resources, power, and process – indicatives

2 Pet 1:5-8 - imperatives grounded in the resources of 2-4 calling us to put on the virtues and practice godliness

2 Pet 1:9 - if you lack fruit, you have forgotten the Gospel

2 Pet 1:10-11 - if you believe 2-4, resulting in 5-8, you gain rich entrance into the kingdom

See here that life in Christ is **abundantly supplied** for those who are **diligent in faith, exerting God dependent effort** in the process of Sanctification. This is the **relation of faith to Sanctification**. It is vital to the process and its fruitful and effective outcome. Through diligent faith on the part of the believer, God's glory in image bearing is put on display in abundance.

## **The Gospel – Living in the glory of the Cross and our ongoing failures**

In summary we have learned that the chief purpose of God in our salvation is to conform us into the image of Christ and cause us to bear the image in greater degree through the course of our Christian life (Sanctification). This is because God's delights in His own excellency and nature above all other things, and it is therefore the greatest gift that God can give us to make us like Christ and conform us into His image. As we have seen, **sanctification** is that work of God conforming us into the image of Christ progressively over time. We have noted that it is a **cooperative process** where we are also called to **exert effort** and **diligence** to see it come to fruition. **God works in sanctification** and **we work**. It is an ongoing **cooperative process**. God's work is primary and **our effort** is **secondary**. Therefore we are called to **God-dependent effort** throughout the New Testament.

As we **look to God in faith** in seeking these virtues, and seek the **filling** of the **Holy Spirit**, we receive power from God both to put off the old nature and to put on the new. This calling to exert effort is what we call **imperatives**. They are commandments, **exhortations** and **admonitions** to obedience. This **dependence** of looking to God for His power is **an exercise of our faith** in God's promises to lead us, guide, us and fulfill His good work in us and through us. And this faith is **belief in God's Word** and **based** upon the grace that God has shown us in Christ, through His good work in the Gospel, and the **sufficient grace for us to persevere in faith** to the end of our life that is our possession because of Christ. Not only has God promised that we are now **justified by grace**, through faith in Christ alone, but He has promised to fulfill His good work of **sanctification** in us causing us to **bear His image** in greater degree over time until the Day of Christ when we are finally **glorified**.

## **Help I am not holy yet!**

But how do we deal with our constant failures and shortcomings? There are so many **imperative** calls to virtue and actions in the Bible that I cannot possibly fulfill them. There are so many **prohibitions** I regularly seem to break God's good rules for life and sin against Him and others that I love. Since the standard that we strive to achieve in Sanctification is the image and likeness of Christ, we will never actually attain that in our practice in this life. Therefore we will frequently find ourselves falling short of the mark and continuing to **struggle against personal sins**, either **sins of commission** (doing things we shouldn't), or **sins of omission** (failing to do things we should). At times it can be downright despairing to see our own weakness and inept ability to be like Christ in our daily Christian practice. It is not that the divine resources aren't there to help us to be like Jesus, we just seem to fail in our ability to appropriate those resources or we forget they are there or become distracted by the busy world around us.

But we cannot forget the awesome and glorious **free grace of the Gospel** and the **positional holiness** that is already ours in Christ. **God has forgiven all of our sins through faith in Christ** and removed them as far as the east is from the west, put them behind His back, drowned them in the deepest part of the sea, and blotted them from our record. In fact he has so completely dealt with and removed our sins that He can say that we are holy and blameless and free from accusation!

**Psalm 103:12 - 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed** our transgressions from us. NASB

**Isaiah 38:17** - 17 "Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, **For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.** NASB

**Micah 7:19** - 19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, **Thou wilt cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.** NASB

**Isaiah 43:25** - 25 "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And **I will not remember your sins.** NASB

**Colossians 1:21-22** - 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, **in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach** NASB

**Ephesians 1:4-7** - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He **freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,** according to the riches of His grace NASB

And all of this forgiveness and grace come to us, *"freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."* We did not earn it in any way, rather we were guilty of hundreds of crimes against God. But He has **freely forgiven us by grace through faith in Christ alone**, it is **NOT a result of works**. By Christ perfect life and death on the cross, He has paid the penalty for our sins in full and merited for us a life of perfect obedience to God's Law on our behalf.

**Romans 3:23-24** - 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ** Jesus; NASB

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - 8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works,** that no one should boast. NASB

**Hebrews 10:10, 14** - 10 By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**..... 14 For by one offering **He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.** NASB

God has also promised to see us through the end of life and perfect that good work in us that He started, and ultimately **raise us up after death with Christ in glory (Glorification)**, never to die again, but to live in His good presence to bless us forever.

**Philippians 1:6** – 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** NASB

**John 6:39** - 39 "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that **of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.** NASB

**John 10:27-28** - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and **I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.** NASB

**John 11:25-26** - 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; **he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die.** Do you believe this?" NASB

**1 Corinthians 6:14** - 14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but **will also raise us up through His power.** NASB

**1 Peter 1:3-5** - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable** and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are **protected by the power of God through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

Now all of these and many more good promises in the Word are ours because of Christ (2 Cor 1:20). All of this good grace of God is already ours because of Christ and it can never be taken away. Therefore **regardless of how we perform** throughout the Christian life, God's good favor toward us never comes into question, but because we have been **adopted as His children**, He only has good designs for us and promises that everything shall work for our ultimate good (Rom 8:28) and His glory! We shall never come into eternal judgment or experience God's wrath because we stand in God's good grace to us through faith in Christ!



**John 5:24** - 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, **has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.** NASB

**Romans 8:1-2** - 1 There is **therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. NASB

This does not mean nothing bad will ever happen to us. Indeed in this life we shall face many trials and sufferings and will at times even receive these as corrective discipline from God. But these things will always prove our faith more sure, develop Christ's character in our lives, and bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11).

All of these wonderful **promises** are the **indicatives** on which the Christian life of sanctification is built. They are already our possession because of Christ and can never be taken away. But how do we deal with our continuing sins and failures? And why do we feel as if our fellowship with God is broken when we sin? And why do we so often seem to lack the ability to appropriate God's resources and become like Christ?

Well the answer is really clear in the Bible. The way we deal with these things in Sanctification, is the same way we deal with them in Justification, through **repentance** and **faith**. How do we deal with our continuing sins and failures?

**1 John 1:6-7** - 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 **but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.** NASB

See here John instructing us about the Christian life and the **ongoing presence of sin** in our lives. These he says, we cannot deny in verse 6, or we *"lie and do not practice the truth."* But in it he gives the remedy for our ongoing sin in verse 7. *"But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* Now when John says, *"walk in the light"* he means to say that we **live in the light of the Gospel** in our everyday practice. This includes a recognition that sin is an offense to God and that we have repented of sin and are striving to live free from it, because we love Christ who has forgiven us of all our sins. By walking or living *"in the light,"* we acknowledge our sinfulness and our ongoing need for forgiveness and divine grace, and our desire to live righteous and holy. He further makes clear how important it is for us to **acknowledge our sins before God and ourselves** in verses 8 through 10 .

**1 John 1:8-9** - 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. NASB

Here in verse 8, he plainly points out that we have an **ongoing presence of sin in our lives**. This he says that we are to *"confess."* We *"confess our sins."* And the result of course is divine pardon because of Christ, that God is *"faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* This ongoing recognition of sin **promotes regular repentance** and an **honest appraisal** of our practical spiritual state, giving us a **clear view** of the process of **sanctification and its progress** in our lives. It also gives us an **assurance of pardon** so that we do not get overcome with despair thinking that God has abandoned us because we know that He forgives us. Confession includes a recognition of divine pardon and we are reminded of our perfect position before God because of Christ! This process of **confession, faith and repentance is the ongoing process of dealing with sin** in the Christian life. We never grow old of hearing that good Word from God that our sins are forgiven. That Gospel assurance of pardon is our constant reminder of God's cleansing through Christ's death and our hope of good things in the

future. This of course is one of the main purposes of taking the **Lord's Table in Communion**. It is to acknowledge and remember that Christ has died for our sins and we are forgiven because of God's great love for us in Him! This is why this ordinance of Communion is a regular ongoing ordinance. We have a **need of regular acknowledgment of our ongoing sin**, and an **assurance of divine pardon** for it because of Christ.

So why do we feel as if our fellowship with God is broken when we sin? This is because our natural human tendency when we sin is to see our **guilt** and then feel **shame** as a result. But for the Christian, Christ has borne our guilt and shame and cleansed us from it completely (Rom 3:21-24, 5:19-21, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 3:18). So we simply have a need to be **honest with ourselves** and **acknowledge it before God**, and be reminded of His divine pardon because Christ, and respond to His grace in repentance. This act of faith, looking to Christ for forgiveness in confession, motivates us through love to God to be renewed again to striving for His holiness because we long to please Him in every way, **NOT** as a **means** to forgiveness, but **as a result** of having already been forgiven.

And why do we so often seem to lack the ability to appropriate God's resources and become like Christ? This is because it is our **natural tendency** is to be **self-reliant** and fix everything ourselves. But sin is an enemy that only Christ can conquer, indeed He already has conquered sin and overcome it completely, rendering it powerless to ultimately destroy us and incur God's wrath. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), that is, death. But we can only appropriate this power through faith in Him. And **Christlikeness** is something that **the Holy Spirit is creating in us by faith**, through the Word. A key part of the Sanctification process is training our minds to think according to the Gospel and have **our minds renewed** again and again that God has accepted us in the Beloved One, and completely removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. Although there is much effort to be exerted in Sanctification, the **primary effort**, and **most difficult** to maintain, is **renewing our minds** continually with the truth of the Gospel maintaining that war against the world, the flesh and the devil by faith.

**Ephesians 4:20-24** - 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and **that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. NASB

**Colossians 3:5-11** - 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and **have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him** 11 — a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. NASB

This is why Paul tells us that the **chief work of faith** is in **believing the Gospel** and renewing and focusing our thoughts on the heavenly truth of Christ's person and work and how it relates to our everyday life.

**Colossians 3:1-4** - 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above, where Christ is**, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Having seen all of these struggles of Christian life, and in light of all of the divine resources to make us like Christ, we simply have to realize our human frailty and weakness and humble ourselves before our loving God and Father and look to Him for strength and help to be who He

has called us to be, and live in a manner worthy of Lord. Let us not forget how eager He is to help us and make us like Christ and see us live a life fully pleasing to Him.

**1 Peter 5:6-7** - 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 **casting all your anxiety upon Him**, because He cares for you. NASB

**Hebrews 4:15-16** - 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, **that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need**. NASB

Let us remember that He is compassionate toward us, knowing our weaknesses fully, and always ready to heal and to help us. In the Gospel, God has ceased from His anger toward us and adopted us as His beloved children. Now He works everything for our good and does the unspeakably glorious work of making us **like Christ** and causing us to **bear His image**.

## The tension of holiness

We live in the tension of **resting in faith** and **working toward holiness**, it is our **everyday struggle**. Our position in Christ is perfect before God, (both justified and sanctified forever), but our practice is ever and always being conformed in this life to the image of Christ. We are becoming like Christ through the Word, by the Spirit. It is God's work and He has allowed us the privilege of participating in it with Him. As we have seen, **sanctification** is a **cooperative process** where we are also called to **exert effort** and **diligence** to see it come to fruition. **God works in sanctification** and **we work**. It is an ongoing **cooperative process**. God's work is primary and **our effort** is **secondary**. Therefore we are called to **God-dependent effort** throughout the New Testament. But we live in the **tension** of always striving to be holy like Christ, and yet never quite attaining it in this life. This is the **nature** of the Christian life. An ongoing recognition of this truth will help you have a **clear vision of the path and trajectory of your life** and help keep you from falling into depression and guilt when you continue to struggle with sin. We cannot forget the good news of the Gospel and the glorious perfection before God that is already our possession because of Christ. And at the same time we are striving to be like Him in all that we do. We do everything for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31) and make it our aim to be fully pleasing to Him (2 Cor 5:9). So we strive to renew our minds with happy truth of the Gospel, **resting in it by faith**. Yet at the same time **we are at war** with the world, the flesh and the devil. This is the great tension of holiness in the Christian life. We must therefore equip ourselves with the weapons of war and with the battle plans ever before us, arm ourselves to fight the good fight of faith and watch as our God destroys Christ's enemies before our eyes.

**Ephesians 6:10-12** - 10 Finally, **be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might**. 11 **Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm** against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. NASB

And so God calls us to ever and always keep believing with much hope that the victory has already been won by Christ, and we will soon lie down in rest forever in God's glorious presence. For our **faith** is in the solid rock of **God's eternal promise** to us, and **sure evidence** of things not yet seen.

**Hebrews 11:1** - 1 Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen**. NASB

All of the Gospel promises for temporal blessing and sanctification and perseverance are ours even now. And in the near future our hope of glory will be realized and the tension will be over. But for now we look with eager expectation, **striving for purity** of life, **yet resting** in Him.

**1 John 3:2-3** - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is**. 3 And **everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure**. NASB

## Becoming who we are - Pursuing Holiness

Now when the New Testament calls us to the imperatives, they come to us in the form of two specific types of God dependent effort. These we call **mortification** and **vivification**, that is to “**put off**” the old nature of sin and to “**put on**” the new nature of righteousness that is already ours in Christ. These are **acts of faith, motivated by love for God** and focused on pleasing Him with our whole life as an act of worship to God. We are striving in this way to be like Christ. This matter is of such importance in the Christian life that huge portions of the New Testament are devoted to giving and explaining these imperatives. But these imperatives, as we have seen, are always grounded in the indicatives of the Gospel and our already righteous position before God because of Christ. With this in mind, let us arm ourselves with **a healthy overview of these methods of mortification and vivification**, coming to a well-rounded understanding of how we exert God dependent effort in the process of Sanctification, becoming like Christ.

## Be Killing Sin – Mortification

Now that we have been **saved** from the **power** (domination) and **curse of sin** (death), it is our **Christian duty** to continue to **walk in repentance** and forsake the **practice of sin**. We now bear the name of Christ and have been made children of God and have as our obligation and privilege to **put sin to death** in our **daily living** and to **glorify God** by the way we live our life. This **mortification** is to **put sin to death** in our living by the **power of the Spirit**. Mortification is to kill sin, to forsake it, turn from it, flee from it and put a stop to the practice of it in our hearts, minds and daily life. To mortify sin, or put the flesh (sinful nature) to death is an imperative commanded over and over in the New Testament. We Christians are **under obligation** to the Spirit to **kill sin** and eradicate it from our thinking and living.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live**. NASB

Paul’s statement makes it clear that all truly born again Christians are TRULY in the process of “**putting to death the deeds of the body**.” This is because he presents the contrast of those who are in the flesh and will die, against those who are in fact “**by the Spirit**” putting sin to death. The context also bears this out.

**Romans 8:9-10** - 9 However, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 And **if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness**. NASB

Paul clearly states, “**you are not in the flesh**” (v-9). He means, you have been “**set free**” from sin and death (v-2), and no longer have your “**minds set on the things of the flesh**” but rather on “**the things of the Spirit**” (v-5). It is not a suggestion but a **FACT**, Christians are “**not in the flesh but in the Spirit**,” because “**the Spirit of God dwells in you**.” He explains that “**the body is dead because of sin**,” but the “**spirit is alive**.” His meaning is clear, the current **physical and mortal body** that we live in is “**dead**,” that is, mortal (able to die) and will ultimately perish and die a physical death. But the human spirit (the essence of our being) of the Christian believer is “**alive**” and will never perish but has eternal life with God and will receive an imperishable spiritual body at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:51-54). This is of course what Jesus meant in John 11:25-26.

**John 11:25-26** - 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; **he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die**. Do you believe this?” NASB



Jesus clearly said, “*he who believes in me shall live even if he dies.*” His point is unmistakable, the physical body will die, but the person in the true essence shall live. Unlike **unbelievers**, who will die a **spiritual death** (the second death... Rev 20:6, 14, 21:8) forever after physical death, believers will **live forever in spiritual life** (John 3:36, 6:51,58, Acts 13:48, Rom 6:23).

Since we are therefore “*not in the flesh but in the Spirit,*” Paul reasons that we are **under obligation** to the Spirit to **kill sin** and eradicate it from our thinking and living.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** NASB

As the English Puritan John Owen made famous the saying “*Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.*” (The Mortification of Sin – John Owen) In this he points to the reality of Christian life, we **ARE mortifying** the deeds of the flesh.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** NASB

Notice in this text;

- The **imperative** is directed at you – *you believers*; See here it is our **Christian** obligation and duty to mortify sin, the deeds of the flesh in our daily life
- The **means** of accomplishment – *the Spirit*; There is only one successful power by which mortification can happen, “*by the Spirit,*” as contrasted with the body, or the flesh. It is not done in human strength but only with divine power can the Goliath of sin be killed. Owen comments; “*Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, to the end of self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.*”
- The Christian **obligation** – *put to death the deeds of the body*; The actual work is killing sin that we commit with our “*body,*”.... “*put it to death,*” do not let it live, exterminate it. The “*deeds of the body*” are in view, but consider that the deeds are only the expression of inward lust and sinful motives, these must be mortified also being committed inwardly with the body. We must kill sin’s vigor, strength, influence, craftiness, subtlety and life. It is our ongoing constant duty, our present active state, mortification of sin.
- A conditional **promise** – *if by the Spirit you,... you will live*; Those who mortify, live forever. There is a certain connection between mortifying and living (spiritual life as opposed to spiritual death). Owen comments; “*The intent of the text in this conditional expression is that there is a certain infallible connection and coherence between true mortification and eternal life; if you use this means, you shall obtain that end; if you do mortify, you will live.*”

See here in Romans 8:12-13 that **mortification** is our **Christian duty and obligation**, the true state of every believer is the constant killing of sin in our daily life.

This **concept** of **mortifying** and **killing sin** is repeated throughout the Apostolic writings and comes to us in the form of imperatives, non-negotiable commandments explaining our **duty as image bearers** who bear the **name and image of Christ**.

**Ephesians 5:3-12** - 3 But **do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you**, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be **no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting**, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that **no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the

sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore **do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord;** walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 And **do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;** 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. NASB

Notice several things about this text. It teaches us of the nature of real believers and the Christian duty in regard to sin in the Christian life.

- Paul names **specific sins** and **commands** us to put them away.
- People whose lives are **dominated by sin** are “*sons of disobedience*” and not true Christians and “*will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Paul is contrasting believers and unbelievers as evidenced by the fruit of their lives.  
**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - 9 Or **do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such **were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. NASB
- Christians were “*formerly darkness but now are light in the Lord,*” noting our true state.
- He regularly gives a **vivification** (put on) when he gives a **mortification** (put off). Where sin is removed, virtue is to be inserted;
  - “*do not let*” v-3... “*but rather*” v-4,
  - “*do not be partakers with them*” v-7.... “*walk as children of light*” v-8,
  - “*do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them*” v-11
- **Sin** is so **heinous to God** it is disgraceful to even talk about it

Two other really clear texts calling us to mortification are Colossians 3:5-11 and Romans 6:11-14. In Colossians 3:5-11 see Paul using the **analogy of death** with **personal** and **specific sins**. He tells us to “*consider the members of your earthly body as dead.*” See how he points to the **chief work of faith**, the **renewing of the mind**. “*Consider*”, think about them as “*dead.*”

**Mortification begins with the constant renewing of the mind and is focused on using the Spirit’s power to kill sin.** Notice also, the contrast of our old life, “*in them you once walked, when you were living in them.*” But now you have, “*put on the new self*” (vivification), you have cognitively chosen to walk in virtue. This virtue **IS “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One.”** See here New Testament imperatives clearly laid out as “*put off*” or **mortification**, and “*put on*” or **vivification** and that these are done by the **renewing of the mind** which results in changed actions with the body.

**Colossians 3:5-11** - 5 Therefore **consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.** 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, 7 and **in them you also once walked**, when you were living in them. 8 But **now you also, put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have **put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One** who created him NASB

Notice a very similar correlation in Romans 6:11-14. Here Paul tells us “*consider yourselves to be dead to sin.*” Again the **analogy of death** to sin is used in our “*mortal body,*” or actions of daily living. This is done by the **renewing of the mind**, “*consider yourselves dead to sin.*” As a result, he says, “*do not let sin reign.*” That is, your life is not dominated by sin, it is the exception, not the rule. The course and trajectory of the Christian life is righteousness, not sin. Do not let it rule you so that you sin with your body, but rather “*present yourselves to God as*

*those alive from the dead.”* Live as if you were in God’s presence, who is your master and King, and do NOT be ruled or mastered by sin.

**Romans 6:11-14** - 11 Even so **consider yourselves to be dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin** as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 **For sin shall not be master over you**, for you are not under law, but under grace. NASB

**We have died to the authority of sin**, but not to **its influence** (Brian Hedges – Licensed to Kill). It is still there, with its lusts and temptations against the Spirit, so Paul tells us *“consider yourselves dead to sin,”* and therefore as a result, he says, *“do not let sin reign.”* You shall not let sin master you but instead Jesus is to be your King and your Master and we are, by the Spirit’s power to live in subjection to His will, *“perfecting holiness out of reverence for God”* (2 Cor 7:1).

## Understanding our condition and indwelling sin

Now it is important to understand that as Christians we have been **delivered from the reigning power of sin** (domination), and **delivered from the curse of sin** (death). We will never die because we have passed from death into life (John 5:24, John 11:25-26). We now stand in the righteousness of Christ having been justified in the sight of God by faith in Christ (Rom 3:21-28, 5:19-21, Gal 2:16, Col 1:21, 1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21, Phil 3:9-10). We have been born again (John 3:3, Eph 2:4-5, 1 Pet 1:3) by the Holy Spirit who now dwells in us (Rom 8:9-11) and set free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). However, **sin’s authority** has been stripped from us, but not **sin’s influence**. We still have a **sinful nature** that we are **at war** with (Rom 7:17-23, Gal 5:16-18). The depravity of our own human nature is still resident in these **“bodies of death”** that we live in and it will not be completely eradicated until Glorification at the Resurrection (1 Cor 15:51-54, Phil 3:21). Although we have been released from the power of sin and its ability to dominate us, it is still resident within us, seeking to dominate us, and must be **actively mortified** by the **power of the Spirit** as an **act of faith**. This mortification requires our **constant vigilance** because while we live in these mortal bodies, sin will always seek to dominate and control us, it is the great Christian struggle of Sanctification.

Our **former condition** (before regeneration) was **dead in transgressions and sin** (Eph 2:1-3), living **in the flesh** or sinful nature, (Rom 7:5, 8:5-8), and in **slavery to sin** (Rom 6:20-22). Because of this condition were we **children of wrath** (Eph 2:3), **unable to please God** and at **enmity with Him** (Rom 8:7-8), and bearing **fruit for death** (Rom 7:5), which would have been the result of our continued condition if it were not for the grace of God (Eph 2:5,8) in predestining, calling (Rom 8:29-30, 2 Tim 1:9) and regenerating us (Eph 2:4-5).

**Ephesians 2:1-3** - 1 And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**, 2 in which **you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind**, and were by **nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.

The Bible uses the **analogy of death** to speak about our **former condition** and in the same context speaks of **regeneration as the means** that God used to save us.

**Ephesians 2:4-5** - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), NASB

Paul says that when we were *“dead in transgressions and sins”* that *“we formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”* Here he describes that condition of everyone who is not saved and born again by the Spirit, they are **spiritually dead in sin**, living under the **influence of Satan** and the **fallen world**, and living in the flesh and **indulging the desires of the flesh** or sinful nature. Of course everyone in this condition is a child of God’s wrath, or if you will, an **object of the wrath of God** and destined for eternal separation from Him (2 Thes 1:8-9). This says Paul, they are by **“nature”** (Eph 2:3). That is, it is their natural condition. Apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, people **cannot “accept” or “understand” the “things of God,”** but God must regenerate them in order for them to even have the ability to believe the Gospel and respond in faith (John 6:37-39, 6:65).

**1 Corinthians 2:14** - 14 But **a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them,** because they are spiritually appraised. NASB

So Paul describes our rescue from our former condition in Ephesians 2:1-5 as God making *“us alive together with Christ.”* God powerfully delivered His grace to us by resurrecting us from spiritual death, quickening us to life in regeneration.

**Ephesians 2:4-5** - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** NASB

But we were also held captive by sin, to do its will. Our **former** condition was **slavery to sin**. We had **no ability** to overcome sin because we were held captive by it, always pursuing it as our natural course of living, being *“dead in trespasses and sin.”* This is because before regeneration, our spirits were dead and we were **“in the flesh”** living without the benefit and blessing of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Romans 6:20-22** - 20 For when **you were slaves of sin,** you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore **what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed?** For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But **now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God,** you derive your benefit, **resulting in sanctification,** and the outcome, eternal life. NASB

**Romans 7:5-6** - 5 For **while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.** 6 But **now we have been released from the Law,** having died to that by which we were bound, so that **we serve in newness of the Spirit** and not in oldness of the letter. NASB

**Romans 8:5-8** - 5 For **those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,** but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For **the mind set on the flesh is death,** but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 **because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** NASB

However our spirit has been *“made alive”* (Rom 8:10, Eph 2:5) and our inner man has been **freed from slavery to sin** and **released from its power** to hold us in bondage and dominate us. Our bodies are still subject to sin and temptation, being swayed at times by indwelling sin or the corrupt sinful nature (the flesh), which is passing away, but our spirit, our inner man is alive, and being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16), it rejoices in and seeks to do God’s will (Rom 7:21-23). When we were born again by the Spirit, we were released from the power of sin over us, the corrupt desires of sin being overcome by the righteous desire of the Spirit, and given a whole new perspective in our **minds set** for living. Once we are freed from sin we are not only **able to please God** because of the **Spirit’s power**, but we long to please Him and make it our aim in daily living. Our true inner selves have been freed from sin’s authority and domination, and we have been given **a new nature that desires to please God** having **His law written on our**



hearts, it now being **our zealous desire**. This is the blessing of the New Covenant promise of God, to live in the blessing and presence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, **"when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,** 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 **"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' **for they shall all know Me,** from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will **forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."** NASB  
**Ezekiel 36:26-27** - 26 "Moreover, **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.** NASB

Having this great blessing of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is vital to our ongoing Sanctification and vital to our ongoing struggle against sin. Sin cannot dominate us, but it will always be at war with the Spirit within us until Glorification. The old sinful nature in this body of death will always be at enmity with the Spirit. **We have died** to the **authority of sin**, but not to **its influence**. It is still there, with its lusts and temptations against the Spirit, so Paul tells us **"consider yourselves dead to sin,"** and therefore as a result, he says, **"do not let sin reign."** You **shall not let sin master you** but instead **Jesus is to be your King** and your Master and we are, by the Spirit's power to live in subjection to His will, **"perfecting holiness out of reverence for God"** (2 Cor 7:1). This is the progression of how Paul deals with sin in the believer's life in Romans chapters 6-8. The whole section from Romans 6:1-Romans 8:17 is devoted to the **problem of remaining sin and Sanctification in the Christian Life**. After having laid out the glorious good news of the gospel in chapter 1-5, in Romans 6 Paul makes the point that even though the grace of God reigns over sin because of Christ(chapter 5), yet we must mortify sin while we still live in these mortal bodies.

**Romans 6:1-2** - 1 What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it? NASB

The key he tells us, as we have seen in 6:11-14 is that it is all in the way we **THINK** about the struggle between the sinful and righteous desires in our hearts and minds. We must renew our minds by considering ourselves **"dead to sin but alive to God"** (Rom 6:11). Since we have been freed from sin's power to dominate us and control us, we must not allow it to do so. **We have died** to the **authority of sin**, but not to **its influence**. It is still there, with its lusts and temptations against the Spirit, so Paul tells us **"consider yourselves dead to sin,"** and therefore as a result, he says, **"do not let sin reign."** Now in Romans chapter 7, Paul discusses **the nature of the warfare with sin in ourselves**. He makes several key points;

- We have been released from the Law's power to condemn – 7:1-6
- The Law is good, yet is the strength and power of sin – 7:7-13 (1 Cor 15:56)
- Sin is within us – 7:17-23
- Sin makes war against us and never rests - 7:14-25
- Our inner man delights in God's law – 7:15-23

Paul explains that we **"were in the flesh"** and as a result bore **"fruit for death."** But having believed, we **"have been released from the Law,"** that is the **"sinful passions which were aroused by the Law,"** and so now we **"serve in the newness of the Spirit."**

**Romans 7:4-6** - 4 Therefore, my brethren, **you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ,** that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, **that we might bear**

**fruit for God.** 5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 **But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit** and not in oldness of the letter. NASB

He further explains that sin is alive because of the Law, which he also refers to as “*the commandment*.” Because the Law affords the opportunity to sin by transgressing it, the weakness of the sinful nature succumbs to it and we die, this of course a reference to Adam, and all of us in our transgression and resulting physical death. And even though the Law is “*holy and good*,” yet we violate it becoming sinners and reap the just penalty of death as a result. This of course is affected through “*sin*” which is in us, and responds to the opportunity to transgress, “*effecting my death*.” His point is, the Law is not to blame, but rather, sin which is within us, and through its passions, **causes us to transgress the Law**, resulting in death (God’s judgment against sin).

**Romans 7:7-13** - 7 What shall we say then? **Is the Law sin? May it never be!** On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” 8 **But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind;** for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;** 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 **for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me.** 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! **Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good,** that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. NASB

Then he digs into **the nature of the warfare** that is taking place in us. He explains that **sin is present within us**, that “*sin indwells me*.” Indeed **SIN** and **EVIL** are within us and “*present in me*,” says Paul. In fact Paul says, “*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh*,” making the point that “*the flesh*,” or sinful nature of Paul (and us) is entirely **EVIL**. In contrast to the flesh is the “*inner man*,” in whom Paul says that it “*delights in the Law of God*,” which is “*spiritual*,” and joyfully wishes to “*practice*” the Law and “*do good*.” But he explains there is a **sinister warfare constantly being waged against us** by “*indwelling sin*,” and this warfare is “*in the members of my body*,” that is, these mortal “*bodies of death*.” Here see that the “*Law is spiritual*” v-14, but our physical “*bodies of death*” v-24, are subject to the power and temptation of sin, and there is a **war being waged in our hearts and minds** v-23. Our inner man delights in God’s Law and desires to “*do good*,” yet is encumbered by the “*flesh*” v-17 and weakness of the physical body v-23, and this creates a **massive spiritual warfare which is constantly being waged** in the Christian life.

**Romans 7:14-25** - 14 For we know that **the Law is spiritual**; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for **I am not practicing what I would like to do**, but I am **doing the very thing I hate**. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. 17 So now, **no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.** 18 **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;** for **the wishing is present in me**, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For **the good that I wish**, I do not do; but I practice the very **evil that I do not wish**. 20 But if I am doing **the very thing I do not wish**, **I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.** 21 I find then **the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.** 22 **For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,** 23 but I see a different **law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.** 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from **the body of this death?** 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! **So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.** NASB

See in this section Paul’s key points about spiritual warfare.

- Sin is within us – 7:17-23
- Sin makes war against us and never rests - 7:14-25
- Our inner man delights in God's law – 7:15-23

Then of course in Romans 8, Paul gives us the keys to victory explaining how God will by His power overcome our enemy within and the war will end in victory. This victory is of course, the **freedom from sin and death** that has **already been granted to believers because of Jesus Christ and the Gospel**. Paul after crying out with the agony of spiritual warfare within, *“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*, explains that this is God's purpose in it all, so that in and through this warfare in the Sanctification process, God is leading us by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and being glorified in us and through us. He explains that Christ has already purchased our freedom from sin's domination and its curse which is death, and that in Him we are no longer under condemnation because of Christ person and work. Having cancelled the debt and penalties that we owed for our transgressions of the Law, God through Christ has given us a freedom which allows us to live our sanctification by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:1-4** - 1 There is **therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free from the law of sin and of death**. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, **He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh, **but according to the Spirit**. NASB

Living out this new freedom is accomplished by the **renewing of the mind** which occurs because of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Now having the Law written upon our hearts by God in regeneration, we have **a new mindset fixed upon the things of the Spirit**, giving us a new focus on God's will which results in *“life and peace”* with God. All of this because we are **resting on the good promises of what God has already done for us in Christ**. Paul contrasts our former life of being dominated by the sinful nature which brings death, with now having our spirits made **“alive”** and living in the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:5-8** - 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, **but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit**. 6 **For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 **And if Christ is in you**, though the body is dead because of sin, yet **the spirit is alive because of righteousness**. NASB

Here Paul has explained in no uncertain terms, that all true Christians have been resurrected from spiritual death saying, **“the spirit is alive because of righteousness,”** that is because of the righteousness that has been imputed to us in the Gospel (Romans 8:2-3). All of this good news about our new condition in Christ brings us to **the obligation to mortify the flesh**. Paul explains, since God has done all of this for us, that we are now **obligated to kill remaining sin** while we do live in these mortal bodies. **While we live, we must mortify**.

**Romans 8:12-13** - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation**, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but **if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live**. NASB

And this effort of mortification, is done by faith in God's power, it is **“by the Spirit”** that we are **“putting to death the deeds of the body.”** It is the done through the renewing of the mind in God's will, and empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Word and by the Spirit that God is sanctifying us. This he calls us to and describes it as **“walking by the Spirit,”** or living according to the Spirit's desire for our lives. Of course this is nothing new to Paul's

doctrine of the Christian Life. He has clearly taught us that the Christian life is lived out by God's power through faith which he has described as "**walking in the Spirit.**" This he has said we do in contrast to the flesh or sinful nature, which is at enmity with God's will and purpose for our life. He has clearly described this warfare of flesh and Spirit to us in Galatians.

**Galatians 5:16-18** - 16 But I say, **walk by the Spirit,** and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 **For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.** 18 But if you are **led by the Spirit,** you are not under the Law. NASB

So we must recognize that we will always be at **war with the flesh** while we live in these mortal bodies. This requires our **constant vigilance** in the war! And therefore we must **mortify the flesh**, because of our obligation to Christ, **putting it to death by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit**, becoming like Christ and bearing God's image in greater degree through the course of Christian life. You see, even though we have been delivered from the power of sin, it still lives within and seeks to dominate and destroy us. Therefore we must **learn to discern** and identify **sinful thoughts** and tendencies in our hearts and minds through our knowledge from the Word. And then **by the Spirit's power mortify it**, and then in **vivification, replacing it with the good virtue** of the **fruit of the Spirit**. In the same context in Galatians Paul teaches us how to discern very specific sins and calls us to mortify them.

**Galatians 5:19-21** - 19 Now **the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,** 20 **idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,** 21 **envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these,** of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. NASB

These he points out are in contrast to the **good virtue** that is **produced in us by the Holy Spirit**.

**Galatians 5:22-24** - 22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** 23 **gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. NASB

Again he states that this mortifying and vivifying is true of all real Christians saying, "**those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**" You see it is the "**passions and desires**" of sin that are within our hearts and minds that we must crucify, before they come to fruition in sinful activity. Therefore God's purpose in sanctification is fulfilled in the Christian life "**walking by the Spirit,**" being "**led by the Spirit,**" and then we will not "**carry out the desire of the flesh.**"

**Galatians 5:16-18** - 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 **For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.** 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. NASB

Let us understand then, that our cooperation with God in image bearing and sanctification, and the warfare that attends it, is largely **waged on the battlefield of the heart and mind**, through faith believing. Through God dependent effort we can mortify sin (put off) and vivify virtue (put on), putting the good glory of God on display in and through our lives.

## **The Mind is the battlefield**

Now this is why it is of utmost importance for the Christian to have a **daily habit of feeding upon the Holy Word of God** so that their mind can undergo a **renewing and cleansing** from the flesh and our fallen worldly thinking. Jesus explained that divine and supernatural life in the Kingdom of God is nourished by God's Word.

**Matthew 4:4** - 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, '**Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**'" NASB



And just like we need food every day to nourish our earthly physical life, so we need the Word of God to nourish the divine and supernatural life of the Spirit.

**Psalm 1:1-2** - How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But **his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.** NASB

As we meditate on the Word regularly, it equips us with the knowledge of God's will for our lives, and skills to **discern virtue from vice**, goodness from wickedness, and recognize the evil of indwelling sin so that it can be mortified by the Spirit. As we learn of God's goodness and virtue, we learn how to **abide in it by the Spirit**. It is through the Word that sin is identified and discerned in our hearts and minds, and the knowledge of God through His Word equips us for a life of holiness and virtue. **A right understanding of God and His Word is vital to fruitful and effective Christian living.** Our minds must be informed and renewed by the Word in order to live the supernatural life by the Spirit in the Kingdom of God. We must come to **know the Word of God** and **understand God's will** for our lives so that we might walk in it. We are called to this vigilance of **renewing the mind** again and again in Scripture.

**Romans 12:2** - 2 And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is,** that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB

**Ephesians 5:17** - 17 So then **do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** NASB

**Colossians 3:1-2** - 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** NASB

**Philippians 4:8** - 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell on these things.** NASB

When we consider this **renewing of the mind** in relation to **mortification** and **vivification**, we see how the Bible is careful to explain that this **warfare in the mind**, and with our knowledge is key to living the Christian Life.

**Ephesians 4:22-24** - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,** 23 and that you be **renewed in the spirit of your mind,** 24 and **put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness** of the truth. NASB

**Colossians 3:9-10** - 9 Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,** 10 and have **put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One** who created him NASB

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war** according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are **destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.** NASB

It is in the mind that we consider truth and righteousness, sin and temptation. Our minds need a continual cleansing from the corruption of the world around us, and the sin, which lives in us. We are constantly tempted to compromise our faith as we are presented with the temptations of the eyes, the flesh, and the pride of life. Only as we have the Word ready on our minds can we be aware of God's will, so that we might walk in it. Not only this but we must **learn to value and treasure the Word in our hearts** so that God's will and His thoughts become precious to us and dominate not only our thinking but equally important they dominate our affections and emotions!

**Psalm 119:11** - 11 **Thy word I have treasured in my heart,** That I may not sin against Thee. NASB

**Psalm 119:24** - 24 Thy testimonies also **are my delight; They are my counselors.** NASB

**Psalm 119:33-34** - 33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, And I shall observe it to the end. 34 **Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, And keep it with all my heart.** 35 Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For **I delight in it.** NASB

As we come to know and value God's Word, we will be driven by loving affection to walk in it.

## Hate - an essential family value

When we learn to love what God loves as we treasure His Word, we also **learn to hate what God hates**. This is a tremendous benefit when it comes to our own personal struggle for holiness. Jerry Bridges comments; *“We cannot escape the fact that God hates our sins. We may trifle with our sins or excuse them, but God hates them. Therefore every time we sin, we are doing something God hates. He hates our lustful thoughts, our pride and jealousy, our outburst of temper, and our rationalization that the end justifies the means. We need to be gripped by the fact that God hates all these things. We become so accustomed to our sins that we sometimes lapse into a state of peaceful coexistence with them, but God never ceases to hate them.”* End quote. Consider how God has spoken of this in His Word.

**Psalm 97:10** - 10 **Hate evil, you who love the Lord**, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. NASB

**Psalm 101:3-4** - 3 **I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work** of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. 4 **A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil**. NASB

**Psalm 119:104** - 04 From Thy precepts I get understanding; - **Therefore I hate every false way**. NASB

**Psalm 119:127-128** - 127 Therefore I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold. 128 Therefore **I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way**. NASB

**Psalm 119:163** - 163 **I hate and despise falsehood**, But I love Thy law. NASB

**Proverbs 8:13** - 13 **"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil**; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate. NASB

As our mind is renewed with the Word, we come to hate our sin along with God. We learn to be cognitive of those things in our lives and in our thinking that are inconsistent with God and His character, and so we need a constant renewal in our minds, a fresh cleansing from the Word. God has expressed an intense hatred and wrath against sin in His Word, and this is consistent with His character. Therefore this same hatred for sin, injustice and evil should be cultivated in our hearts and minds as well. Jerry Bridges comments; *“We need to cultivate in our own hearts the same hatred of sin that God has. Hatred of sin, as sin, not just something disquieting or defeating to ourselves, but as displeasing to God, lies at the root of all true holiness. We must cultivate the attitude of Joseph, who said when he was tempted, “how could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” Gen 39:9... The Pursuit of Holiness page 21.... Consider then that we are not to allow a **peaceful co-existence with our sinful thoughts and actions**, but rather we are to have a healthy hatred for them. And when we see the injustice and evil of our culture parading itself around us as if to blaspheme the God of Heaven, let us also **have with God a righteous anger** alive in our hearts and minds. This righteous anger however must always be held under the meek power of the Spirit and expressed in ways that are also holy! This is why Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4;*

**Ephesians 4:26** - 26 **Be angry, and yet do not sin**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. NASB

Further, let this **holy anger motivate us to put off the sin** which is so prevalent in our lives and zealously adorn ourselves with the blessed virtues of the God we love and worship. Let us deny the sin within and allow the Holy Spirit of God to dominate our hearts and minds, as we are guided and enlightened by a daily renewal in the Word of God. Let us freely surrender to the guidance of the Word of God. This warfare of Christian life is properly waged in our hearts and minds and we must allow our thinking to be molded and shaped by the Word. Therefore we must learn to long for the Word, delighting in it and letting it become our greatest desire and affection.

**1 Peter 2:1-3** - Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 **like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation**, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. NASB

## Lessons in Pride and Humility

Now as we have considered at some length the **mortification of sin**, no discussion would be complete if we did not mention the relation of **pride** and **humility** to **mortification**. Indeed the relation of pride and humility to **Sanctification** and **Bearing the Image** is of paramount importance. This is because **pride is the motivation and/or disposition of every sin** and **humility is the well spring of all virtue**. These heart attitudes are the very basis for how we live our lives and view our world. And the eyes of the Lord are peering into our hearts and lives to see if we have an arrogant heart of pride or a humble heart of gratitude. Consider 1 Peter 5:5-6...

**1 Peter 5:5-6** - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

You see the matter of **pride** and **humility** is something that **God is paying attention to**. And here Peter describes that **God is actively responding** to both the **proud** and the **humble**. You see **“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”** The prideful person may not be at war with God, but God is opposed to them! God actively seeks to make their life difficult.

**Proverbs 16:5** - **Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;** Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. NASB

When we exalt ourselves against God and proudly disregard His authority, we make Him our enemy and He is the most fierce of all enemies. Let us not be found warring with God or we will find ourselves frustrated, downcast or even ultimately destroyed! In contrast here the Scripture says, He **“gives grace to the humble.”** **God actively seeks to bless those who are humble.** In fact, He exalts them and lifts the up. He sees to it that things go well, and graciously overlooks their many failures and instead turns things for their good.

**Isaiah 57:15** - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order **to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.** NASB

Learn here about the central issues of the spiritual warfare for Sanctification in the Christian life. More than this, these matters are directly related to God's disposition toward us. These **heart attitudes** of **pride** and **humility** are indeed the very foundation for a life of holiness and the nitty gritty of how this war is waged.

**Luke 18:10** - 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; **for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.**" NASB

## Defining Biblical Pride and Humility

Now let us briefly define **pride** and **humility** in **the Bible**. I will start with the definition from the little booklet, **“From Pride to Humility”** by Stuart Scott.

**Pride** – The mindset of self, a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self.

**Humility** – The mindset of Christ, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given.

These definitions indeed get to the heart of pride and humility but I think we should add a few things to highlight the nature of these two heart attitudes. Indeed **pride and humility are polar**

**opposites.** They are the antithesis of each other. They also have to do with **spiritual awareness.** Pride is a spiritual blindness to true reality and humility is an ability to see true spiritual reality. An excellent example of this is the fact that the proud person thinks he/she is a humble person and the humble person thinks there are few people as proud as themselves. The proud person is oblivious to the fact that they are proud and the humble person thinks themselves proud for sure.

This is because the **nature of pride** itself is a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God and others.**

**James 3:14-16** - 14 But if you have **bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.** 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where **jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.** NASB

**Selfish ambition** is a prideful disposition which *“lies against the truth.”* It cannot see true reality. And where *“selfish ambition”* exists, *“there you have disorder and every evil thing.”* This is because this pride of selfish ambition views everything according to its own inflated view of self and appraises little according to what is right and true. The proud person is not aware of themselves and how proud they really are, looking down on others and appraising them according to an **inflated view of self.** They have a twisted view of others because they view everything in relation to themselves, and appraise others in view of themselves and often completely misunderstand others because of this condition. They many times are guilty of the very thing they accuse or think of others because **pride** is also the very **nature of hypocrisy.** The **proud person thinks more highly of themselves** than is true or than they should. The thing to which they are blind the most is their own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by their own inflated self-respect, they make a wrong appraisal of themselves, God and others. Bill Farley comments, *“We cannot see pride, even though it is our most grievous, disabling sin, because its very nature is blindness, and the first thing to which it is blind is its own existence... the proud person has a high view of self, but a low view of God and his brother... the proud man is completely unaware of his pride, of all men he is convinced he is humble.”* from Gospel Powered Humility page 25. Pride is **self-righteous**, thinking itself more righteous than others. Pride is **self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized. Pride is **self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking to highly of its own wisdom. Pride **self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, not recognizing its total dependence of God for strength and resources. Pride can also be **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore consumed with self and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention. Biblical examples of pride can be seen in the characters of Jacob, Pharoah, Korah, Saul, Uzziah, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and others. Other biblical terms for this blinding inflated view of self we call pride are; vainglory, conceit, boasting, arrogance, loftiness, presumption, haughty, puffed up, scoffing or self-seeking. One last important point is that **every person is proud**, in some degree. None of us are without pride, including all born-again Christians. We all, to some degree are infected with this vicious blindness and affected by our own pride. We will also never in this life be completely delivered from this spiritual disease for it is the nature of the sinful nature we will all struggle with until we are glorified at the resurrection. Let us see in this that **pride** is indeed the most **“grievous and disabling sin,”** and the life of the proud person is sure to be a constantly painful and difficult struggle ending in disaster. This of course is because *“God is opposed to the proud,”* (Jam 4:6).

**Proverbs 26:12** - 12 Do you see a man **wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool** than for him. NASB



**Humility** in contrast is a delightful and fruitful **heart attitude**. And because it deals with nature of spiritual reality, only born-again Christians with the Spirit of God can learn genuine humility. Genuine humility is NOT our natural disposition, but given by the Spirit of God. The more **genuine humility** we learn, the more **powerfully our lives will be changed**. Humility is the **foundation for all the virtues** to thrive in our lives and without it, virtue cannot exist in any meaningful measure. The humble heart is a heart that sees both God and others in the proper light. As we grow in **humility we grow** in the **awareness of spiritual reality**. Bill Farley comments; *“Humility is one of the least understood spiritual fruits. It is not self-hatred or lack of self-confidence. Humility and low self-image are not the same thing. Indeed they are polar opposites. Increasing humility brings rest with self, with God, and with life’s circumstances. It produces real lasting joy and healthy self-image. Humility is the ability to see spiritual reality, to see things as they really are. It is the capacity to see myself in God’s light, in the context of His holiness and my sinfulness. In other words, it is the ability to see self, and this world, through God’s eyes. God empowers the humble person to increasingly see himself as he really is; “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.” (Rev 3:17). The person growing in humility see his gifts and faults, his strengths and weaknesses, with increasing clarity. Ironically, this humility lays the sure foundation for real contentment and healthy self-image because the humble Christian also increasingly sees and feels God’s great personal love. The truly humble believer has a low view of himself, but an increasingly high view of God and his fellow man.”* from Gospel Powered Humility pages 24-25.

The idea of **humility** in the Bible is to **make oneself low**, or to bow down. It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive**, meek and gentle. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself.

**Philippians 2:3-4** - 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. NASB

It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue. Humility does not have an inflated view of self, but rather recognized one’s own spiritual bankruptcy before God’s holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**. Humility has a clear self-image because it sees itself with faith depending on God. Humility rejoices when others are blessed and rather than feeling jealous or envious, is happy to bless and to serve others for their benefit, and even to make personal sacrifices to see these things happen and for **God to get the glory** for it. Humility does not seek its own glory or attention. The genuinely humble person is content to be forgiven of their many sins, to have the bare necessities of life, and their great **privilege** is to love and serve God and to love and serve others. **Humility is NOT self-righteous**, thinking itself more righteous than others, but rather knows itself sinful, in need of divine grace and privileged to be forgiven. Humility is **NOT self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized, but rather seeks to be in the background and not the center of attention. Humility is glad for others to be honored and blessed, and for God to get the glory, to whom it is properly due. It submissively yields to the preference of others, and prefers others choices and desires often when making decisions.

**Romans 12:10** - 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor**; NASB

Humility is NOT **self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking too highly of its own wisdom, but realizes that others often have a better understanding of matters and probably have insight that we lack. It humbly looks to God and others for help and guidance.

**Romans 12:16** - 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; **do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.** NASB

Humility is NOT **self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, but **realizes one's own weakness** and dependence on God for strength and resources. It recognizes that without God's blessing and favor, it cannot make any lasting progress.

**2 Corinthians 3:4-5** - 4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 **Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.** NASB

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10** - 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses**, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore **I am well content with weaknesses**, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. NASB

Humility is NOT **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore **consumed with self** and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention. It does not always see itself as the victim of others injury, but rather takes responsibility for its own regular mistakes, and is willing to admit when it is wrong. It does not criticize others or speak of their troubles with delight, but speaks well of others and desires to build others up with gracious and edifying words, giving others the benefit of the doubt.

**Ephesians 4:29** - 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, **but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.** NASB

Humility is inwardly glad when others bring correction or critique, because it realizes this is an opportunity for real progress and a clearer view of self.

**Proverbs 9:8** - 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, **Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.** NASB

**Proverbs 17:10** - A **rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding** Than a hundred blows into a fool. NASB

Other biblical terms and ideas for this healthy self-image of humility are; contrite or contrition, bowing down, servile, lowly, yielding, submissive, meek, gentle, and modest. One last important point is that **humility is a goal** we are always striving for but never actually attaining. We may grow in humility by degree, but **never fully arrive** in this life. When you finally think your humble, your pride just ruined it. We all are in a **desperate need to humble ourselves**, and this must be renewed continually, for pride is always lurking in the self, seeking its own attention, importance and lust. This is why the Bible commands us to "**humble ourselves**" before God.

**1 Peter 5:5-6** - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

As we said earlier, it is the **attitude or mindset of Christ**, who left the glory and honor and majesty of Heaven to come and serve and die for wretched sinners who rebelled against His authority, and had profaned his world and His entire creation.

**Philippians 2:5-8** - 5 **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,** 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 **but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,** and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. NASB

Thus **Jesus** is our **great example of humility** and His attitude is the heart attitude that we strive to possess at all times, always seeking the glory of God. Humility is "*a focus on God and others,*

*a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given.*" There is then **in humility, a self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, seeing Him in His proper place and therefore, seeing **everything in its proper place** in relation to God. When you see the world as being ruled by the Sovereign and in rebellion against Him, you begin to understand why it is in such a desperate plight as it is. Grace and mercy take on a whole new meaning when you realize that you deserve God's wrath forever in hell, but instead are the recipient of His loving mercy and eternal life that He has freely given to you because of Christ. And in order to follow Christ, one must take that initial step of **humble repentance at the cross, denying your own will** and exalting God's will above your own.

**Mark 8:34-35** - 34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,** and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. NASB

You must **lose your own life** to follow Christ. The first step is a humble one, a contrition that acknowledges its arrogant sinfulness toward God, and bowing low to seek God's mercy you lose your own life, your own selfish will, your own plan for your own life and your own glory. In this yielding and brokenness of losing your life, you actually find your life, and you come to realize that life is not centered in and around you, but it is God's world, His Kingdom, His glory and His plan that is central to all things. In this humility you find great **meaning and purpose in life** realizing that God gave you life to glorify Him by living a life of virtue, loving and serving God. No longer consumed with self, you are free to give yourself away in service and love to others, and to live your life as a fountain of blessing, and reaping from that a **healthy self-image**, filled with joy. As you grow in this **spiritual awareness**, wisdom and understanding about your relations and the world around you become more and more obvious, and you begin to realize how to impart grace to others, having been blessed by God's grace toward you. This fundamental change in spiritual awareness can only come by God's free grace in **regeneration**, it is not a human work, and there is nothing you can do to merit this spiritual vision. **God must open your eyes** before you even realize your great and desperate need to be saved, and He must give the gift of humble faith in order for you to believe.

**John 3:3** - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

**Ephesians 2:4-6** - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), 6 and **raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places**, in Christ Jesus, NASB

Therefore **when we are saved** it is **entirely by grace**. Once you were blinded by the God of this world (2 Cor 4:4), and steeped in your our sinful and selfish lifestyle, you **viewed God with arrogance**, mocking His holiness and sovereignty by you sinful deeds. You **viewed others with contempt**, as a means to your own ends and existing for you and unto you, you saw your life as your own, and not as God's (the One who gave it to you!). But in mercy He opened your eyes to see your desperate sinfulness, and your great need to be saved, and He showed you that you needed a Savior to pay the great penalties for your crimes that you had amassed before Him. By grace you have been saved! In regeneration He granted you a **humble child-like faith** in order for you to receive Christ, broken over your sin, and mourning your great offenses against God and others.

**Mark 10:15** - 15 "Truly I say to you, **whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.**" NASB

Coming as a child, you had **no righteousness of your own** to bring, only a life filled with sinful arrogance, so with God-given faith you looked to Christ and the cross as your only hope to be saved! Behold the **contrition, the yielding and submissive disposition** that receives Christ and His kingdom like a child. Thanks be to God that He started this humble work in your heart, and He will bring it to completion.

**Philippians 1:6** - 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** NASB

The **contrast** between **pride** and **humility** can be seen very clearly in the teaching of Jesus. Consider how he pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Luke 18:9-14. Consider the **spiritual awareness** of the two subjects in the illustration.

**Luke 18:9-14** - 9 And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, **'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'** 13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, **was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'** 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." NASB

Consider the **disposition before God** of the two subjects in the illustration. The **Pharisee** is **proud** and has an inflated view of himself, and being **self-righteous** he thinks is better than others saying, *"God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer."* He views others with contempt, thinking they are worse sinners than he is, and not seeing his own hypocrisy. He has a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God and others**. He is **blind, not spiritually aware**. The thing to which he is blind the most is his own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by his own inflated self-respect, he makes a wrong appraisal of himself, God and others. He is **self-exalting, self-willed, and self-reliant** thinking he has God's approval, worse yet that he himself has earned God's approval, when in fact God is not even hearing his arrogant prayer; *"The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself."* God is opposed to this man and does not even acknowledge his bankrupt and blind discourse about the glory of himself, and he was **NOT justified** before God, *"justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled."* Having exalted himself, he had cut himself off from the mercy of God who only **"gives grace to the humble."**

But notice the **tax-collector**, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to even approach God**, whom he knows he has offended with his sin; *"standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"* He did not even consider himself worthy to look up toward God, he was **lowly** and **trembling before God**, even *"beating his breast"* and crying out to God for mercy, knowing that he desperately needed God's help and mercy and remedy for his terrible crimes against the Lord. He **sees so clearly** and has the **ability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly his **relation to God and others**. His eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, He realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, the One whom he has offended and the only One who can give mercy. Here Jesus demonstrates the disposition one must have to approach God, for God to hear his prayer, and to receive grace and mercy from God and be justified in his sight.



## Humility, trembling and obedience

So we have considered the nature of humility and some of its basic characteristics which are;

- It is an **awareness** of true **spiritual reality**. It sees and/or perceives clearly its proper place before God and others.
- The **mindset of Christ**, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a **desire to glorify and please God** in all things and by all things He has given.
- It recognizes one's own spiritual bankruptcy before God's holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**.
- It is a **self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, and a willingness to lose one's life for Christ's sake.
- It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive**, meek and gentle. It is **contrite** and seeks to amend its failures. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself
- It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue.
- One last important point is that **humility is a goal** we are always striving for but never actually attaining. We may grow in humility by degree, but **never fully arrive** in this life.

Having seen to some degree what the nature of humility looks like, let us consider how it should progress in us, and how we may know that we are making this **downward progress** of **contrition**. As we grow in **humility we grow** in the **awareness** of **spiritual reality**. We become like that tax collector of Luke 18:13, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to even approach God**, his eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, he realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, and therefore he is trembling and contrite. Let us make no mistake, this is the **heart attitude** of one that is **pleasing to God**.

**Isaiah 57:15** - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order **to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite**. NASB

**Isaiah 66:2** - 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word**. NASB

**Matthew 5:3** - 3 "**Blessed are the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. NASB

And this heart attitude leads to a healthy fear, a **reverence** for **God and His Word**. As it sees God and His holiness, there is a **trembling**, a fearful reverence, a **contrition** that seeks to amend its failures to glorify Him. Because humility has such clear vision of God, it cannot but see the awesome **beauty** of **God's holiness**, and **His magnificent love** and rejoice at the sight (or perception) of it. Moreover in this sight of God, is the perception of His forgiveness, and His loving-kindness in giving the ultimate sacrifice to reconcile us to Him, even His sinless Son, Jesus the Christ. So with this humility and contrition comes an inner rejoicing, yet with holy fear. This **humility with joy** combines to be a powerful motivator toward our growth because with the reverence for God's holiness comes the perception of His love and the desire to please Him. It not only adores His beauty and virtue, but it also longs to be like Him. This is the deep inner **work** of the **Spirit**, causing us to grow in the perception of God's love to us in the Gospel, and

also causing us to long to be like Him, which results in virtue being perfected within us. As we grow in this union with the Father and the Son, we are powerfully changed into His image.

**1 John 4:16-18** - 16 And we have **come to know and have believed the love which God has for us**. God is love, and **the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him**. 17 **By this, love is perfected with us**, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear**, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. NASB

This **joyful trembling** is the stuff of spiritual growth and the motivation that causes the **downward progress of humility**. Bill Farley comments; *"The person growing in humility see his gifts and faults, his strengths and weaknesses, with increasing clarity. Ironically, this humility lays the sure foundation for real contentment and healthy self-image because the humble Christian also increasingly sees and feels God's great personal love. The truly humble believer has a low view of himself, but an increasingly high view of God and his fellow man."* As we understand God, ourselves, and others more clearly, we are empowered to change and become like Him. More than this, it is the motivation for obedience to God's Word. Humility is the fuel that causes us to want to **amend our failures** and to truly be changed and become like Him. When we see the wretchedness of our own sinfulness, and the beauty of God's love and forgiveness, we long to be changed and take on His virtue, not only in our thoughts, but even more in our words and actions. We begin to desire to glorify Him and enjoy Him by loving Him and serving Him and others. We begin to act on the **vision that humble faith has clearly given** us of God. As we **grow** in this **joyful trembling**, we grow in **spiritual awareness**, we perceive reality more clearly. And so the Bible calls us to **tremble** before God's holy **Word** from a heart of **contrition** and **humility**. It tells us that God is not only pleased with our contrition, but blesses the humble and contrite.

**Isaiah 66:2** - 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word**." NASB

**Psalms 25:9** - 9 He **leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble** His way. NASB

**Psalms 138:6** - 6 For though the Lord is exalted, Yet **He regards the lowly**; But the haughty He knows from afar. NASB

So the Bible calls us not only to a **trembling before God's Word**, but calls us to a **lively obedience** that produces a godly life, a life of true worship, which looks like **Spirit empowered virtue**, and purposeful **service to God and others**. This is **spiritual growth** and maturity. It is becoming like Him, **bearing the image** in greater degree, as we are changed through the Word and by the Spirit.

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, **just as you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work** for His good pleasure. NASB

**2 Corinthians 3:18** - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB

**James 1:21-22** - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls**. 22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB

**1 Peter 5:5-6** - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble**. 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

But what does it look like to humble yourself? How do we offer our **God dependent effort** in this cooperation with God? What practical steps does the Bible tell us to take in this Sanctifying work of the Spirit? The New Testament is filled to the brim with practical exhortations toward

**sanctification and personal holiness.** Several practical sections come to mind; (**Romans 12:1-15:13, Galatians 5:1-6:10, Ephesians 4:1-6:20, Philippians 2:1-18, Colossians 3:1-4:6, 2 Thess 3:1-15**). Almost the entire Epistles of James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude are given to this practical instruction. But when considering how to **“humble ourselves”** as Peter calls us to, consider the passage in James where James also tells us to **“humble ourselves.”** Here he gives very specific exhortations to this humbling. Let’s look at this text.

**James 4:6-10** - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 **Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.** 10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.** NASB

Now as we consider this passage, don’t forget that we accomplish these things in the **power of the Spirit**, yet we make real effort toward them. Our effort is **God dependent effort** (faith), and we are working together with Him, empowered by Him to become like Him. Notice that James has in mind how to correct our **sinful struggles in relationships with God and others** (v-3:1-4:10) that are filled with ungodly lust (v-4:1-5) and selfish ambition (v-3:14), which lead to quarrels and strife (v-4:1-2), and ultimately striving with God as His enemy (v-4:4-5).

**James 4:1-5** - 1 What is the **source of quarrels and conflicts among you**? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 **You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.** You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because **you ask with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, **do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? NASB

As we arrive at his conclusion in **James 4:6-10**, notice he tells us how to practically **mortify our old sinful selves**, and to **vivify by putting on the new self**, but particularly calling this activity **“humbling ourselves.”** In this he points out that **humbling ourselves** has to do with both **mortification and vivification.**

**James 4:6-10** - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 7 **Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.** 10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.** NASB

The context of verses 6-10 is sandwiched on both sides (v-6 & v-10) with the idea of humbling ourselves. Consider how he tells us it is done in between.

- **7 Submit therefore to God** – Here he calls us to the contrition and submissive yielding to the will of God that humility is. If you want to humble yourself, you must submit to God’s will, and yield yourself to Him in obedience. **How do we humble ourselves? By submitting to God.**
- **Resist the devil and he will flee from you** – This means you must put off or mortify the selfish desires of the old self, and stop yielding to Satan’s temptations (in this context it is lust, envy, quarreling, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition), but rather resist him. Here God says if you resist the devil he will flee. **How do we humble ourselves? By resisting the devil.**
- **8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you** – See here he encourages us to draw near to God, not to flee from Him like guilty Adam. God loves us and desires to free us from the slavery of sinful choices and He calls us to come near. See here the love that God has for us, and this should overcome our fear of Him (1 John 4:16-18).

Matthew 11:28-30 - 28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." NASB

Notice that God is ready and willing to draw near to those who draw near to Him. **How do we humble ourselves? By drawing near to God.**

- **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded** - Here he calls us to mortify our sinful behavior both on the outside, "*cleanse your hands, you sinners*" and on the inside, "*and purify your hearts.*" Here the Christian is called a "*sinner*" and called to repent. Consider he also points to the inner man, the heart and mind of man. See here the battlefield of the mind, change your "*double mind*" into an steadfast single minded devotion to God. The Psalmist prayed, "*give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name!*" (Psalm 86:11). **How do we humble ourselves? By repenting (or mortifying) our sinful deeds, intentions and thoughts.**
- **9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom** – Here James calls us to the clear vision of humility in light of our sinfulness (v-8) and God's holy jealousy (v-5) for our purity. God has given His Holy Spirit to live within us, therefore we should hate, bewail and loathe our sinful deeds, intentions and thoughts! If we see our great offenses against God, and we perceive His loving-kindness in the Gospel to forgive us, we ought to have a regular mourning over our sinfulness with that contrition that detests its own corruption and seeks to amend its failures... remember the tax collector who "*was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*" **How do we humble ourselves? By mourning and weeping over our sinful deeds, intentions and thoughts!**

2 Corinthians 7:10-12 - 10 For the **sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret**, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For behold **what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!** In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. NASB

See in these few verses how James has given several **very practical** and **clear steps** to take in "**humbling ourselves.**" Notice how this humility relates to so many different aspects of our Christian life. Humility in this context includes, "**submitting to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God,**" and "**repenting and mourning over our sinfulness.**" This is because humility is that foundation, that heart attitude of the true believer, that disposition of the heart before God that permeates everything we do in life and our relationship to God and others. It is in fact the **wellspring of all the virtues** in a Christian life. The more **intense and fertile the soil of humility in your heart**, the **richer and more bountiful** is the **virtue of God perfected** in our lives. This is because the humble are submitted to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God and repenting and mourning their sin, and God in turn is "**giving grace to the humble.**" This is what the **God dependent effort of faith** looks like practically. It is a joyful trembling at the Word of God, which the Spirit is working in us, to cause us to **bear His image** in greater degree over time. We "**are being transformed**" through the Word and by the Spirit!

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB  
But this happens in greater degree to those who respond to the Word in humility and receive it, being an "**effectual doer**" of the Word, and not just "**hearers**" only.

James 1:21-22 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** 22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB



## Declaring war on pride

Now in the same way that **humility is the wellspring of all the virtues**, as we have said, **pride is the root of every sin**. One of the most important matters in the Christian life is the disposition of our hearts before God. What is the posture of our heart as it relates to God in His holiness and us in our sinfulness? Are we like the proud and therefore blind Pharisee, to whom God is opposed? Or are we submissive and contrite, like the tax collector, realizing our own profoundly sinful condition and need of divine grace, with a clear vision of God's love to us through the Gospel? See here the very heart and foundational matter in **bearing the image** and becoming like Christ in Sanctification, it is the process whereby that grace of humility that was given in regeneration when we were saved, is growing and bearing fruit over time. We are progressing heavenward to Christlikeness overtime as we make the downward progression of humility, coming to that **clear vision** or **spiritual awareness** that **humility is** in greater degree over time. This of course happens also through the mortification of the pride that is in our hearts. Growing in humility starts with a recognition of our pride and an active killing of this sinful heart attitude, and the replacement of it with the godliness of humble child-like faith. We must come to see that the sinful **posture of pride** is arrogantly lifted up against God's authority, bent on rebellion in defiance of His will, and willing to commit treason with contempt of His holy Law. The **great beast of pride must be slain in our hearts** if Christ will rule there!

## Pride is part of the nature of every sin

This truth is one in Scripture that is much like the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no specific verse that states that God is Triune as a proposition, but the whole Bible is filled with statements that put forth God's Tri-Unity and repetitively imply His Triune nature. So it is with **pride** being an element in the **very nature of sin**. There is no specific verse that says pride is the nature of sin as a proposition, but the Bible continually exposes the sins of people in the course of history, and continually shows the nature of this activity to be an arrogant defiance of God. This is because the struggle with pride in our hearts is a struggle against **God's reign, His rule, His Lordship**. It is as if our will is saying, "*who rules me and determines my course of action?*" When we sin we commit **treason** against His Heavenly **Majesty**, in **defiance** we lift ourselves up against His **Kingship** and in **contempt** of His **Sovereignty** we commit **mutiny** as it were. This is why every sin is an arrogant defiance of God's authority and Law. **Sin always defies God, therefore it always is proud**, lifted up and haughty, as if to say "*I am my own God, I will not have this God to rule over me.*" **Pride seeks to "un-god God,"** says Ralph Venning. Consider **pride** in what is the **nature of sin**, and what **motivates sin**, and what is the **disposition of the heart** that commits sin.

1. It is the **nature of sin to exalt oneself above God's rule** as Creator and in rebellion against Him violate His holy law (Gen 3:1-7, 1 John 3:4). Sin transgresses, crosses over God's boundaries as our Governor, it **arrogantly disregards His authority**. Because of this, there is **always a sense of self-exalting pride in sin**, whether premeditated, intentional or unintentional. When we sin we put ourselves in the place of God.
2. What **motivates** both intentional and unintentional sin is a disregard for the judgment (power and authority) of God and an arrogant dismissal of it, as if in our **unbelief** **we do not think He will require justice, and defiantly transgress His will**. It is to **proudly** say, "*my desire is greater than God's judgment against my sin.*" Even unintentional sin does not regard God enough, (believe), to be informed of His requirement for morally acceptable behavior, or His power to judge according to righteousness.

3. Although the **conscience may warn against sin** because of our accountability to God, yet **our heart proudly decides** that our will is better than God's because ultimately what we want (**our lust**) is greater and more important than what God wants (**His Law**). See the nature of temptation is always to violate a law, otherwise it would NOT be a **temptation to sin (transgress law)**. The **disposition of the heart** that sins is **proudly lifted up against God**, and voluntarily overthrowing His rule in the heart.

Consider the **heart motivation of the first recorded sin** in creation, the **fall of Satan**. Look at the words that describe the motives and intentions in Satan's heart.

**Isaiah 14:13-14** - 13 "But you said **in your heart**, **'I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise my throne above** the stars of God, And **I will sit on the mount** of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 **'I will ascend above the heights** of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High.'** NASB

**Ezekiel 28:12-19** - 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God, **"You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.** 13 **"You were in Eden, the garden of God;** Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that **you were created** They were prepared. 14 **"You were the anointed cherub who covers,** And I placed you there. **You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.** 15 **"You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you.** 16 "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And **you sinned;** Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 **"Your heart was lifted up** because of your beauty; You **corrupted your wisdom** by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. 18 "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade, You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. 19 "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified, And you will be no more.'"" NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of Adam and Eve** when they partook of the forbidden fruit. Knowing clearly the will of God and yet **defiantly transgressing** His command, in their pride our first parents **committed treason** against the Sovereign Majesty of God. Their desire in their hearts for what God had forbidden, and their desire to be like God, drove them to **defy God**.

**Genesis 3:1-7** - 3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 **but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'**" 4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of the unbeliever** in this Gospel age. Knowing clearly that there is a God who requires righteousness of them, **in their pride they will not honor Him as God**, or give thanks to Him for His good gifts that He gives every day. In their **arrogance** they do not acknowledge God any longer, but instead transgress and violate His Law and will. They know God will hold them accountable, but **defy Him** anyway.

**Romans 1:18-22** - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** 21 For even though **they knew God,**

**they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

**Romans 1:28-32** - 28 And just as they **did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer**, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and, **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them**. NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of the true believer** who has been forgiven and stands in Christ. It is apparent that those of us who know and believe the truth hold an even greater culpability for sin. We are fully aware of God's righteous judgment, and yet allow our lust to deceive us into sin, and proudly dismiss His Lordship over the members of our bodies. If it were not for the grace of God in accomplishing our Justification once for all time through the death of Christ (the Gospel), we would again be condemned with the unbelieving and subject to eternal death. But thanks be to God, He has accomplished this, and we stand in Christ, and have been given the Holy Spirit and faith in regeneration. Nevertheless, we are in a struggle for sanctification and holiness, but aided by the Holy Spirit so that we have the ability to submit to God's desire and mortify our sins, something the unbeliever does not have. Yet even with us, the struggle with sin is one that has at its heart a temptation to cross over God's boundaries, defy His authority, and follow our will according to our lust.

**James 1:14-15** - 14 But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. NASB

This is why in **humbling ourselves** James has told us that we must submit therefore to God and resist temptation. You see it is a question of **who rules the heart**, who is in authority there. We will submit to the Creator as a dependent creature, our will we proudly defy His authority to chase our lust and deny His will to seek our own?

**James 4:6-7, 10** - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** .... 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. NASB

This battle is very real even for people who love God and seek to do His will. This of course is what we spoke of earlier about the **tension of holiness** in the Christian life. The inner man delights in the law of God and seeks to do His will, but we are buffeted by these bodies that are still subject to sin and temptation. Even King David, the man after God own heart could be led away by His own lust and fall into sin.

**2 Samuel 11:2-4** - 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof **he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.** 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 And **David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her**; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. NASB

So even for the true believer the pride that is in our hearts is an essential part of the struggle against every sin, because it always calls God's authority into question and seeks to dethrone or un-god God. As we have clearly seen in the scriptures above, **pride is part of the very nature of sin**. Pride is what **motivated the very first sin** in creation, the fall of Satan himself (Isa 14:12-14). It was the heart motivation that caused our first parents to commit the first human sin as they sought to **"be like God"** and transgress His Law and defy His authority as God the Creator (Gen 3:1-7). **Pride is what motivates the heart of the unbeliever** as the no longer even acknowledge

God or His authority as Creator and constantly defy Him by dethroning Him in their hearts (Rom 1:18-32). We have clearly seen that even the **true believer struggles in sin because of a prideful disposition** that will even defy God in the light of His grace to us in Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank God that He is making us practically holy through the process of sanctification and He will ultimately glorify us with bodies that are no longer even subject to sin and death. The Bible clearly shows that the struggle against sin is a struggle against the authority and rule of God over His creatures, and that is why **pride is an element in every sin**, because ultimately it defies God's rule and seeks to dethrone Him. As we have said, the **great beast of pride must be slain in our hearts if Christ will rule there!**

Now much of this evidence from scripture, and indeed much study of the Bible on this topic has led many students of the Bible, indeed some of the greatest theologians in history to conclude that there is a sense in which **we are all infected with pride**, and pride is the root, and/or the motivating source, or **part of the very nature of sin itself**. Here are a few quotes.

**Spurgeon** – *“That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warped and woof of our nature, that too we are wrapped in our Wynding sheets we shall never hear the last of it.”*

**CS Lewis** - In his book Mere Christianity, Lewis evidences his conviction about the seriousness of pride in this way, he asserts *“that pride is the essential vice, the utmost evil,”* and that it is the *“one vice of which no man in the world is free, and of which hardly any people ever imagine they are guilty themselves.”*

**Chrysostom** - Chrysostom said that *“pride is the mother of all evils.”*

**Thomas Watson** – *“Oh, let us search if there is none of this leaven of pride in us. Man is naturally a proud piece of flesh; this sin runs in the blood. Our first parents fell by their pride. They aspired to deity. There are the seeds of this in the best, but the godly do not allow themselves in it. They strive to kill this weed by mortification..... Justice comprehends all virtue in itself; so pride comprehends all vice. It is a spiritual drunkenness; it flies up like wine into the brain and intoxicates it. It is idolatry; a proud man is a self-worshipper.”*

**Andrew Murray** - Murray asserts, *“humility, the place of entire dependence upon God, is from the very nature of things the first duty and the highest virtue of his creatures. And so pride, the loss of humility, is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen Angels began to look upon themselves, with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Likewise, it was when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from there high estate into the wretchedness to which all humankind has sunk. In heaven and on earth, pride or self-exaltation is the very gateway to hell. And so it follows that nothing can save us but the restoration of our lost humility, the original and only true relationship of the creature to its God.”*

The modern biblical counselors Stuart Scott and also Wayne Mack both assert that **pride is in our very nature** and at the **very root and essence of sin**. **Stuart Scott** says *“Pride is the epidemic vice. It is everywhere and manifests itself in many ways. As much as we may hate to admit it, we all have pride, each and every one of us. The question is not, do I have it? But, where is it? And how much of it do I have? We all have the tendency to think too much about ourselves and too much of ourselves.”* **Wayne Mack** says *“What is pride? Pride consists in attributing to ourselves and demanding for ourselves the honor, privileges, prerogatives, rights, and power that are due to God alone. Thus, it is at the very root and essence of sin because*



*pride, at its core, is idolatry of self. A proud person has put himself or herself in God's place."* I have maintained that **pride is part of the nature** of sin, it is one element of several. Let me briefly show a few other parts of the nature of sin, to see more clearly a fuller scope of the nature and essence of sin.

**Unbelief** – Every sin ultimately must dismiss at some level God's right and power and certainty to judge our actions, therefore we reason (falsely) that our lust is greater than the reality of His Judgment (deception). It calls the existence of God and His righteous judgment into question, which is **unbelief** (we fail to believe His judgment is greater than the temporary pleasure of sin).

**Through lust the tempter deceives us** into thinking sin is something less than it is (Eph 4:22). For if one believed that God existed and will judge our actions according to righteousness, there would be a willing submission. Unbelief is a **proud dismissal of reality** since God has clearly made Himself known, and conscience is a witness against sin and a warning of God's righteous judgment. John Piper has written a helpful book on this topic called "Battling Unbelief."

**Romans 1:18-22** - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** 21 For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks;** but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

**Romans 14:23** - 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin.** NASB

**Ephesians 4:22** - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, **which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,** NASB

**Insubordination** – Because sin is a transgression of God's Law, it is always insubordination, which is a **proud dismissal of God's Sovereign authority**, expressed in His Law. Words appropriate to describe this are; Arrogance, Haughtiness, Loftiness, Defiance, Rebellion, Audacity, Treason, Contempt, Mutiny, to name a few.

**1 Corinthians 15:56** - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law;** NASB

**Romans 4:15** - 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but **where there is no law, neither is there violation.** NASB

**1 John 3:4** - 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness.** NASB

**Lust and Law** - Although the **conscience may warn against sin** because of our accountability to God, yet **our heart proudly decides** that our will is better than God's because ultimately what we want (**our lust**) is greater and more important than what God wants (**His Law**). See the nature of temptation is always to violate a law, otherwise it would NOT be a **temptation to sin (transgress law)**. The **disposition of the heart** that sins is **proudly lifted up against God**, and voluntarily overthrowing His rule in the heart.

**Romans 6:12**- 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body that you should **obey its lusts,** NASB

**Romans 7:9-11** - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came,** sin became alive, and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 **for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me,** and through it killed me. NASB

**Judgment** – **Sin always brings about judgment** because God is good and always requires an appropriate penalty for transgression of law. This is the **Justice of God**, which is perfect and complete and never flexible. Every sin in the history of creation will be judged by God and brought to justice. This is one of the elements of God's Goodness, He is the perfect Judge and carries out perfect, complete and final justice. Even in the case of the forgiven sin of believers, our sins ultimately bring forth the death of our sacrificial substitute, Jesus the lamb of God.

Either Christ will die for your sins, or you will die for your sins, but someone will die because sin is a heinous and infinite crime against our Holy Creator and our Righteous Judge.

**Romans 6:23** - 23 For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB

**James 1:15** - 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**. NASB

Hebrews 9:22 - 22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, **and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**. NASB

So indeed we have seen there are **several elements in sin**. This is very helpful in the struggle for sanctification in the Christian life and in bearing the image in greater degree over time. Through this knowledge God equips us with greater discernment, which comes through the Word and by the Spirit. This knowledge is then quickened in us by the power and presence of God by the Spirit to fashion us into the image of Christ. Through our **very real and intense struggle with sin**, and because of the **triumphing power of the Gospel**, with all its promises, God makes us like Jesus (Rom 8:1-17).

Lastly, let me point out **why** this **understanding of pride being the heart motivation and root of every sin** and all vice is so **important in sanctification** in the Christian life. It is because of the way that we make war against and mortify sin.

### **Pride is part of the nature of every sin, therefore killing pride is killing sin at its root**

Now put the thought clearly in your mind that at the heart and core of your struggle against sin is a **proud disposition** that seeks to **dethrone God** and the **desire to do your own will** instead of His, brings you to the precipice of sin and transgression. As you stand at the door of temptation consider; will I now dethrone God from my heart and lift myself against His heavenly Majesty and commit this transgression against Him? Or will I humble myself and submit to God, resist this temptation from the devil and remain at peace with my Creator? Ahah! The veil has been removed from this struggle and pride stands naked before the truth of God's Word, and now you must, with God dependent effort (faith), strike down this beast of pride with the sword of the Spirit! Is the promise of pleasure that this sin holds out greater than God's promises of lasting peace and joy in fellowship with Him? You must take this proud thought of transgression **"captive"** and **"render it obedient to Christ."** You must **"destroy this speculation"** (thought to sin) and cast down this **"lofty (proud) thing"** that has **"raised itself up against the knowledge of God"** (His authority as Creator and King), and make that **"thought obedient to Christ,"** through the Word and by the Spirit's power!

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war** according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are **destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**, NASB

You see when you have this truth before your eyes that you are in **submission to God**, and in contrition with that tax collector who realizes his great need for divine grace to stand before God, **you humbly realize your dependence on God** and look to Him for strength and power to live out the holiness He has called you to. When you are aware of your pride, and often seek to discern where it is lurking in your heart and mind, you **maintain a humble disposition before God** as your Sovereign King, and desire to live under His rule and authority. This is the place of submission, rest and blessing. Therefore, **if you make war against your pride**, you cut off sin at the roots, and deprive it of its nutrients and life. And if you **humble yourself before God** and others, you allow every other virtue to flow freely from your heart and life. The last thing the

devil wants is for you to come to realize this truth, for the glory of God is at stake in your life through your conformity to it. This is because **the degree** of your practical **sanctification** is largely related to the **disposition of your heart before God**, and therefore your spiritual awareness of your life in relation to God and others, as you live out your daily life. It is imperative then to be **focused in your daily life** on this great purpose of God in your life, His process of making you like Christ and causing you to bear the image in greater degree over time. Therefore to deal with your heart attitude, your disposition and posture before God and others, is the first and foremost priority in daily Christian living. And so the **renewing of the mind** is of utmost importance here. We must be **renewed in this great heart attitude of humility**, having cast down our high thoughts of self (pride), and looking to the power and presence of God to live the daily Christian life of virtue, which puts the glory of God on display as we bear His image. Often times this spiritual growth (or sanctification) looks like growth downward, the downward progression of humility, as we **establish a servant's mindset**, and a humble and contrite heart attitude toward God and others. This is how Jesus described becoming **“great in the Kingdom of God.”**

**Matthew 20:26-28** - 26 "It is not so among you, but **whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;** 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. " NASB

Therefore we must continually renew our minds with this knowledge of God's purpose in our life and be equipped in the war that is taking place in our daily lives. As we learned back on pages 52 and 53, **the mind is the battlefield in the war against sin**, and we must be renewed in our minds daily by the Word, looking to God in faith to live out the Christian life. Our minds must be focused on God and His will, that is, the knowledge of God and His Kingdom, each day to live and walk in all of His ways.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** - 3 For though we walk in the flesh, **we do not war** according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are **destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,** NASB

We are taking the **“thoughts captive”** in order to live in **obedience to Christ**. Therefore our thoughts need to be renewed and fixed upon God and His ways, and His wonderful work in us through the Word and by the Spirit. We must **mortify** the old man of sin (**put off**) and **vivify** the new man of righteousness (**put on**) each day in our minds.

**Ephesians 4:22-24** - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness** of the truth. NASB

**Colossians 3:9-10** - 9 Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,** 10 and have **put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One** who created him NASB

We must remember who we are (the saints and children of God), and humble ourselves daily before God (our heart attitude), looking to the power and presence of God (our union with Christ and God by the indwelling Spirit) to live an obedient life (God dependent effort), that puts His glory on display by the way we live (image bearing). This daily renewal of the mind is **vital** to living an effective and fruitful Christian life. It also puts us in the place of maximum blessing and equips us to live the powerful spiritual life of the Spirit. The Bible calls this daily pursuit **“walking in the Spirit,”** (Rom 8:1-14, Gal 5:16-18). It is of utmost importance that you learn to be **disciplined in this practice**, to the point that you train yourself to live in this godliness and walk in God's ways. This is where the **basic disciplines of Christian life** are so important.

### The 3 Basic Disciplines of Christian Life

Effective Christian living is not something that happens effortlessly. We are called to follow Christ, that is, to actively live the way He does, to go where He goes and do what He does. We are disciples of Christ, that is, followers who have been disciplined or trained in the **school of Christ**. There are important facets of daily Christian living that Jesus and the Apostles taught us that require discipline and training, they require rigor and restraint to carry them out. One **definition of discipline** is;

*An activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill; rigorous training.*

In this sense, Christian life is seen as training in godliness, training to become like God in character and practice. In his book *“Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life,”* Donald Whitney gives at least 9 disciplines; Bible Intake, Prayer, Worship, Evangelism, Serving, Stewardship, Fasting, Silence and Solitude, and Learning. These of course are all things that we learned from Jesus as we saw Him live His life. But they are also things he taught His disciples about how to live, by living like He lived, or doing what He does. Each of these things, and others as well are all important things we are commanded to carry out in Christian living. Now I believe all of these are important and could be developed and understood in the context of each one. For example in my mind, **worship is the ultimate priority for Christian life**, and almost everything we do is an act of worship in the Christian life. But I believe that there are **three essential disciplines of the Christian life** that we must become skilled and disciplined at in order to live effective and fruitful lives to the glory of God. Without these three, our Christian life will definitely lack vital elements that it must have to be fully fruitful. They are;

- **daily meditation on the Word**
- **daily communion with God in prayer**
- **regular fellowship with godly Christians**

Now consider how these relate to sanctification and image bearing, and how they relate to the war against sin we wage by mortification and vivification, and how we live a humble life of dependence on God, rely on His power and presence to be like Him, through the Word and by the Spirit. If you are focused on God and His will (**daily meditation on the Word**), and daily seeking to live in dependence on His presence and power to walk in His ways (**daily communion with God in prayer**), and regularly being encouraged and encouraging others in this godly living (**regular fellowship with godly Christians**), then you are equipped for growing in sanctification and bearing the image in your daily life. These three disciplines are vital to and effective Christian life. It is imperative to be in God’s Word daily to nourish spiritual life.

**Matthew 4:4** - 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, **'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'**" NASB

As we meditate on the Word regularly, it equips us with the knowledge of God’s will for our lives, and skills to **discern virtue from vice**, goodness from wickedness, and recognize the evil of indwelling sin so that it can be mortified by the Spirit. **A right understanding of God and His Word is vital to fruitful and effective Christian living.** Our minds must be informed and renewed by the Word in order to live the supernatural life by the Spirit in the Kingdom of God. We must come to **know the Word of God** and **understand God’s will** for our lives so that we might walk in it. We are called to this vigilance of **renewing the mind** in Scripture.

**Romans 12:2** - 2 And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is,** that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB  
**Colossians 3:1-2** - 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.** NASB



But **prayer** is also a **vital element**. We must know God and commune with Him, **drawing strength** from Him personally to live the supernatural life as we lean on and **trust in Him in faith**. When we approach God in prayer, the **first action** is to **bow in contrition**, to humble ourselves as we approach His divine majesty, and in fearful reverence we come in dependence and weakness, **seeking His divine power and presence** for strength. We come **yielding** to His will, **submissive** and lowly realizing our great need for His grace and favor to even approach Him, much less live out His awesome commandments. In fact, one central purpose in prayer is to realign or reorient our thinking with God's, to reform and renew our will in accordance with His. This happens largely **through the act of contrition** and humility, because that is the central issue with God, what is our posture or disposition, **our heart attitude** before Him. Once we have realigned our posture to submissive yielding, we are in that place to fellowship with Him, free to receive His grace and rejoice in His goodness and love to us, and to relish in His good promises to forgive us, and provide for us and be our God! The proud do not enjoy this benefit, for they do not perceive God's goodness or His grace and blessing because He is opposed to them, only giving grace to the humble. Think what madness it is that we would barge into God's throne room demanding our will and barking out commands for Him to align Himself with our selfish ambitions! Another way to say this is **prayer** is first a humble **dependence** on God, approaching Him in contrition for help in our daily time of need. We must become disciplined in this action of prayer and learn to daily look to God for strength to live according to His will. This we learned from Jesus, who was constantly in prayer, looking to God for guidance and grace! Consider what He taught us about the posture of prayer in the Lord's prayer of Matthew ch-6.

**Matthew 6:9-13** - 9 "Pray, then, in this way: '**Our Father** who art **in heaven, Hallowed** be Thy name. 10 '**Thy kingdom** come. **Thy will be done, On earth** as it is in heaven. 11 '**Give us this day** our daily bread. 12 'And **forgive us** our debts, as **we also have forgiven** our debtors. 13 'And **do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil**. [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.]" NASB

How clearly we see that the whole nature of our posture and disposition is one of **submissive yielding** to His Kingship, and in **dependence and weakness by faith** looking to God for daily bread and daily forgiveness and daily deliverance from sin and temptation. We must **learn to commune with God daily in prayer** if we will have the strength to live in a manner worthy of our calling as Christians.

Further, we have been **adopted into God's family, the church**, and **placed as a member by God** into the church as a vital part of it. It is essential for effective Christian living to have **regular fellowship with godly Christians**. We are not lone ranger Christians, the Bible knows nothing of the sort. It is a vital discipline of Christian life to be plugged into the life of the **local church** for the purpose of living out the **one another commands** of Scripture. This cannot be done by any other means, because the one another commands of the New Testament are focused on our relationship to other Christians in the church. God has designed the body of Christ in such a way that our love and service to them and their love and service to us is a fundamental and **essential means of grace** for living a fruitful Christian life. Without the mutual encouragement for spiritual life that the church provides, we will not have sufficient means to fulfill our calling as defined in the New Testament. Also, without **our regular love and service** to both individual Christians and the **corporate body of Christ**, we will be largely disobedient to Christ and the apostolic commands because there is no other way to carry out many of these precepts. This is because the **context of these precepts** is in **our relation** to the **local church**. Consider the nature

of the early church's fellowship and the New Testament teaching about the way in which our membership in the local church fulfills our role in it, specific precepts in regard to it.

**Acts 2:41-47** - 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they were continually **devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching** and **to fellowship**, to **the breaking of bread and to prayer**. 43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And **all those who had believed were together**, and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions, and were **sharing them with all, as anyone might have need**. 46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were **taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart**, **47 praising God**, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. NASB

**1 Corinthians 12:12-15** - 12 For even as **the body is one and yet has many members**, and **all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body**, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For **the body is not one member, but many**. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," **it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body**. NASB

**Colossians 3:15-17** - 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, **to which indeed you were called in one body**; and be thankful. 16 Let the **word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching** and **admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. NASB

It is very important then that we become **disciplined** in our **regular fellowship in the local church**, and disciplined in both our commitment to the love and service of our fellow believers, as well as receiving their love and service to us.

See then how important these **three basic disciplines** are in the Christian life. If you are focused on God and His will (**daily meditation on the Word**), and daily seeking to live in dependence on His presence and power to walk in His ways (**daily communion with God in prayer**), and regularly being encouraged and encouraging others in this godly living (**regular fellowship with godly Christians**), then you are equipped for growing in sanctification and bearing the image in your daily life. These three disciplines are **vital** to a fruitful and effective Christian life.

Therefore, since the **struggle for Christian character** and image bearing is largely **waged in the heart** (what is the disposition of your heart) **and mind** (taking every thought captive), with the end focused on **obedience to the Lordship of Christ**, we have seen how important it is to be **focused** on our **posture before God** in our daily Christian living. Are we **humble** and contrite with a **submissive** and servant like mindset, a **heart that sees its great need for divine grace** and help to live the supernatural life of the Spirit, seeking to live according to God's will for our life? Or are we **proud** and **self-reliant**, living life according to the **dictates of our own selfish ambitions** and in the strength of the flesh, thinking that we are largely in control of our lives and pursuing our own glory, comfort and desires (lusts)? In the end, the **real struggle** is for that **throne of our hearts** and who is ruling there, and what is our heart attitude before God, as we approach our daily lives. This puts the **war against pride at the forefront** of our living, seeking to kill the great beast of pride, taking self from off the throne, and surrendering to King Jesus in **humble child-like faith**, that **He may rule** in our hearts by faith. We have seen the great necessity of a disciplined life of **renewing the mind in the Word of God** to know His will and stay focused upon it, and to look to Him **daily in prayer and fellowship with Him**, drawing strength from Him (God dependent effort) to live in obedience to His will. And we have seen the great need for the help of others in **regular fellowship** with those who desire to do God's will and encourage and help one another in the struggle for obedient living.

## Vivification - Putting on Christ

If we have **killed sin** in our hearts and minds we have only come **halfway** in the process of image bearing. This is because in becoming like Christ, we not only have to **put off** the **old nature** and the **sins** that accompany it, but we must also **replace** it with the important **virtues** of the **new nature** by **putting on God's virtue**. It is one thing not to be sinful, it is another thing to be like Christ in the way that we **think, speak** and **act**. We may not hate our neighbor, but do we actually, and actively love him? The New Testament **calls us** to an **active life** of **virtue** by telling us to **put on virtue** as if it were our clothing. So often when the Bible instructs us to put off or to kill sin, it also tells us in the same context to **put on virtue**. See how the **vice of sin** is **contrasted** with the **virtue** of the **person of Christ**, which is called here, **"the armor of light."**

**Romans 13:11-14** - 11 And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; **for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. **Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** 13 Let us **behave properly as in the day**, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. NASB

Here again in Ephesians 4, the **"put off"** and **"put on"** pattern, combined with the **renewing of the mind** is the **pattern for a life of holiness and image bearing**.

**Ephesians 4:20-24** -20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, **you lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**, 24 and **put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** NASB

Paul says, **"lay aside the old self,"** and be **"renewed in the spirit of your mind."** Once, sin is dead, there remains the need for virtue to live, so he adds, **"put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."** Put off your sins, and correct your thinking according to the **new creature** that God has already created you to be, and therefore **act** and **live** as that **new creation**.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** - 17 Therefore **if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature**; the **old things passed away**; behold, **new things have come.** NASB

See the pattern of the new and supernatural life of the Christian. The **old things of sin and self** have **already passed away**, and now we are **new creations in Christ**. Sin no longer rules or dominates us, we have been **freed** from its **controlling power**, and now the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is with us to give us victory as we walk by faith (God dependent effort). And it is not just some spiritual and esoteric idea, but affects the way we **behave** and the **way we live** our lives. It affects the bad deeds we are to put away and the good deeds we are to put on. And all of this happens because inside the heart and soul, we have been supernaturally transformed by God in regeneration. We **"are being renewed"** says Paul, **"according to the image of the One who created him."** The **Spirit** is **powerfully renewing us** and **empowering us** to live a life of **virtue** and become imitators of God.

**Colossians 3:9-10** - 9 Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self with its evil practices**, 10 and **have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him** NASB

**Ephesians 4:31-5:2** - 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander **be put away from you**, along with all malice. 32 And **be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.** 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love**, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

And so we are called in so many places in the New Testament to **put on virtue**. There are many **imperatives** in the Apostolic writings calling us to lives of **godly character, good deeds, and virtue**. These are said not only to be the fruits of the Spirit within us (because God is the primary worker in our holiness), but **our active role** in seeing our **sanctification** coming to completion. The **Gospel** promises of forgiveness and cleansing of sin, and justification before God and the son-ship of adoption and heavenly inheritance, also heartily accompany a **non-optional imperative call** to **holiness of life** and a **transformed life of separation from sin** and the **pursuit of virtue and good deeds**.

**Matthew 5:16** - 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that **they may see your good works**, and **glorify your Father** who is in heaven. NASB

**Colossians 3:12-16** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And **beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity**. 15 And let the **peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**. 16 Let the **word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. NASB

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 **instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly** in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds**. NASB

**Titus 3:8,14** - 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that **those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds**. These things are good and profitable for men.... 14 And **let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful**. NASB

**Hebrews 10:23-25** - 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. NASB

**1 Peter 2:12** - 12 **Keep your behavior excellent** among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may **on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God** in the day of visitation. NASB

Let us consider then that we are to **pursue this life of virtue**, of love and good deeds, having our **hearts and minds fixed** on this pursuit, for it is God's purpose in our salvation to make us like Him and to conform us into the image of Christ. Since God is working to make us like Christ, our role and response is to **obey His call** to both **mortify sin** and to **put on His royal robe of virtue** in our daily life. We are to work this salvation out, and allow it to come to fruition by the power and presence of God, as we both fix our eyes upon the Word to renew the mind, and pursue, **actively chase after** and **lay hold of His virtue**.

**Philippians 2:12-13** - 12 So then, my beloved, just as **you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling; 13 **for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure**. NASB

**Colossians 3:1-2** - 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth**. NASB

**Philippians 4:8** - 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell on these things**. NASB

We must be diligent in this pursuit, for God is at work in you through the Word and by the Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:5-7** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence**, in your faith supply **moral excellence**, and in your moral excellence, **knowledge**; 6 and in your knowledge, **self-control**, and in your



self-control, **perseverance**, and in your perseverance, **godliness**; 7 and in your godliness, **brotherly kindness**, and in your brotherly kindness, **love**. NASB

These virtues are in fact the character and nature of the Holy Spirit who lives in us and the **end goal** of our **growth in holiness** for our daily lives. These **virtues** should now begin to **characterize** our life as Christians with ever **increasing intensity** as we take on the **image of God** more and more by the work of the Holy Spirit in us. In our struggle against the sinful nature we are to renew our minds with the beautiful and wonderful thoughts of the virtues of God, longing for and **pursuing His goodness** in our daily life as children of God. Let us therefore consider what these virtues are, so that we can renew our minds accordingly, dwelling upon, thinking about and pursuing these very virtues in our thoughts, words and deeds.

### **Love – the crowning virtue**

Now as we consider what the **virtues of God** are, let us acknowledge that some are more **prominent**, fundamental and important than others. Some are the **foundation** or **motivation** for others, and many virtues are **interrelated** and don't function properly without this relation to others. Surely without a doubt, **love** is seen in scripture as the paragon, pinnacle or crowning virtue. Our Lord Jesus when asked what the greatest commandment in all of the Old Testament was, he answered, **“LOVE!”**

**Matthew 22:36-40** - 6 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment."** 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

In fact, said Jesus, ***"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*** His point here is, the **entire Bible** is **dependent, built on, pointing to and revealing the centrality of love** to the **worship and glory of God**. Of all that God has commanded us to do, the greatest is to LOVE. Surely this is why the Apostle Paul said that love was itself the fulfilment of the Law. Consider all the commands in the Law, God says they are fulfilled when we love our neighbor.

**Romans 13:8-10** - 8 **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.** 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

And consider Paul's words toward the end of the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13.

**1 Corinthians 13:13** - 13 But now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.** NASB

However great the **virtues of faith and hope** may be, they are **surpassed by love**. And surely this is why Peter tells us that more important than anything in regard to how we relate to one another in the Christian life, that **fervent love** is **“above all.”**

**1 Peter 4:8** - 8 **Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another**, because love covers a multitude of sins. NASB

And John tells us that this is because it is **God's very nature**, that is, God **IS** love.

**1 John 4:7-8** - 7 Beloved, **let us love one another, for love is from God**; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.** NASB

In fact John says here, that this is the **test** for knowing God and being **born of God**, that we **“love one another.”** Without this **virtue of love** being brought forth as the **product of our life**, we cannot claim to be the **sons of God**. And it is by the great love that we show to one another that others recognize us as genuine Christians.

**John 13:34-35** - 34 "A **new commandment I give to you, that you love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**" NASB

And surely it is the **great love** of **God Himself** that **motivated** Him to **save us** helpless and wicked sinners from His own justice through that great loving act of giving His only Son to die in our place and on our behalf.

**John 3:16** - 16 "For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. NASB

**Romans 5:8** - 8 But **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** NASB

**1 John 4:9-10** - 9 **By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world** so that we might live through Him. 10 **In this is love**, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** NASB

And it was the same **selfless** and **glorious love** that **motivated the Son to give Himself** as a **sacrifice**, so that the demands of God's justice could be met and we could go **free** from the great bondage of sin and its penalty of death.

**Galatians 2:20** - 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in **the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.** NASB

**Ephesians 5:1-2** - 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and **walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God** as a fragrant aroma. NASB

**Revelation 1:5** - 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. **To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,** NASB

Love is the sum total of all the **Law** and the **Prophets** of the **Old Testament**, and the **new commandment** in the New Testament. You see the **centrality** of **love** is taught everywhere in the **New Testament**. It is held up as the **chief** and **crowning virtue** and most **important** and **fundamental** of all that **we are** and all that **we do**. Let us therefore seek to understand how God describes this love in His Word, and thereby see how we shall incorporate it into our lives that we might become the very imitators of God that He has called us to be.

### **Love is....**

In all of Scripture, we have no clearer **portrait of love** painted in words than in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians. There Paul gives us a **description** of the **character** of **love** in very vivid and luminous terms. In the context Paul had been correcting the Corinthians on many failures in regards to the exercise of **spiritual gifts** and how they are designed to **serve one another**. As he reaches the high point of his discussion, it becomes necessary for him to describe to the Corinthians how **fundamental real** and **sincere love** is to the **nature** of **Christian worship** and **service**. It is here where Paul's hymn of love is brought forth to give us a vivid picture of the very **nature** and **character** of **love** itself, and also its **importance** and **prominence** among us. Consider how **love** is **contrasted** in **verses 1-3** with other virtues, and in **verses 4-8** is **defined** with utmost clarity.

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3** - 1 If I **speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love**, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have **the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge**; and if I have **all faith, so as to remove mountains**, but **do not have love, I am nothing**. 3 And if I **give all my possessions to feed the poor**, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but **do not have love, it profits me nothing.** NASB

In these verses Paul refers to the **gifts** and virtues of **tongues, prophecy, faith, charity** and **martyrdom** to explain that even these great Christian gifts (charisma) and virtues, without the **motivation** of **genuine love**, are of no profit in and of themselves. This obviously in the context is because the **design of the gifts** among the Christian church is for the **purpose of expressing**

love and thereby **edifying** and **building one another up** by our hearty service to God and one another, bearing the fruit of His Holy Spirit which resides within us. He contrasts the use of each gift, and this in their most extreme forms, explaining that **without love**, the render us bankrupt. The sounds of tongues which should be used to edify others, becomes a “**noisy gong and clanging cymbal.**” The gift of **prophecy** by which one might even “**know all mysteries and knowledge,**” or the gift of **faith** so strong it could “**remove mountains,**” **without love**, causes us persons to be “**nothing.**” Even the extreme **charity** of giving all away, or even giving of oneself even unto **death**, **without love** “**profits me nothing.**” See here Paul’s use of hyperbole to explain the **prominence** and **importance** of the great **virtue of love**, and how it must be the **character** and **motivation** of our hearts as we serve one another in the church. All our gifts, and worship and busy work in the service of God, without love, are noise in God’s ears and futile efforts that profit us nothing and leave us as nothing. And this is because they do not flow from “**a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.**”

**1 Timothy 1:5** - 5 But **the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.** NASB

**1 John 4:7-8** - 7 Beloved, **let us love one another, for love is from God;** and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.** 8 The one who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.** NASB

Indeed **love** is the **measure** of **all our religion**, and the sure proof that God is in us and among us! Paul then shines a bright light on the **very nature** and **character** of **love**, giving a colorful description of many of its qualities, so there will be no mistaking in our minds what this virtue of **love really is**, and how we can compare it to the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** - 4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; NASB

Now here **love** is **described** by **what it does** and **what it does not do**. In the Greek, each of these terms used to describe love is actually a verb. **Love** is **defined** more by its **action** than its feeling, however the two are closely related. Real love gives **demonstration** with actions to its existence in the **heart**. As Paul unfolds his description of love, consider that because **God is love** (1 John 4:7), that these virtues are the very character and nature of God. One other consideration of this text is Paul’s **correction** to the **Corinthians**. Here Paul is correcting many of their unloving actions toward one another, and these can be seen in much of the context of the letter.

**Love is patient** – Love is by its nature forbearing and willing to suffer long with others because of its genuine desire for the good of the other. Love doesn’t lose its cool, but patiently bears with others. It is “**slow to anger**” and it **endures patiently**, even with those who have provoked or injured us.

**Psalms 86:15** - 15 But Thou, O Lord, art **a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness** and truth. NASB

Consider the patience of God with the sinfulness of mankind. God demonstrates His love for us by **His unlimited patience**, suffering long with our **sinful rebellion** and yet pursuing us by sending His only Holy Son to die in the place of us sinners.

**1 John 4:10-11** - 10 In **this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son** to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.** NASB

Christian love gives **demonstration** to its reality by showing this love even in the most difficult of circumstances. Love is not only patient with others who have wronged us, but goes beyond such patience to do them good. See in the words of Jesus the high calling of Christian love.

**Luke 6:27-28** - 27 "But I say to you who hear, **love your enemies, do good to those who hate you**, 28 **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you. NASB

**love is kind** – The Lord is “**gracious and merciful**,” and “**abounding in lovingkindness**.” Consider God’s benevolent disposition toward His creatures.

**Psalms 145:8-9** - 8 The **Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness**, 9 The **Lord is good to all**, And His **mercies are over all His works**. NASB

Love is kind and desires for all to be happy and blessed. It has genuine concern for others. People who **truly love** others will be **kind** to them, and **do them good**, and will be gentle, not severe and harsh. Love is courteous because it desires the happiness of others. Love is kind and therefore good-natured, gentle, tender, affectionate. Love has a benevolent disposition toward others. Consider the **kind action of Christ** in becoming a man forever and giving His life on the **Cross** to die for our sins and injuries against God. **is not jealous** – Since love has a **benevolent disposition** toward others, it **rejoices** when others are **blessed** and in a happy state. Love does not jealously desire what good others possess, but rather seeks the benefit and prosperity of others. It is **unloving** to be **jealous** or **envious** of the good that others have. Rather love rejoices when others are blessed.

**Romans 13:8-10** - 8 Owe nothing to anyone except **to love one another**; for **he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law**. 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor**; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. NASB

**love does not brag** - Love takes not take a high view of self, but sees others as more important than itself. Love is humble and because love is truly humble it does not seek to exalt itself above others, or seek to demean or disrespect them in any way. Therefore it **never brags** or **boasts** of its own good. It is unloving to brag or boast. Therefore, **love does not brag** of its own good or accomplishments, but rather **commends others** and rejoices with others in their good and accomplishments.

**is not arrogant** - Love is **not proud** but rather **humble**. See here one of the roots of love in the heart is **humility**, and without a **humble disposition** toward others we **cannot truly love**. Having genuine concern for others, love **does not act** or **speak** in an **arrogant** way, but rather is **considerate of others** and concerns itself with how others will think or feel as a result of its actions. Love looks after the interests of others because of its humble posture toward others.

**Philippians 2:1-4** - If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any **consolation of love**, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, **maintaining the same love**, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind** let each of you regard **one another as more important than himself**; 4 **do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others**. NASB

Consider the humility of **Christ** in leaving the glory of heaven to come to this sinful world and die on a Cross.

**does not act unbecomingly** – Love is **not rude**. It doesn’t treat others harshly, disgracefully or embarrass them. It behaves in a way that is **fitting** and **proper** in the midst of whatever situation it exists. Love is considerate of others. **Love respects** superiors and subordinates alike, and treats each person with the **dignity** and **respect** as is proper for fellow human beings, made in God’s image. Having genuine concern for others, it is careful not to put others in an embarrassing or uncomfortable position by its own audacity or rudeness, but rather seeks their **respect** and **honor** whenever possible. Love has a gracious, benevolent and humble posture toward others and therefore cannot

act in a rude or unfitting way. Love is much more than being kind and considerate to others, but it is never less.

**it does not seek its own** – Love is selfless. It is always concerned for the welfare and benefit of others. Here is one of love's most profound qualities, and antithetical to human nature, it prompts us to love others with self-denial, personal sacrifice and toil. Love will work hard, suffer long, sacrifice its own time and money, and do many uncomfortable and inconvenient things to care for and tend to the happiness and welfare of others. Loving Christians serve one another.

**Galatians 5:13-14** - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another.** 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** NASB

Jesus lived His entire life to **serve** and **benefit others**. It was the intent and focus of His whole life, and **He** has **called us to follow Him** in this devotion to the love and service of others. This He says is done by **"denying ourselves"** and **"taking up our cross and following Him,"** and **"losing our life"** in the process.

**Luke 9:23-24** - 23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. NASB

In other words, we will have to be willing to **deny our own interests often**, considering the **needs** and **concerns** of **others**, and give of our **time, talent, and treasure** to see their needs and concerns addressed. Christian love is at its heart a self-sacrificing service to others that springs from a pure heart and clear conscience, that is demonstrated most clearly at the Cross of Christ.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** - 1 Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us,** an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

See here the chief virtue in **"imitating God"** is to **"walk in love."** By this Paul means to call us to **live our life** with the **purpose** of **loving** and serving others.

**is not provoked** – Consider, because love is focused on the welfare of others, it is not easy to provoke or to offend. The ESV renders this, **"it is not irritable,"** and the NIV **"it is not easily angered."** Love has a **tender** and **calm disposition** toward others that **suffers injury with patience**, as to soften the blow that others may inflict, because it is not primarily motivated with its own preservation. Because love is humble and not arrogant, it is **composed** and **restrained when wronged** because it is not primarily motivated with its own exaltation. Pride is easily offended where humility is selflessly reserved. Love is not self-preserving, self-exalting or self-focused. Therefore it is not overly concerned with its own reputation or prestige.

**Romans 12:14-21** - 14 **Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.** 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 **If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.** 19 **Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God,** for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 **"But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink;** for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** NASB

Because love is **"not provoked, easily angered, or irritable,"** it's calm disposition allows it the ability to respond in kindness and blessing even in the face of injury. Love is not **"overcome with evil"** to the point of vengeful response, but in its selfless repose can



“**bless and not curse,**” returning a blessing instead. Consider the calm repose of Jesus in His last week before His passion, making His way ever so closer to that fatal night when the injuries of others would finally mean His own personal sacrifice unto to death.

**1 Peter 2:20-25** - 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if **when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.** 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 **who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;** 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. NASB

One way that Christians **glorify God** is by **not returning evil for evil**, but patiently bearing with the injuries of others by entrusting themselves to God who judges justly. **does not take into account a wrong suffered** – It is common with human nature for us to **harbor resentment** and **hold a grudge** against those who are rude or insulting, or otherwise displeasing to us. We keep a “**record of wrongs**” in our hearts and harbor and hold a **bitterness** in our hearts toward them. We “**think evil**” and are “**resentful**” toward them. When we let this build up over a long period of time, this **bitter resentment** can be a **destructive** and odious thing to God and others. In the end this bitter resentment is only hurting ourselves, as we are the object of its torment, and it is the ruin of many relationships. **Love** on the other hand is **forgiving** and **forbearing** with others, because it seeks their benefit and not its own. It is patient and kind and wishing a blessing and peace upon others, and therefore not willing to hold an offense toward others, because it does not desire retaliation but rather blessing. Love gives others the benefit of the doubt and does not assign malicious intent to the motives of others easily, but wants to see the good in others. It has a sweet and peaceful motive toward others.

**Colossians 3:12-14** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** 14 And **beyond all these** things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. NASB

Christians must be willing to **mortify** their own tendency to **hold a grudge** against others, and more than this, must “**put on**” a willingness to forgive and forbear with others out of compassion and love for them. This heals and promotes the health of relationships as we “**put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**” Love binds us together in peace by its forgiving and peaceable disposition toward others.

**6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness** – Love is **holy**, and it **grieves** when there is **sin** or **unrighteousness**, because God is offended by any kind of evil. Therefore love is **grieved** when others fall into or commit any kind of sin, and therefore **never rejoices** in **sin** or **unrighteousness**. See in this also the **destructive** and **unloving motive of gossip**, which seeks to report and spread abroad the news of someone else’s moral failures. This is a grievous and destructive thing that ought not to exist among loving Christians, for we are seeking to the good of others and not their demise, **neither** do we **rejoice** in any **unrighteousness**. Christians must mortify the tendency to rejoice when they hear of the sin of anyone, much more the sin of another believer, rather it should **grieve** us.

**Philippians 4:8-9** - 8 Finally, brethren, **whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute,** if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell on these things.** NASB

We should **strive to seek the welfare** and **always think the best of others**, inasmuch as it is possible.

**but rejoices with the truth** – See here in the context “**rejoices with the truth**” is contrasted with “**rejoicing in unrighteousness.**” Rather than rejoicing over sin or the moral evil of others, **love rejoices** when others live and **walk in truth** and **integrity**, in moral righteousness and **goodness** or **virtue**. Love and righteousness are inseparable and knit together. **Love rejoices** when others are **godly** and pious, and long to see others be **holy** and good. Love is zealous to see others live and walk in **virtue**, and is grieved by the moral failure of others. Also, **love rejoices** when the **truth is told**, and the truth prevails and is upheld. Even as **God hates lies** and lying, and loves integrity and truth, so love rejoices and delights in the same, and along with God, love hates lies and the evil they produce. Surely this also applies to **God’s biblical truth** and the propagation of it in the world. **Love does not rejoice** in the wickedness of **false doctrine** but rather rejoices when the **truth is told** and is **willing to tell the truth** for the **good** and benefit of others. **Love** would not mislead us but rather will **delight** in us being **led down the path of truth** and righteousness. Consider how Paul had to **rebuke** the Corinthians and they were made sorrowful, yet he **rejoiced in the good** it ultimately produced in them.

2 Corinthians 7:9-13 - 9 **I now rejoice**, not that you were made sorrowful, but that **you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance**; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For **behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.** 12 So although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. 13 **For this reason we have been comforted.** NASB

Surely Paul **loved them enough to speak the truth**, even if it hurt and created some measure of conflict between them.

**7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails;** - Paul now sums up his short love hymn here with a short section of **hyperbole**, as in verses 1-3, to express the beauty and power of love. He does this to emphasize its character of goodness and righteous virtue, and he **does not** intend to mean by “**all things**” that **love tolerates everything**, God forbid. He has already stated that **love rejects the evil** of envy, bragging, pride, rudeness, selfishness, hot tempers and unforgiveness. He uses this **hyperbole** to express the **general character of love** and not to push it to limits that go beyond the obvious nature of God, for even **God’s patience and forbearance** eventually turn to **indignation** and **wrath** at some point when His forgiving grace is rejected. Even so love, has a gracious, forbearing and hopeful positive character, but not to a point that is destructive or unrighteous.

**7 bears all things** - The word here for “**bear**” means to **cover** and this is why the NIV renders this “**always protects.**” Love is very concerned for the welfare of others therefore it **protects** and **covers offenses** and sins, rather than broadcasting them and exposing others to ridicule and shame. It does not seek to expose, exploit or gloat over others weaknesses and failures, but rather **covers** these **whenever possible**. And it is not always possible, for often times the most loving thing that one can do is to expose the sin

of another, but wisdom must be exercised here in love. **Love abhors gossip** for it seeks to expose and publically malign, but **love seeks to cover** and forgive others.

**Proverbs 10:12** - 12 Hatred stirs up strife, But **love covers all transgressions**. NASB

**1 Peter 4:8** - 8 Above all, **keep fervent in your love for one another**, because **love covers a multitude of sins**. NASB

“**All things**” here seems better rendered “**always**,” for love clearly does not bear and endure evil, but rather is opposed to it, even if it wages war against it with kindness and forgiveness. In either case, love will **not bear forever with evil**, nor will it **bear all kinds and degrees of evil**, but will like God deal with it according to God’s will and righteousness. There comes a point in time when forbearance must turn to tough love that confronts and reproves, but whenever a sinner repents, he is to be forgiven.

**Matthew 18:21-22** - 21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall **my brother sin against me and I forgive him**? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven**". NASB

We must be careful not to push Paul’s use of hyperbole here beyond its limit, but hold it in the proper **balance of love’s general character and righteousness**, exercised in wisdom.

**believes all things** - This is probably better rendered, as the NIV, “**always trusts**,” which does not mean that it is **gullible**, it doesn’t blindly just accept any false report but is willing to get the facts about a situation and establish a true testimony before making a rational response. Because **love believes all things**, it prefers to be generous in its openness and acceptance rather than **suspicious** and **cynical**. Love wants to **trust** and is **always hoping for the best**, even when disappointed by repeated personal abuse, it continues hoping against hope, and always ready to give an offender a second chance and ready to forgive him. Love wants to believe the best about others, and seeks to see them in the best light possible, with a most charitable and kind repose. Love produces this, because it **rejoices** in the **happiness** and **virtue** of **others**, and will not believe the contrary except on obvious evidence.

**hopes all things** – Here again better rendered, as the NIV, “**always hopes**,” love’s quality is to **hope** that all will **turn out well**. In the same way that **love wants to trust** in the best of others, it longs to see others receive the best and is not vengeful or vindictive, but rather **seeks the blessing and prosperity** of others whenever possible. It is hoping for the best possible situation for others, and **lives and walks** in such a way as to see it come to pass. Since **love always hopes for the best**, it takes action that brings about the best outcome for others whenever possible. It wants to believe the best of others because it hopes the best for them. Love will do this, because it **delights** in the **virtue** and **happiness** of others, and will not credit anything to the contrary unless compelled to do so. Love **always hopes** for the best.

**Proverbs 24:17-18** - 17 **Do not rejoice when your enemy falls**. And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; 18 **Lest the Lord see it and be displeased**. And He turn away His anger from him. NASB

**endures all things** - Here again better rendered, as the NIV, “**always perseveres**,” the idea is to bear up under suffering, particularly in how we are treated by others. Remember the context of this being how we love and serve one another in the church. Because love protects, trusts, and hopes the best of others, it is also **willing to suffer insult and injury** from them with a calm repose whenever possible, in hopes that reconciliation can take place and loving relations can be restored again. Love perseveres through the difficulty of relationships because people are important and love rejoices in

the blessing and prosperity of others and is vigilantly committed to see it come to pass. Love doesn't **give up** on others in spite of their **immaturity, ignorance, or stubbornness**. It perseveres in hope that all will turn out well and be restored to peace and blessing.

**2 Timothy 2:24** - 24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, **patient when wronged**, NASB

**Colossians 3:12-15** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** 14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. NASB

See the power and virtue that love is in this crescendo of qualities; **love protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres**, it is the crowning and prominent virtue because it has an **unconquerable attitude** of **benevolence** toward others that **endures and perseveres** even through the most difficult of times, and even injuries from its own objects. As a result of this Paul writes; **Love never fails!**

**8 Love never fails** – So as to express the great power of love to always achieve its goal Paul writes, **“love never fails.”** It does not fail in its power, but always achieves its goal of blessing and benefit to its objects. Love may not always appear successful, but it will **always glorify God** and therefore succeed. As in the cross, Christ appeared to be defeated, yet his loving sacrifice triumphed over all evil. Even if one dies when loving another, what appears to be the defeat of death is actually a triumph of love! See here the beauty and the power of the unfailing nature of love! But these words do not stand alone, but are connected to the whole verse and into the next section of text all the way to verse 13. Here the unfailing nature of love is contrasted with other virtues and gifts of the Spirit which will actually cease and be done away! But beyond these, love will endure!

**1 Corinthians 13:8** – **love never fails**, but if there are **gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.** NASB

Paul **contrasts** love with the gifts of **tongues, prophecy and knowledge**. His point is the enduring nature of love even beyond the current age and into the next, when **gifts will no longer be necessary**, but love will abide and endure beyond the **eschaton** (the last days, from the cross to the second coming) and into the age to come. See here when connected to the **context** of the **whole of chapter 13**, above all other virtues, **LOVE** is chief, because it is **enduring and unfailing**. Love will abide even when **faith** and **hope** no longer have a **purpose**. Because when **faith** is realized at the **Resurrection** when **Christ comes again**, hope will have achieved its great longing, but **love will endure** beyond this age and into the age to come. This is why **Paul raises love above** even the great virtues of **faith** and **hope**!

**1 Corinthians 13:13** - 13 But now abide **faith, hope, love**, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.** NASB

**Gifts** are **temporary** and they will **cease**, and so will **faith** and **hope**, but love will always endure.

Here then we see that **love** is indeed the **crowning virtue**, and the **main thing** to be pursued and protected, sought after and carried out. Love is the sum total of all the **Law** and the **Prophets** of the **Old Testament**, and the **new commandment** in the New Testament. Indeed **love** is the **measure of all our religion**, and the sure proof that **God is in us** and among us!

**1 John 4:7-8** - 7 Beloved, **let us love one another, for love is from God**; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.** 8 The one who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.** NASB

It is the most **important** and **fundamental** thing of all that **we are** and all that **we do**. Let us therefore seek to understand how God describes this love in His Word, and thereby see how we shall incorporate it into our lives that we might become the very **imitators of God**, and **walk in love** as He has called us.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** - Therefore **be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you**, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. NASB

Let us never forget that **love is seen most clearly in the Cross of Christ** and should be a constant reminder to us of the **selfless nature of love**. The Gospel is the demonstration and definition of love.

**John 15:13** - 13 "**Greater love has no one than this**, that one lay down his life for his friends. NASB

**John 3:16** - 16 "For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. NASB

**Romans 5:8** - 8 But **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**. NASB

**1 John 4:9-10** - 9 **By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world** so that we might live through Him. 10 **In this is love**, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins**.

Further, the Holy Spirit reasons with us that if God has demonstrated His love to us in the Gospel, then we "**ought to love one another**" as a result. This is how we know that God is in us, among us, and how **love is further perfected, matured and growing** in our lives.

**1 John 4:11-13** - 11 Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another**. 12 No one has beheld God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us**. 13 **By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us**, because **He has given us of His Spirit**.

See here in verse 13, love originates in God and is a **fruit** of the **Spirit**. True godly love is a **product** of the **Spirit's power** being lived out in our lives and proof positive that God is in us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

All of this love that is being produced in our Christian life is very closely tied to the sheer power of **God's overwhelming love for us in Christ**. In fact, our **union in Christ** is mysteriously spoken of as intertwined with God's great love for us that we have **come to know** through faith in Christ.

**1 John 4:16-13** - 16 And **we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him**. NASB

### **Love for God is seen in obedience to His commandments**

When we speak of the second table of the Law, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, loving one another in all these ways we have discussed is clearly seen. But what about the first table of the Law, and loving God with all of our heart, and soul and mind and strength? John speaks of the nature of love to God as **obedience to the commandments of God**. Since love is part of the very nature of God Himself, therefore obedience to every commandment of God is an act of love and consistent with love in every way.

**2 John 4-6** - 4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. 5 And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, **that we love one another**. 6 **And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments**. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. NASB



And Jesus told us that true love for God was characterized by obedience to God's commandments. One cannot say that they love God, and live in disobedience to His commandments.

**John 14:15** - 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. NASB

**John 14:21** - 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." NASB

**1 John 5:3-4** - For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

**John 15:10-12** - 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. NASB

There is no escaping then this **huge responsibility** that we have as the children of God to **love one another**. This demonstrates our **love for God and Christ** and **fulfills the whole Law**. This of course was what Jesus said was **the main thing** in all of the Bible, **love for God and neighbor**.

**Matthew 22:36-40** - 6 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

### Keeping the main thing, the main thing

Let us recognize then the **great Christian priority** to always be **striving to love** and to be **characterized by love** in every way. Let us **keep constant vigil over our hearts** to always be filled with love for others in the church. This is the main and important thing!

**1 Peter 4:8** - 8 Above all, **keep fervent in your love for one another**, because **love covers a multitude of sins**. NASB

For this the **Apostles labored in prayer**, that our love would abound.

**Philippians 1:9-11** - 9 And this I pray, **that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment**, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. NASB

And their constant instruction and exhortation was to **put on love and pursue love**.

**Romans 12:9-10** - 9 **Let love be without hypocrisy**. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**; give preference to one another in honor; NASB

**1 Corinthians 16:14** - 14 Let **all** that you do be **done in love**. NASB

**Galatians 5:13-15** - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, **but through love serve one another**. 14 **For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Colossians 3:12-16** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And **beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity**. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. NASB

**1 Peter 1:22** - 22 Since you have in obedience to the truth **purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart**, NASB

**1 Peter 3:8-9** - 8 To sum up, let all be **harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit**; 9 not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. NASB

**Hebrews 10:23-25** - 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and **let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. NASB

Let us never forget to keep the main thing, the main thing, to love God and one another.

### **Humility the wellspring of virtue**

It is impossible for the **virtues of God's good character** to be reproduced in any meaningful measure in a heart and life that is **proud**. This is because the disposition of pride has an **unhealthy focus on self**, the very enemy of love and virtue.

**Pride** – The mindset of self, a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self. The very **nature of pride** itself is a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God and others**. The proud person is not aware of themselves and how proud they really are, looking down on others and appraising them according to an **inflated view of self**. **Pride** is also the very **nature of hypocrisy**. The **proud person thinks more highly of themselves** than is true or than they should. The thing to which they are blind the most is their own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by their own inflated self-respect, they make a wrong appraisal of themselves, God and others. Pride is **self-righteous**, thinking itself more righteous than others. Pride is **self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized. Pride is **self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking to highly of its own wisdom. Pride **self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, not recognizing its **total dependence** of God for strength and resources. Pride can also be **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore consumed with self and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention.

**Humility** on the other hand is perfect **habitat** for the **virtues of God's good character** to thrive because of its contrite disposition toward God and others.

**Humility** – The mindset of Christ, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given. The idea of **humility** in the Bible is to **make oneself low**, or to bow down. It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive, meek and gentle**. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself. It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue. Humility **does not have an inflated view of self**, but rather recognized one's own spiritual bankruptcy before God's holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**. Humility has a clear self-image because it sees itself with faith **depending on God**. Humility rejoices when others are blessed and rather than feeling jealous or envious, is happy to bless and to serve others for their benefit, and even to make personal sacrifices to see these things happen and for **God to get the glory** for it. Humility does not seek its own glory or attention. The genuinely humble person is content to be forgiven of their many sins, to have the bare necessities of life, and their great **privilege** is to love and serve God and to love and serve others. **Humility is NOT self-righteous**, thinking itself more

righteous than others, but rather knows itself sinful, in need of divine grace and privileged to be forgiven. Humility is NOT **self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized, but rather seeks to be in the background and not the center of attention. It submissively yields to the preference of others, and prefers others choices and desires often when making decisions. Humility is NOT **self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking too highly of its own wisdom, but realizes that others often have a better understanding of matters and probably have insight that we lack. It humbly looks to God and others for help and guidance. Humility is NOT **self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, but **realizes one's own weakness** and dependence on God for strength and resources. It recognizes that without God's blessing and favor, it cannot make any lasting progress. Humility is NOT **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore **consumed with self** and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention. It does not always see itself as the victim of others injury, but rather takes responsibility for its own regular mistakes, and is willing to admit when it is wrong. It does not criticize others or speak of their troubles with delight, but speaks well of others and desires to build others up with gracious and edifying words, giving others the benefit of the doubt. Humility is inwardly glad when others bring correction or critique, because it realizes this is an opportunity for real progress and a clearer view of self.

In this **contrast** between **pride** and **humility** we can clearly see how humility is in fact the wellspring of all virtue, because it is part of the nature of virtue itself. In fact, it is that good place where we live in the active blessing of God because God gives grace to the humble. Remember Peter's exhortation to humble ourselves because God is actively responding to us based on our heart attitude before Him, "**opposing the proud**" but giving "**grace to the humble**". In this exhortation he tells us to "**clothe ourselves with humility to one another.**"

**1 Peter 5:5-6** - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

Are we **humble** and contrite with a **submissive** and servant like mindset, a **heart that sees its great need for divine grace** and help to live the supernatural life of the Spirit, seeking to live according to God's will for our life? This is the very habitat of virtue itself, humility. This is where the fruit of the Spirit and God's virtue thrives. This is the heart and life in which the image of God is growing in a meaningful and productive way, as our character is being changed into His likeness in greater degree over time. This is also that good place where we learn that love and obedience to God is our greatest desire. The humble person cries out to God in dependence for faith and grace to obey, the proud person thinks themselves perfectly righteous already. When we receive the Word in humility we learn to become doers of it.

**James 1:21-22** - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** 22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word,** and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB

You must **lose your own life** to follow Christ (Matt 16:24-25). The first step is a humble one, a contrition that acknowledges its arrogant sinfulness toward God, and bowing low to seek God's mercy you lose your own life, your own selfish will, your own plan for your own life and your own glory. In this yielding and brokenness of losing your life, you actually find your life, and you come to realize that **life** is not **centered** in and around you, but it is God's world, His Kingdom, His glory and His plan that is central to all things. In this humility you find great **meaning and purpose in life** realizing that God gave you life to glorify Him by living a **life of**

**virtue**, loving and serving God. No longer consumed with self, you are free to give yourself away in service and love to others, and to live your life as a fountain of blessing, and reaping from that a **healthy self-image**, filled with joy. This is how God lifts us up out of the depth of sin and self, and exalts us to a **life of blessing and virtue** as we humble ourselves in contrition before God and others.

**1 Peter 5:5-6** - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another**, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time**, NASB

Where there exists the **fertile soil** of a **humble heart**, a contrite disposition toward God and others, **the virtues will thrive and grow** and **produce much fruit**. This is because Humility reorients your entire spiritual attitude and disposition before God and others and provides the maximum format for the virtues to thrive. The **proud man cannot love** because his heart is focused on **pleasing himself**, but the humble person has the **perfect disposition** before God and others to **love**, in fact humility is the disposition of love. **Joy, gladness** and **thanksgiving** are easily fostered with a humble heart that sees everything as a blessing of divine grace. **Patience, Gentleness**, and **forbearance** come easily to the humble one who sees others as **“more important than themselves,”** and this goes further to bear the **fruit of peace** in relationships because of its sweet temperament. **Compassion** and **forgiveness** thrive in the **contrite heart** because we see ourselves as **lowly, underserving**, and recipients of God’s free grace, and therefore long to be filled with **kindness** and **goodness** toward others. Because of this **humility** and **contrition** before God, **honesty** and **integrity** become our way of life because we have such a strong desire to please God, now that we realize He has been so gracious and we therefore continue in **faithfulness** to His **calling** from the sheer desire to please Him that contrition creates in our heart. See here how humility is the very **wellspring of virtue**, from its rich soil much **virtue** can **grow** and **thrive**. Therefore to actively seek to kill your pride and to humble yourself is to enhance your ability for **all virtue to thrive** in your life. Consider how James has explained that humility is the very ground of the Christian life and blessings from God.

**James 4:6-10** - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, **“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”** 7 **Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.** 8 **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** 9 **Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.** 10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.** NASB

The context of verses 6-10 is sandwiched on both sides (v-6 & v-10) with the **idea of humbling ourselves**, and in between he tells us **how it is done**. See in these few verses how James has given several **very practical** and **clear steps** to take in **“humbling ourselves.”** Notice how this humility relates to so many different aspects of our Christian life. Humility in this context includes, **“submitting to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God,”** and **“repenting and mourning over our sinfulness.”** This is because humility is that foundation, that heart attitude of the true believer, that disposition of the heart before God that permeates everything we do in life and our relationship to God and others, the very **wellspring of all the virtues** in the Christian life. The more **intense and fertile the soil of humility in your heart**, the **richer and more bountiful** is the **virtue of God perfected** in our lives. This is because the humble are submitted to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God and repenting and mourning their sin, and God in turn is **“giving grace to the humble.”** This is what the **God dependent effort of faith** looks like practically. It is a **joyful trembling** at the **Word of God**, which the Spirit is working in us, to cause us to **bear His image** in greater degree over time. We **“are being transformed”** through the Word and by the Spirit!

**2 Corinthians 3:18** - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB  
Thank God that this privilege is ours as Christians. We don't just get forgiven of our sins, but we get **transformed** into the **very goodness** of God's own character, the **image** of His Son Jesus.

### **Train your heart to be humble**

Since the heart disposition of humility is of such dire importance in the process of sanctification and image bearing, it is important for us to learn to be **disciplined in humility**. So often we naturally revert to our old proud self and need a regular renewal of our thinking in the Word and in prayer. But consider that we could use a regular **refresher** on **pride and humility** to re-orient our thinking.

**Luke 18:10** - 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; **for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.**" NASB

**Philippians 2:3-4** - 3 Do nothing from **selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. NASB

**Romans 12:10** - 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor**; NASB

**Romans 12:16** - 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; **do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.** NASB

**Colossians 3:12-13** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. NASB

Growing in humility starts with a **recognition** of **our pride** and an **active killing** of this **sinful heart attitude**, and the replacement of it with the godliness of humble child-like faith. We must come to see that the sinful **posture of pride** is arrogantly lifted up against God's authority, bent on rebellion in defiance of His will, and willing to commit treason with contempt of His holy Law. The **great beast of pride must be slain in our hearts** if Christ will rule there! Therefore we need a regular reminder and refresher on the importance of this process of mortifying our pride and putting on humility. Here I have made several suggestions toward that end.

- **Read the Bible** everyday coming to it with a humble submissive attitude of prayer and faith. The Bible will humble you.
- **Pray regularly** for discernment of **pride** and **God to grant you humility**
- Get or make a **Bible bookmark** with a **scripture** and or principle about humility.
- **Read a book** on **pride** and **humility** annually. Here are some recommendations;
  - From Pride to Humility by Stuart Scott
  - Gospel Powered Humility by William Farley
  - Humility by Andrew Murray
  - Humility True Greatness by CJ Mahaney
  - Humility The Forgotten Virtue by Wayne Mack
  - The Proudful Soul's Guide to Humility by Thomas Jones and Michael Fontenot

### **Understanding the Virtues – His image in us**

Now as we have had a good look at the heart disposition of humility that is needed to cultivate virtue in any meaningful sense, and also an intense look at the crowning and chief virtue of love, let us now consider several other virtues that are part of the nature of God and also the fruit of the Holy Spirit powerfully abiding in us. Without a doubt one section of Scripture that shines a



bright light on these is that passage on the fruit of the Spirit. This is not an exhaustive list of virtues, but indeed an important one.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. NASB

Here we see the **“fruit of the Spirit”** listed as a **complex** of **virtues** described as the virtuous product of the **Holy Spirit** abiding in us. When one lives under the **domination** of the Holy Spirit this produces the very **character** and **nature of God** in us, which emanates from our lives like a fruit tree or vine. This **virtue** is the **“product”** of a **Spirit filled** and dominated **life**.

### **Joy true and lasting**

Any **survey** of **joy** in the **Bible** reveals that there are **several kinds** of **joy** that we experience. Joy is also many times spoken of as happiness, contentment, exaltation, satisfaction, cheerfulness or even amusement. These surely are types of joy and also enjoyment that we experience. Often times these kinds of joy come as a result of our circumstances or in joy that we derive from people, places or things. But this kind of joy is a **natural joy** that comes from the **natural environment** which can **change** as **quickly** as our circumstances. Often people seek to find lasting contentment from things in the natural world and wind up sorely disappointed because everything that is in the world is transient and passing away. But there is another kind of joy that is spoken of in the Bible that is a **supernatural** and therefore **true** and **lasting** kind of **joy**. This is the **joy** of the **Holy Spirit** that is produced by God in response to His promises and the spiritual realities of His Kingdom that we Christian believers experience every day. It is a product of the powerful **work** of the **Spirit** within us and a result of living in God's Kingdom.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Romans 14:16-17** - 6 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the **kingdom of God** is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**.

This kind of **spiritual joy** is normally a **reasoned response** to the knowledge and experience of the goodness of God in our everyday Christian life and it is also a commandment from God that we actually **rejoice** at all of His goodness in our lives. Therefore there is a host of good things in our lives that can elicit this kind of joy, and because the things of God's Kingdom are **true** and **lasting**, our joy in those things can **stand the test** of even the most difficult circumstances of life. As result we can **rejoice in God Himself** and all of His goodness and blessing in our lives.

**Psalms 43:4** - 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, **To God my exceeding joy**; And upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, my God. NASB

**Isaiah 61:10** - 10 **I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness**. As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. NASB

We rejoice in **Christ** and His **salvation**. For example, the Scripture says we **rejoice** simply in **knowing Christ** our Savior and Lord, even in the midst of the difficult trails of life.

**1 Peter 1:3-9** - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this **you greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and **though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory**, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the **salvation of your souls**. NASB

The **work of Christ** on our behalf brings us much joy!

**Romans 5:8-11** - 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**. 9 Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him**. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life**. 11 **And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. NASB

**Romans 8:1-2** - 8 **There is therefore now no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free from the law of sin and of death**. NASB

**Ephesians 1:7** - 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace NASB

We **rejoice** when the **good work of God** happens in our lives, even when created by difficult **trials** and **sufferings** in this life, which ultimately produce joy in the life of the Christian.

**James 1:2-4** - 2 **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials**, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NASB

**2 Corinthians 7:9** - 9 **I now rejoice**, not that you were made sorrowful, but **that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance**; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. NASB

Spiritual **joy** is often the result of **obedience to God**.

**John 15:10-11** - 10 **"If you keep My commandments**, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. 11 **"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full**. NASB

We **rejoice** in the many **promises** that **God has made** to us including the **continual** spiritual blessings of God's fatherly care for us.

**Psalms 119:162** - 162 **I rejoice at Thy word**, As one who finds great spoil. NASB

**James 1:17** - 17 **Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father** of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. NASB

**Ephesians 1:3** - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**. NASB

**2 Peter 1:4** - 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, **in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. NASB

We **rejoice** no matter what we face because we know that **God is in control** of all things and by His **providence** is working **everything for our good**, and when it's over, brings us into **glory**.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are **called according to His purpose**. 29 **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, **these He also glorified**. NASB

We **rejoice** especially because we know that God promises **this life is only temporary** and in the end our hope of **eternal** and **future joy** and glory awaits us at **Glorification** when this earthly life ends and we enter the **age** of **immortality** promised to us by God. Only in the promises of the **resurrection** do we see the ultimate **liberty from this warfare** and struggle **against sin**, when death shall be destroyed and we shall be transformed into immortality by God's power at **Glorification**, when we will have our hope realized and much reason for joy unceasing and full of glory.

**Philippians 3:20-21** - 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. NASB

**1 Corinthians 15:51-55** - 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we shall be changed**. 53 **For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality**. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the

imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" NASB  
**Revelation 22:3** - 3 And **there shall no longer be any curse**; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; NASB

We **rejoice** at the wonderful **fellowship** that we enjoy with other Christians because we are all **overjoyed** to have been **loved** by God, **saved** from sin and death, and rejoicing that God is **changing us** and making more virtuous over time as He fashions us all in the image of Christ together. **Sanctification** is a **family endeavor** which brings us much joy.

**1 Thess 3:9-10** - 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return **for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account**, 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? NASB

We can even rejoice in the midst of bitter **suffering** and **persecution** for being a Christian.

**Matthew 5:10-12** - 10 "**Blessed are those who have been persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "**Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you**, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, **on account of Me**. 12 "**Rejoice, and be glad**, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. NASB

**1 Thess 1:6-7** - 6 You also became **imitators of us and of the Lord**, having **received the word** in **much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit**, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. NASB

**1 Peter 4:12-14** - 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, **which comes upon you for your testing**, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but **to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. 14 **If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed**, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. NASB

It is no wonder that **the Christian faith overcomes the world**, it is indestructible in the hope that this life is only temporary and Christ will soon come and bring us into a world of unparalleled **joy** and **glory**. Truly the Christian has so much **reason to rejoice** that is not founded in earthly circumstance, but rather rests upon the unchangeable purposes of God, and the solid rock of God's eternal Kingdom, that **our joy may be full and complete** no matter what we face in this life. This kind of spiritual joy that is the **fruit of the Holy Spirit within us** is a **lasting joy** that **no one** or any circumstance **can take away** from us.

**John 16:22** - 22 "Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and **your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you**. NASB

Not only is this joy all of these things, it is also a **commandment from God to rejoice**.

Knowing our weakness and tendency to forget God's privilege upon us, He has commanded us to **rejoice in Him** and all of **His goodness to us**. The Christian has so much to rejoice in that God has commanded that we will **always rejoice** in Him.

**Philippians 4:4** - 4 **Rejoice in the Lord always**; again I will say, **rejoice**! NASB

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** - **Rejoice always**; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. NASB

Therefore if we are **lacking joy** let us remember all of the wonderful things that God is and has done to jolt us from our earthly sorrow into heavenly joy. We have only to recount God's good blessing to us to find ample **reason for joy**.

**Psalms 40:16** - 16 **Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee**; Let those who love Thy salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!" NASB

May we be continually reminded of all of God's goodness in our lives so that our hearts may be filled with His joy.

**Romans 15:13** - 13 **Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing**, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. NASB

**My Peace I leave with you**

One of the great blessings that are ours in Christ is **His peace** that He has both **secured** for us and **given** to us. Indeed the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent to teach and comfort us gives us a **spiritual peace** from God that is rich and full.

**John 14:25-27** - 25 "These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. 27 **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you.** Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. NASB

This **peace** that **Christ gives**, much like spiritual joy, is a thing that only **true born again Christians** can **experience**. It comes to us from Christ, **"not as the world gives,"** but it is Christ's peace that He gives to His people. **"My peace I give to you,"** says Jesus to His disciples, indicating that it is a unique **spiritual blessing** that He gives only to His own people who have been **born** of the **Spirit**. God has always blessed His people with His own gift of peace.

**Psalms 29:11** - 11 The Lord will give strength to His people; **The Lord will bless His people with peace.** NASB

It has always been a common **greeting, salutation and benediction** exchanged between God's people because God has always wished His people to abide in peace.

**Numbers 6:22-26** - 22 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 23 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: 24 The Lord bless you, and keep you; 25 The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; **26 The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.**' NASB

We are all familiar with the common Hebrew blessing **"Shalom,"** which is a greeting offering **peace**. But even in the New Testament, **peace** is a common **salutation**.

**1 Corinthians 1:3** - 3 **Grace to you and peace from God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

**Ephesians 6:23-24** - 23 **Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith,** from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible. NASB

And of course God wishes **peace** upon His people because His **very character and nature** is **Peace**, for He is the **God of peace**.

**Hebrews 13:20-21** - 20 Now **the God of peace**, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 3:16** - 16 Now may **the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace** in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! NASB

Indeed **peace** is a **gift granted by God** and this because Jesus Himself is the Prince of Peace who's Kingdom and rule will **abide forever in peace**.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** - 6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, **Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,** On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. NASB

And since **Christ has reconciled us in peace to God**, He has also **reconciled us to all men**. He **"Himself"** has become **"our peace"** having **overcome all our enmity toward all men** and granted us His **Spirit of peace** to **rule** in our hearts and turn us into His people of peace.

**Ephesians 2:13-18** - 14 For **He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,** 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 **and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.** 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. NASB



**Colossians 3:15** - 15 And let **the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called** in one body; and be thankful. NASB

Indeed Christ has **reconciled us to all men** so that there remains no reason for prejudice or tension toward people of any **race, gender, or social class**.

**Galatians 3:28** - 28 There is **neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus**. NASB

We have been overcome by the **sweet peace** of the **Prince of Peace** and long to live in a **world of peace** which He will soon bring to pass. And this is because **peace** is a **fruit** of the **Spirit**. It is a product of the powerful **work** of the **Spirit** within us and a result of living in God's Kingdom.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Romans 14:16-17** - 6 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the **kingdom of God** is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**.

**Romans 8:6-9** - 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, **but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace**, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. NASB

Another obvious reason that this peace is a **spiritual peace** enjoyed by the **Spirit filled** Christian is that it comes as a benefit of **the Gospel and faith and union with Christ**. This is the very thing the angel announced had arrived with the **birth** of **Jesus the Messiah**, and also that the Apostles preached about the **Gospel** of Jesus Christ.

**Luke 2:13-14** - 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 "**Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased**." NASB

**Acts 10:36** - 6 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, **preaching peace through Jesus Christ** (He is Lord of all) — NASB

This is because in the **Gospel and upon faith in Christ**, **peace with God** is both **offered and secured**. This is a powerful result of **Justification by Faith alone in Christ alone**.

**Romans 5:1-2** - 1 Therefore **having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. NASB

**Colossians 1:19-20** - 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and **through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross**; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. NASB

Through Christ's atoning work, we have been **reconciled to God** and have **peace with God**. Our **alienation from God** because of sin and **His wrath toward us** have been appeased by **Christ's sacrifice in our place**. Therefore our hearts can **rest in peace**, knowing that God is now for us, and not against us, now that our sins have been put away by the cross, and we have been adopted into God's family through Christ's powerful work. Now God's peace is a blessing bestowed upon those who **believe the sure promises of His Word and trust Him** with God given **faith**.

**Psalms 119:165** - 165 **Those who love Thy law have great peace**, And nothing causes them to stumble. NASB

**Proverbs 3:1-2** - 1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But **let your heart keep my commandments; 2 For length of days and years of life, And peace they will add to you**. NASB

**Isaiah 26:3-4** - 3 "The **steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in Thee**. 4 "Trust in the Lord forever, For in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock. NASB

This peace of Christ gives to us an **inner tranquility** and **confidence** that overcomes even the difficult trials that we face in life. It is said to "**surpass all comprehension**" and "**guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**." "**In Christ Jesus**" is an obvious reference to our **union with Christ** that we enjoy being one with Him in spiritual union, His very presence of peace guarding our hearts from the "**tribulation in the world**" (John 16:33).



**Philippians 4:6-7** - 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 **And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** NASB

**Romans 15:13** - 13 Now **may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,** that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. NASB

**John 16:33** - 33 "These things I have spoken to you, **that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**" NASB

As a **result** of this **peace with God** that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ, we are now also **called** to be **His people of peace, peacemakers** and ambassadors of **His peace** in the church and to the world. We Christians can no longer take up the sword against others, but must **seek peace** and **pursue** it.

**Matthew 5:9** - 9 "**Blessed are the peacemakers,** for they shall be called sons of God. NASB

**Colossians 3:15** - 15 And let **the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called** in one body; and be thankful. NASB

**Ephesians 4:1-3** - 4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,** 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 **being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** NASB

**Romans 12:18** - 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace with all men.** NASB

**Hebrews 12:14** - 14 **Pursue peace with all men,** and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. NASB

**Proverbs 16:7** - 7 When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, **He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.** NASB

Because we live under **Christ's rule** in the **Kingdom of God**, we must **abide** in **peace** and **pursue** the **peace** of God always.

**Romans 14:16-19** - 16 Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, **but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.** NASB

This is because as **God's own dear children bearing His likeness**, we must be people of **peace**, for that is the **very nature of God** within us by the Holy Spirit.

**James 3:17-18** - 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, **then peaceable,** gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And **the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.** NASB

Let us therefore hear God's exhortation to **"live in peace"** and thereby be called the **"sons of God!"**

**2 Corinthians 13:11** - 11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, **live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.** NASB

## **Patience**

Having looked at the **first triad (love, joy, peace)** of the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, we come to the **second triad (patience, kindness, goodness)**. **Patience** is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience,** kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Patience** is a virtue closely **related** to the **virtue of forbearance**. In fact forbearance is one way we might describe patience and the Scripture uses it in connection with patience often. **Patience** is that **forbearing temperance of attitude** that **suffers long** or **endures** with **difficult circumstances** or **troublesome people** and this it does **without complaint**. Nelson's Bible Dictionary defines **PATIENCE** this way; "*Forbearance under suffering and endurance in the*

face of adversity. Two Greek words are translated as patience: *makrothymia* and *hypomone*. *Makrothymia* generally expresses **patience** with regard to **people**. It is also translated longsuffering as a **quality of God** (Rom 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) and is listed by the apostle Paul as one of the nine **fruits of the Holy Spirit** (Gal 5:22). The second word, *hypomone*, generally expresses patience with regard to things. It may be described as the quality that enables a person to be "patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). **"end quote.**

Now **patience** is surely an **attribute of God**. Men may tempt and provoke God, and **God patiently endures** with them. God is said to be "**slow to anger**" and enduring patiently the "**objects of His wrath.**"

**Psalm 103:8** - 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, **Slow to anger** and abounding in lovingkindness. NASB

**Romans 9:22-25** - 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, **endured with much patience vessels of wrath** prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. NASB

God certainly has **His purposes in patiently enduring** those who provoke Him. As He waits to bring judgment upon the world at the Second Coming of Christ, His patience means that more people will come to know Him and be **saved**.

**2 Peter 3:9, 14-15** - 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance..... 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and **regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation**; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, NASB

Often times God's patience **works** for the **good of His people** in the various trials and circumstances and even in the **midst** of our **sins**. Consider how Paul describes how God used him as an **example** of His patience.

**1 Timothy 1:15-16** - 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, **Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience**, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. NASB

Or how the Scripture tells us that **God's forbearance and patience leads us to repentance**.

**Romans 2:3-6** - 3 And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 **Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to every man according to his deeds: NASB

One thing is for sure, we all ought to be **thankful** for the "**perfect patience**" of **God** and this **beautiful virtue of patient forbearance**, for if God were not patient toward His sinful creatures, the entire world would be consumed in the fire of His judgment. Now because this patience is a virtue that is also an **attribute of God**, Christians are therefore called to demonstrate and practice this virtue. We are **called to be forbearing and patient with others** as well as **composed and patiently endure the hardships and trials** of life with grumbling or complaining.

**Philippians 2:14-15** - 14 **Do all things without grumbling or disputing**; 15 that you may **prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent**, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, NASB

In the church we are to keep "**the unity of the Spirit**" that we already possess by "**showing forbearance with patience**" toward "**one another.**"

**Ephesians 4:1-3** - 4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, **with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love**, 3 being diligent to **preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. NASB

How **pleasant** it is when brothers dwell together in unity, and how it **glorifies God** among us. But this requires that we actively “**put on**” this **virtue of patience**, and “**bear the weaknesses**” of each other.

**Romans 15:1-2** - 1 Now we who are strong ought to **bear the weaknesses of those without strength** and not just please ourselves. 2 Let each of us **please his neighbor for his good**, to his edification. NASB

Many times we are instructed to practice this virtue in the church with composure, and forgiveness, and with restraint “**bearing with one another.**” Consider how this targets **personal relationships** in the **church** where people offend and injure each other, for if there were nothing to forgive, we would not need patient forbearance. But wherever there are people, there are always offenses, and these we are called upon in the church to **patiently forbear** and **forgive** one another! Paul instructs this to be done first in the heart... “**put on a heart of**”... virtue...

**Colossians 3:12-13** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**; 13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you**.

And of course because we desire to **please God** and **obey His commandments** with **all people everywhere**, we are also called to practice this virtue of God with all people.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14-15** - 14 And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, **be patient with all men**. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always **seek after that which is good for one another and for all men**. NASB

Surely as we long to **love our neighbor as ourselves**, it will require a healthy dose of **patience with others**, and this will **put the glory of God on display** in our lives! But it is not just with **people** that we are called to **endure patiently**, but also in the **hardships, trials**, and even **persecutions** of the **Christian life**. When we practice this **patient endurance** it produces strong godly character in our lives and makes us more like Christ so that we bear His image in greater degree over time, which includes His **patient endurance** and **perseverance under trial**.

**Romans 12:10-15** - 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, **persevering in tribulation**, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. NASB

But what does it look like practically to “**persevere in tribulation?**” Well one thing for sure is, we don’t lose our joy in midst of difficulties, but remain steadfastly focused on the Lord and wait for His deliverance, and **joyfully endure** our **trial** knowing that He is working to change us to be more like Him in the midst of our difficulties.

**James 1:2-4** - 2 **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance**. 4 And let **endurance** have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NASB

**Romans 5:3-4** - 3 And not only this, but we also **exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character**; and proven character, hope; NASB

It means we don’t **grumble** and **complain** in the midst of trial **against God** and His **Providence**, and thus blaspheme against God’s goodness toward us arrogantly deciding that we know what is best for us better than God. This **grumbling** and **complaining** about our circumstances is a thing very displeasing to God and it is a failure of our patience and perseverance under trial.

**Philippians 2:14-15** - 14 **Do all things without grumbling or disputing**; 15 that you may **prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent**, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, NASB

**1 Corinthians 10:9-13** - 9 Nor let us **try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed** by the serpents. 10 **Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed** by the destroyer. 11 **Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, **but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.** NASB

**Patiently enduring the trials and sufferings of life** without complaint, while **maintaining our joy and faith in God**, greatly glorifies God and clearly shows that our hope is in God who is greater than the world, and it proves our faith genuine that we believe that God will ultimately bless us and fulfill His promise to us to bring us into a better world and eternal life.

**Hebrews 11:37-12:3** - 37 **They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted,** they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. 39 **And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,** 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect. 12:1 **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus,** the author and perfecter of faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,** and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For **consider Him who has endured** such hostility by sinners against Himself, **so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.** NASB

And so it means we don't **abandon our faith in God** and our hope that God will see us through according to His promise, even in the midst of terrible suffering or **even persecution** for being a Christian by a hostile world.

**2 Thessalonians 1:4** - 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God **for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.** NASB

With **faith** we **wait on the Lord, trusting in His goodness** and power, maintaining our joy without **severe worry** or fear, but looking to God with faith to care for us and meet our needs.

**Psalms 37:7** - 7 **Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret** because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. NASB

**Psalms 40:1** - **I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me,** and heard my cry. NASB

In fact this is one of the **marks of true saving faith**, that it will persevere to the end and not abandon the faith or give into temptation to go back to the world and begin again to rely on ourselves. Remember the **children of Israel** in the **wilderness** as an example of all things **NOT** to do in the midst of suffering; grumbling, complaining, giving into to sinful temptations, rebellion against God's called leaders, and ultimately idolatry (Golden Calf). Instead as Christians upon whom **all the good promises of God in Christ** have come, we maintain our faith and hope, serving God and His people, with composure and joy, without fear and worry, trusting in and patiently waiting upon the Lord to deliver us and give us eternal life.

**James 5:7-11** - 7 **Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.** Behold, **the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.** 8 **You too be patient; strengthen your hearts,** for the coming of the Lord is at hand... 10 As an example, brethren, of **suffering and patience, take the prophets** who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, **we count those blessed who endured.** You have heard of the **endurance of Job** and have **seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings,** that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. NASB

**Unger's Bible Dictionary** says; "*Patience is that calm and unruffled temper with which the good man bears the evils of life, whether they proceed from persons or things. It also manifests itself in a sweet submission to the providential appointments of God and fortitude in the presence of the duties and conflicts of life. This grace saves one from discouragement in the face of evil, aids in the development of the entire Christian character, and, continued till the end, will*

*terminate in reward in the life to come,” end quote.* Consider how the Hebrews were being tempted to abandon their faith in Christ because of the **persecution** they were enduring from the hands of Judaism in the early church. One main theme in the book of Hebrews was that of **endurance under trial** and here we see some of the greatest **encouragements** in the New Testament to **persevere** until the **end**.

**Hebrews 6:10-12** - 10 For **God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.** 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you may not be sluggish, but **imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** NASB

**Hebrews 10:36-39** - 36 For **you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.** 37 For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. 39 But **we are not of those who shrink back to destruction**, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. NASB

In summary then let us see this great **virtue of patience** as an **essential part** of the **Christian life**. Let us hear the exhortations to patience with **people** and also with the **difficulties** of life. Let us **“put on”** this **patience** and **patiently forbear** with those in the church who try our good character, and also with those in the world so we may **prove** ourselves **blameless**. And also may we **endure** the great **trials** and **difficulties of life** maintaining our composure without fear and worry, but **trusting in** and **waiting** on the **Lord**, not giving into temptation and abandoning our faith in His goodness, but patiently enduring until the end when He delivers us and gives us eternal life. Let us **not forget** those words of our **Lord** concerning the end of the age and His Second Coming.

**Matthew 24:13** - 13 "But the **one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.** NASB

## Kindness

Having looked at the **first triad (love, joy, peace)** of the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, we come to the **second triad (patience, kindness, goodness)**. **Kindness** is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Kindness** is a charitable and **generous disposition** toward others **that manifests** in gracious **acts** of **free** benevolence to others. It is expressed in many ways in the Bible and is closely related to the virtue of love, in that love is said to be **“kind.”**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** - 4 Love is patient, **love is kind**, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant NASB

Kindness can be spoken of without actually using the word for it whenever **free acts** of **blessing** are **given**, that is a **kindness**. The idea of **grace** is also related as grace is a **favor given freely** and **not deserved**, it is underserved favor. But kindness first lives in the heart as a **charitable** and **generous disposition** toward others, a **desire** to be a **source of blessing** and **benefit** to someone else. Then when kindness acts, it gives freely, out of its bounty. This can be in the form of **favor granted** where it is not deserved, or in the form of some **material blessing** given to another. As an **attribute** of **God**, it shines forth a **glorious beauty**. Kindness is God’s loyal love and favor towards His own people. In the Old Testament, the word translated as "kindness" or "lovingkindness" **“hesed,”** refers to God's long-suffering love and His determination to keep His promises of blessing to His chosen people in spite of their sin and rebellion. And so God’s lovingkindness is celebrated throughout the pages of the Old Testament.



**Psalm 145:8-9** - 8 The **Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger** and **great in lovingkindness**. 9 The **Lord is good to all**, And His **mercies are over all His works**. NASB

God's lovingkindness is to be a **cause for praise and adoration**, for no false God is like the Almighty God who is abundant in such things as **grace, kindness** and **tender mercies**, but these attributes of God are **peculiar** to His own **self-revelation** in the **Bible**.

**Psalm 36:7** - 7 **How precious is Thy lovingkindness**, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. NASB

**Psalm 51:1** - 51 **Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness**; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. NASB

**Psalm 103:2-8** - 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; 3 **Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; 4 Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; 5 Who satisfies your years with good things**, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle. 6 The Lord performs righteous deeds, And judgments for all who are oppressed. 7 He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger **and abounding in lovingkindness**. NASB

**Psalm 31:21** - 21 Blessed be the Lord, For **He has made marvelous His lovingkindness** to me in a besieged city. NASB

**Psalm 117:1-2** - 1 **Praise the Lord, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples! 2 For His lovingkindness is great toward us**, And the truth of the Lord is everlasting. Praise the Lord! NASB

This attribute of God was finds it **apex** and is shown through His **divine mercy** and **forgiveness toward sinners** when payment of sins was offered through the death of His Son, freely given by God to redeem us from the awful curse God's wrath because of sin which results in death.

**Titus 3:4-7** - 4 But **when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us**, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but **according to His mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly **through Jesus Christ our Savior**, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. NASB

Who can speak of such **kindness** that **God has shown** to His own **rebellious creatures** who have spurned His love and blasphemed His great name. Indeed no pen of man or tongue of angel can adequately describe it, but He will be **praised forever** and ever for it. Indeed the nations of the redeemed will forever praise God for His lovingkindness in the **New Heavens** and **Earth** which He will create. In fact, one main purpose of Christian salvation is simply so that God can show His kindness to us forever. And we in return will **praise Him** for the **glory** of it.

**Ephesians 2:4-7** - 4 But **God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us**, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 **in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus**. NASB

In the New Testament, because God is kind, we are called to imitate Him in this great virtue. Jesus called us to this standard of life in His Kingdom first in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Luke 6:35-36** - 35 "But **love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return**; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for **He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men**. 36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. NASB

Paul instructs this to be done first in the heart, **"put on a heart of kindness"**...

**Colossians 3:12-13** - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you**.

And this then becomes **our great desire** in order to **be like God**, and live in the joy that such free benevolence toward others produces in our heart. For when we are **kind**, we find **much joy**!

**Ephesians 4:32** - 32 And **be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other**, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. NASB

## Goodness

Again as part of that **second triad (patience, kindness, goodness)** of **virtues** listed in the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, we find **Goodness**. Goodness is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

Goodness is that which good and is **not bad**, but rather is of highest quality, what is **morally excellent** and **virtuous**, what is positive and valuable, useful and beneficial, proper, honorable and righteous. As an **attribute** of **God**, goodness consists of righteousness, holiness, justice, kindness, grace, mercy, and love. So the Lord is said to be good and to do good to all.

**Psalms 119:68** - 68 **Thou art good and doest good**; Teach me Thy statutes. NASB

**Psalms 145:7-9** - 7 They shall eagerly utter the memory of **Thine abundant goodness**, And shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness. 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. 9 **The Lord is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works**. NASB

Goodness expresses the supreme benevolence, holiness, and **excellence** of the **divine character**, the **sum of all God's attributes**. When God revealed Himself to Moses, He described His glory and goodness with a **list of virtues**. "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you."

**Exodus 33:18-19** - 18 Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" 19 And He said, "**I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you**, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.... 34:6-7 - 6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, **"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished**, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." NASB

Therefore whatever attributes God has ascribed to Himself in His **self-revelation** to us in the **Bible**, each one is an **expression** of His **goodness**. This is because **every attribute** of God is **good**, or **virtuous**. There is no attribute of God that could be described as bad, but rather each one shines forth another facet of the **beauty** which is **goodness**. Therefore **God's character** itself is the **supreme measure** of what goodness and virtue are. Moreover everything that God **does** is also **good**, for if **He is good** in His **very essence**, than He can but **only do good**. AW Pink comments... *"There is such an absolute perfection in God's nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better. God is summum bonum, the chiefest good. The original Saxon meaning of our English word "God" is "The Good." God is not only the Greatest of all beings, but the Best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but God's goodness is underived, for it is the essence of His eternal nature. As God is infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or any act of omnipotency put forth; so He was eternally good before there was any communication of His bounty, or any creature to whom it might be imparted or exercised. Thus, the first manifestation of this Divine perfection was in giving being to all things. "Thou art good, and doest good" (Ps. 119:68). God has in Himself an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness enough to fill all things.... All that emanates from God—His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences—cannot be otherwise than good: as it is written. "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31)." End quote. It is important to understand that the **measure of goodness** is **God Himself**, and that **virtue** is **quantified** by God's own character, the very essence of His being. Thomas Manton comments... *"He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature's good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good;**

*the creature's good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him.*” **End quote.** Therefore let us understand that in reading of the accounts of God's dealing with man, we learn what goodness is, and therefore we can emulate it. God is good when He shines forth **His mercy** to those who **spurn His benevolence** in offering forgiveness for their transgressions of His holy and sovereign law. God even loves His enemies, and gives them ample opportunity to repent. The goodness of God is seen in that when man transgressed the law of His Creator a dispensation of unmixed wrath did not at once commence. God did not immediately execute holy wrath against sinful man, as in the flood of Noah, but rather in great mercy for some 2000 years endured with much patience the people of the earth who became **increasingly corrupt** until *“the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen 6:5-6). And so, in **His goodness, God destroyed the evil world** of Noah's day. But **God is good, even in His judgment and wrath.** AW Pink comments... *“Nor can the benevolence of God be justly called into question because there is suffering and sorrow in the world. If man sins against the goodness of God, if he despises “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,” and after the hardness and impenitency of his heart treasureth up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:5,5), who is to blame but himself? Would God be “good” if He punished not those who ill-use His blessings, abuse His benevolence, and trample His mercies beneath their feet? It will be no reflection upon God's goodness, but rather the brightest exemplification of it, when He shall rid the earth of those who have broken His laws, defied His authority, mocked His messengers, scorned His Son, and persecuted those for whom He died.”* **End quote.** In summary, **goodness is what and who God is, and what God does.** And so of course Christians are called to goodness, and to be good, even as God the Father is perfect and good (Matt 5:48).

**Matthew 5:48** - 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NASB  
Goodness is therefore a fruit of the Spirit of God within us, and so we are called to produce it with faith and dependence on God's working in us to produce this divine virtue in the way we live and act.

**2 Thessalonians 1:11-12** - 11 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and **fulfill every desire for goodness** and the work of faith with power; 12 in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

**Ephesians 5:7-10** - 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light 9 (for **the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth**), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. NASB

**Goodness** for Christians is **not sinlessness** but an **integrity** and **uprightness of heart** and mind that reflects God's goodness (His righteousness, holiness, justice, kindness, grace, mercy, and love) in our relationships with others (**Luke 6:35, Gal 6:10, 1 Thes 5:15, Heb 13:16, 3 John 11**). It is that **sincere desire** for God's **virtue** to come forth from our life, in all the facets of our character.

**Romans 15:14** - 14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that **you yourselves are full of goodness**, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another. NASB

Christians strive to be good because the Holy Spirit lives inside prompting us to live a life that is **morally excellent** and **virtuous**, positive and valuable, useful and beneficial, proper, honorable and righteous. We seek to **imitate God** and let His goodness be that which **characterizes** our **lives** as we live according to His goodness of righteousness, justice, kindness, grace, mercy, and love. May He grant us to be good, even as He is good.

## Faithfulness

We have now come to that **third triad**, (**faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**) of virtues listed in the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, and here we find **faithfulness**. Faithfulness is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Faithfulness** is a steadfast and reliable integrity and loyalty to others in our word, priorities and commitments (**Luke 21:16-19, 1 Cor 4:2, 2 Tim 4:7-8**). As an **attribute** of **God**, faithfulness is a virtue that describes God's **fidelity** and **dependability** to **carry out His Word**. It assures us that He will certainly fulfill His promises as well as execute His threats against sin. It also refers to His **truthfulness** and **integrity**, so that when **God speaks His Word is true**, which also therefore means He will **fulfill His promises** and **threats**. Particularly, God makes covenants and promises to His people and remains **steadfast** to **fulfil His obligations** to these promises, even when His people fail to do their part. God keeps His covenants, remembers His lovingkindness because **"great is His faithfulness."**

**Deuteronomy 7:9-11** - 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God, **He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments**; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. NASB

**Psalms 36:5** - 5 Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, **Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies**. NASB

**Psalms 98:1-3** - 1 Sing to the Lord a new song, For He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him. 2 The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. 3 **He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel**; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. NASB

**Lamentations 3:22-23** - 22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; **Great is Thy faithfulness**. NASB

Consider that **Jesus** was called as the **Messiah**, the **promised** and **Anointed One** to deliver God's people from their enemies and bring them into a Kingdom of peace, blessing and prosperity. There are actually hundreds of **prophecies in the Old Testament** that tell of the future person and work of Jesus and all that He would do to bring this about. Consider the massive list of fulfilled prophecies (some 300 of His first coming), that **God was faithful** to fulfill in the person of Jesus. **Jesus Himself is God's faithfulness on display** as He carries out God's Word and fulfills His covenant to save His people. Jesus is described as the "faithful one" (Rev 19:11), the "faithful witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14), and the "faithful High Priest" (Heb 2:17; 3:2).

**Hebrews 2:17-3:2** - 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that **He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God**, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, **consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him**, as Moses also was in all His house. NASB

God is **certainly faithful**, and certainly will **fulfill all His promises** to His people. In fact, God's integrity is at stake because He has made so many promises to His people to do them good. So He is said to be faithful as He fulfils His promises to us.

**Hebrews 10:19-23** - 19 Since therefore, brethren, **we have confidence** to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with



pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for He who promised is faithful**; NASB

And even when **we forsake God** and deny our faithfulness to Him, God will surely fulfill His threats and promises for He cannot change, but rather **His very nature is faithfulness**.

**2 Timothy 2:11-13** - 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 **If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself**. NASB

This is seen clearly in **God's promise to forgive sins** to Christians who with faithful (humble, repentant, sincere) hearts **confess our sins** and ask for forgiveness. In fact, this is said to be an act of justice and righteousness for God to do, because Christ has been punished for our sins to meet the demand of divine justice, and God therefore forgives on the basis of His promise to forgive those who trust in the Christ, the wages of their sins having been paid by Christ. This is a glorious thought, **God is faithful to forgive our sins!**

**1 John 1:9** - 9 If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. NASB

Because God is faithful, He will also **keep us** and **cause us to persevere** in the **faith** until the end, and will also set us apart to Himself and cause us to bear His image, until our Sanctification is complete.

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** - 23 Now may the God of peace **Himself sanctify you entirely**; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**. NASB

Now as faithfulness regards the Christian life, as a **fruit** of the **Spirit** and a **virtue** that we are to live and strive for, it also deals with our own **fidelity** and **loyalty to God and others**.

**Faithfulness** is a steadfast and reliable integrity and loyalty to God and others in our word, priorities and commitments. It means that we **tell the truth**. It means we **keep our promises** and we do what we say we are going to do. It means we be the kind of person that is **reliable** and can be counted on because we are **dependable**. It means that we are **obedient to God** and **keep His commandments**. Not that we never sin, but that the **pattern** and **trajectory of our life** is marked by **doing God's will** and being faithful to love Him and others. Moreover, let us consider that because God is faithful, He takes our faithfulness very seriously, Jesus said that in fact it was one of the weightier matters of the law.

**Matthew 23:23-24** - 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected **the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness**; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. NASB

May our lives be marked by this **constancy of faithfulness** as Paul.

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** - 7 I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the course, I have kept the faith**; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. NASB

Let us also take great care to be **faithful** to the **charge** to follow Christ, do His will, for we are **stewards** of all that He has **entrusted to us**. Our time, our talents, and our treasure have been given by God for us to serve and glorify Him with and this is our stewardship. We know someone is faithful when we witness their devotion to God in worship, by their integrity in word and deed, and by their life marked by **trusting in God** and doing what He says (obedience). As we **strive with God dependent effort** to be **faithful**, we shall **bear His image** in greater degree over time by the power of the Spirit. Consider lastly, the **Lord** also **rewards faithfulness** to our calling and gifting in the Christian life.

**Matthew 25:20-22** - 20 "And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.' 21 "His master said to him, **'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things**, enter into the joy of your master.' NASB



## Gentleness

We have now come to that **third triad**, (**faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**) of **virtues** listed in the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, and here we find **gentleness**. Gentleness is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 **gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Gentleness** is a humble consideration toward others which is **amiable** and **tender**, kindly giving them preference in honor. **Gentleness** is not severe, rough or violent with others, but rather restrained and mild with them. It is related to the **virtue** of **humility** because of its **yielding submissive approach** with others, and also to the **virtue** of **meekness** because meekness also has a reserved and restrained relation to others. When God's people walk in His wisdom and love, they bear this lovely virtue of gentleness.

**James 3:17** - 17 But the wisdom from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable**, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. NASB

As an **attribute** of **God** gentleness is an amazing virtue when we consider that God is all powerful and yet **tender** and **mild** in astonishing ways. Consider how **mild** and **temperate** **God** is as He is so patient when wronged, reserved in His judgments (which ought to break out in immediate justice), yet He possesses great power under the control of love and gentleness. God's gentleness is expressed in His care for His own dear people in the **imagery** of a **shepherd**. Consider that amiable and lovely scene of God's people under the care of His powerful staff and loving care, "**lying down in green pastures**" and "**beside still waters.**"

**Psalms 23:1-2** - 1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 **He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.** NASB

**Isaiah 40:10-12** - 10 Behold, the Lord God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, And His recompense before Him. 11 **Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.** 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance, And the hills in a pair of scales? NASB

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the **Messiah** to come he spoke of this **gentleness** that was a bright shining **excellency** of **Christ**.

**Isaiah 42:3** - 3 "**A bruised reed He will not break, And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;** He will faithfully bring forth justice. NASB

And **Jesus Himself** invited **all** to come and benefit from His **gentle** care.

**Matthew 11:28-30** - 28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and **I will give you rest.** 29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, **for I am gentle and humble in heart;** and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." NASB

Surely no other deity that men have invented possesses such a **mild** and **temperate nature** as the Living and **Triune God** of Scripture. He is so unlike men who yield power and authority with severity and violence. Indeed there are none as severe as God, yet **He offers to gently care** for those who will come and surrender to His Kingly rule. Then it is, that God's people shall find rest and tranquility. And even in the midst of the storms of life His peace guards us and we are comforted with the hope of that great Day, when He will come and bring eternal life and peace, and in serenity we shall lie down in green pastures and beside still waters when there shall be nothing ever again to make us tremble or cause us harm as we dwell together under the loving care of the Great Shepherd. See in this imagery of a shepherd the very gentleness of God.

**Jeremiah 30:9-10** - 9 'But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. 10 'And fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the Lord, 'And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For

behold, I will save you from afar, And your offspring from the land of their captivity. **And Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, And no one shall make him afraid.** NASB

Indeed God's Word is loaded with promises of this **gentle care** of **God** for His own. Now as **gentleness** regards the **Christian life**, as a **fruit** of the **Spirit** and a **virtue** that we are to live and strive for, it deals with our relation **to others**. Because God is gentle, He calls us to be gentle. And as we are being powerfully transformed through the Word and by the Spirit, we **become** more **gentle** as we **bear His image** in increasing degree over time. Therefore we are called to **exert God dependent effort** to be **gentle**, even as He is gentle.

**Titus 3:1-2** - 1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, **to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.**

This **gentleness** is an important component of how we keep the peace in the church and relate to one another. We strive to be **restrained** and **mild** in our **temperament**, so as not to agitate or provoke others to anger or to be rough or severe with them. We **seek** to be **like Christ** and treat others with honor and give them preference, **“with all humility and gentleness, with patience showing forbearance in love.”**

**Ephesians 4:1-3** - 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 **with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,** 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. NASB

And gentleness is held out as an important virtue in womanhood as that good virtue that is **“pleasing in the sight of God.”**

**1 Peter 3:3-5** - 3 And let not your adornment be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, **with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit,** which is precious in the sight of God. NASB

And this is how we are called to deal with one another, even when other Christians are caught in the trappings of sin.

**Galatians 6:1** - 6 Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, **restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness;** each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. NASB

And Peter instructs us that this is **the way** we are to **share the Gospel** with **unbelievers**. Surely we will not be harsh and unloving, but rather amiable and mild, seeking to persuade them kindly.

**1 Peter 3:15** - 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, **yet with gentleness and reverence;**

This **gentle way** of a **shepherd** is also the way in which God commands those to behave who lead His people. The imagery of a shepherd as an expression of God's gentleness is in fact from where we derive the word **pastoral**, from such scenes when shepherds care for their flock in a rural setting of **simplicity** and **serenity**. God desires for His people to be well fed and to live in peace, and to dwell together with them in the pleasant fellowship of mutual love and care. And so He calls His **leaders** to **exemplify** this characteristic of **gentleness**.

**2 Timothy 2:24-26** - 24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 **with gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. NASB

The Apostle **Paul** was a **good example** of this tempered and mild relation toward God's people.

**2 Corinthians 10:1** - 1 Now I, Paul, **myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ** — I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! NASB

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8** - 7 But **we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.** 8 Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. NASB

May God grant us to be a people of mild and tender care for one another, who put His glory on display in our lives by this **lovely virtue** of **gentleness**.

## Self-control

We have now come to that **third triad**, (**faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**) of **virtues** listed in the nine-fold **fruit** of the **Spirit**, and here we find **self-control**. Self-control is similar to those virtues we have already looked at in the fact that it is both an **attribute** of **God** and also a **fruit** of the **Spirit** within us.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law. NASB

**Self-control** is that self-discipline or self-restraint which is temperate under temptation and emotional duress or excitement (**Acts 24:25, 1 Cor 7:5, 9:25-27, 2 Pet 1:6**). It is often translated as **temperance**, meaning restraint in regard to one's emotions and indulgences beyond moderation. It is seen as an important virtue in both Old and New Testaments.

**Proverbs 25:28** - 28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who **has no control over his spirit**. NASB

**Proverbs 16:32** - 32 He who is **slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city**. NASB

**2 Peter 1:5-7** - 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, **self-control, and in your self-control**, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. NASB

In fact, Paul related self-control to the **repentance from sin** required in a faithful **response** to the Gospel.

**Acts 24:25** - 25 And **as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened** and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you." NASB

Paul was telling Felix that he must control his desires and passions in order to please God, and not to sinfully indulge being moderation. He needed to **repent** of that kind of **lifestyle** in order to live **rightly before God**. And so Paul called Him to the **repentance** which is **self-control**. See in this the essential virtue of self-control is required to live and walk in repentance. As an **attribute** of **God** self-control is a marvelous **virtue**. God **always has control** of His emotions and faculties regardless of things that happen in the world. Since God is omnipotent and all-wise, He is ever and always composed and at peace, unruffled and never stirred to an uncontrolled response. He is an **immovable Rock** in a turbulent world so that Scripture says we can put our trust in God who is a Rock and a refuge.

**Psalms 62:2** - 2 He only is **my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken**. NASB

**Psalms 18:2** - 2 The **Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge**; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. NASB

**Isaiah 26:3-4** - 3 "The **steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in Thee**. 4 "Trust in the Lord forever, For **in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock**. NASB

Being the **self-existent** Creator of all things, God is not moved to improper passions for things around Him, rather **everything** has been created to **manifest the glory and excellence** of His own **nature as God**. He is never moved by **passions** that are **non-virtuous** or evil. God's passions ever and always consistently righteous and He is always moved and guided by virtue because that is His very nature. Therefore He is always **under control** of everything in His world, and guiding it according to the counsel of His own will. Therefore, **we** can put our **faith** and **trust in God** to find peace in the turbulence of the world around us, and comfort when we lack, for God promises to meet all of our needs. Surely **those who trust in the Lord will not be shaken**, or moved to uncontrollable emotions, and we can **only find our contentment** in God

alone. We have been created with the capacity to enjoy the world around us and in that **enjoyment to glorify God** and give Him thanks.

**1 Timothy 4:4-5** - 4 For **everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude**; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. NASB

Therefore we must be careful not to derive our ultimate satisfaction and contentment from things in the world, for these will only leave us empty. Only God can fill that **powerful longing for satisfaction** that He has placed in the human heart, and to search for the fulfillment of our passions and **desires apart from God** is no less than **sinful idolatry**. Therefore, we are called to enjoy the world around us, **being careful to exercise self-control**, and to govern ourselves in a way that is proper and godly. Self-control is exercised to **restrain oneself from indulging beyond a reasonable level** in regard to eating and drinking, and to govern oneself in regard to one words and actions in the course of everyday life. Being a **fruit** of the Holy Spirit, self-control is a God given gift that helps us to live in a tempered and governed way that honors God in our common everyday relation to people and the desires and passions that we have in relation to the world around us. Self-control is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Timothy 1:7** -7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and **discipline**. NASB  
The Christian does not let his or her **passions and desires run wild** and headlong into sin, but **governs themselves** in a way that glorifies God, **exercising restraint** so as not to **indulge to point of sin**. Unlike the heathen world around us who indulge their desires and passions to the point of sinful excess, Christians are to exercise self-control. Self-control does **NOT** act in licentiousness, sensuality, self-indulgence, and it is **NOT** unruly, lawless, improper, audacious or wild. Rather it lives **under the control** and domination of the Holy Spirit. When one pursues their **sexual desires** beyond restraint, it becomes **lustful thoughts**. When one pursues their **desire for food** beyond reasonable restraint it becomes **gluttony**, and when one pursues their passion for **alcohol** beyond reasonable enjoyment it becomes **drunkenness** at the point when they **lose any degree of self-control**. If someone does not restrain their **anger**, it becomes an **outburst**, or their **excitement** in regard to **things pleasing to the senses**, it can result in the sinful and **immoderate treatment** of others around them, or **improper expressions of emotion**. Self-control is a key virtue in the Christian life that displays a humble trust in God in relation to people and things around us. Self-control can often be seen by contrast in the things that the Apostles **warned us against**. Rather than be **covetous lovers of money and things** in the **material world** around us we are to live **content** with what we have. The Christian must be careful not to **burn with passion** for certain kinds of things in the world **beyond our reach** or **not rightfully ours**.

**Hebrews 13:5** - 5 **Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have**; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," NASB

Rather than **reviling** when curbed by a parent, boss or another authority, we **live in submission** to God given authority. Rather than live in **vengeance** and **un-forgiveness** toward others who have offended us, we are to **forgive** and be **reconciled**. Rather than run off in **immoderate indulgence** in the world of materialism around us, we are to be **contented** with adequate means.

**2 Timothy 3:1-4** - 3 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, **lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**; NASB

See in these things how we **glorify God** in the Christian **virtue** which is **self-control**.

**1 Corinthians 9:25-27** - 25 And everyone who competes in the games **exercises self-control in all things**. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but **I buffet my body and make it my slave**, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. NASB

## Thankfulness/gratitude

One of the essential virtues of the Christian life is that of **thankfulness** or **gratitude**.

Thankfulness is that **due esteem** and **appreciation** that we **give to God** for His divine blessings of life, health, forgiveness and both temporal and future benefits. It is both a **heart attitude** and also a **duty** we offer with **words** and **service**. So often when thanksgiving is expressed in Scripture, it is a result of some good thing that God has done for us, or to recognize His own good nature for which we are thankful.

**Psalm 100:4-5** - 4 **Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name.** 5 **For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting.** And His faithfulness to all generations. NASB

Thanksgiving is **pure praise**! It is to properly give **glory to God** for being the **source** of our wellbeing and blessed state (Luke 17:11-19). Thanksgiving is a **form** of **praise** and therefore **praise** is closely related to **thanksgiving** and often **associated** with it. Many times praise is the response of a thankful heart, so thanksgiving can also be referred to as praise.

**Hebrews 13:15** - 15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a **sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name**. NASB

There are many things that the Bible says we are to be thankful for. Consider that God being the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, we are **owing to Him for our life**, and breath and all that we have. We are totally dependent on **God's Providence** for everything we experience in the course of daily life. If God did not give us **life** and **peace** and **health**, we would die in misery and pain. The blessing of wellbeing comes from the hand of divine Providence!

**Matthew 6:31-33** - 31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32 **"For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.** 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. NASB

Therefore **all creatures are owing to God** for their life and wellbeing. God is the one who providentially rules over people and history, with an intricate involvement in the blessing and care of all people everywhere and therefore it is the **duty of every creature to give God praise** and **thanksgiving**. Shall we ignore or disdain the hand that feeds us? God forbid, rather praise!

**Acts 17:24-25** - 24 "The **God who made the world and all things in it**, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, **since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things**; NASB

In fact our obligation to God for praise and thanksgiving is so great, that we can hardly discern **all the ways in a day that God cares for our needs**. Sun, moon, stars, food and water, inhabitable weather, the restraint of war, the functions of the human body to sustain life and many other things all come to us every day from the **good hand of providence**.

**1 Chronicles 29:11-13** - 11 **Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O Lord,** and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. 12 **Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone.** 13 Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise Thy glorious name. NASB

Therefore it is fitting and proper to give God praise and thanksgiving for His goodness to us. It is a great **sin to be ungrateful** and to **ignore** and take for granted the many blessings of God. Indeed it is listed among some of the world's greatest sins in Romans chapter one and also in 2 Timothy. When people **cease to honor God for who He is** and **cease to give Him thanks**, they have descended into the darkness of sin being foolish and futile in their thinking, ignoring the very One who gives them life! For such great sins God says people are **"without excuse!"**



**Romans 1:20-23** - 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, **so that they are without excuse.** 21 **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.** 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. NASB

**2 Timothy 3:1-2** - 1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, **ungrateful**, unholy, NASB  
Therefore it is said to be **“becoming to the upright”** to praise God and thank Him, and God’s people are **commanded** to give Him **praise** and **thanksgiving**.

**Psalms 33:1-5** - 1 Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; **Praise is becoming to the upright.** 2 **Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; Sing praises to Him** with a harp of ten strings. 3 Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy. 4 For the word of the Lord is upright; And all His work is done in faithfulness. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; **The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord.** NASB

When we **thank God** we properly honor Him as the **giver of life** and **blessing** and we give Him the **due esteem** and **glory** due Him for His mercy and lovingkindness to us. And so we thank God for being God, and we thank Him for all His good promises to us, and we thank Him for every blessing we have. This is not only our duty, but our **great privilege** to have this **knowledge** that God is the giver of life and blessing. For this the saints are told to thank God and have grateful hearts in all that we do, especially in our worship of God.

**Psalms 50:14-15** - 14 **"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,** And pay your vows to the Most High; 15 And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." NASB

**Psalms 106:1** - 1 Praise the Lord! **Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;** For His lovingkindness is everlasting. NASB

**Colossians 3:15-17** - 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; **and be thankful.** 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing with thankfulness** in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks through Him to God the Father.** NASB

We have so many things to thank God for that we can hardly count His blessings to us in a day, much less a lifetime. We should thank Him for **temporal blessings**, such-as health, food, clothes, shelter, work and rest. We should thank Him for **spiritual blessings**, such as the Bible, the Gospel and its blessings, such as free grace (election, calling, regeneration), justification, pardon and forgiveness, adoption, sanctification, the church and the ordinances and other means of grace. We should thank God for **eternal blessings**, and the enjoyment of God and His blessings through all eternity because of Christ in the future state.

**Psalms 86:12-13** - 12 **I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart,** And will glorify Thy name forever. 13 For Thy lovingkindness toward me is great, And **Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.** NASB

We should thank God for all that is **past**, what we **now enjoy**, and **what is promised**; for private blessings and public blessings, for **ordinary** and **extraordinary** blessings; for **prosperity**, and even **adversity**, for even our trials are fashioning us into His virtuous and glorious image, and in the end we shall be **glorified in immortality** with **Him forever**. Therefore we can give thanks to God for every circumstance, in fact this is our duty.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** - 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 **in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.** NASB

Let us therefore glorify God by thanking Him for everything we have from His good hand.

**James 1:17** - 17 **Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,** with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. NASB

## Contentment

Another very important virtue in the **Christian life** is that of **contentment**. Contentment is a settled happiness or **satisfaction** with **one's circumstances**, being also **free of anxiety** or **worry** with an **ease of mind**. It is that disposition of mind in which one is, through **grace**, independent of outward circumstances, so as not to be moved by **envy**, **anxiety**, and **discontent**. This is to say we are not **envious** of **others circumstances** or **possessions**, murmuring at our lot, or wishing **ardently** for more. It has a certain **gratitude** for the **blessing** and **provisions** that God has decided to give in His providence without **anxiously seeking more** or **complaining** about **what we have**, which would be **discontent**. **Contentment** arises and **grows** out of a **heartly recognition** of **God's Providence** over all our circumstances and the exercise of **faith** in believing that God will **fulfill** His **promise** to care for us and meet our needs (2 Pet 2:2-4). Strong's Encyclopedia comments; *"Contentment does not imply unconcern about our welfare, or that we should not have a sense of anything uneasy or distressing; nor does it appreciate idleness, or prevent diligent endeavors to improve our circumstances. It implies, however, that our desires of worldly good be moderate; that we do not indulge unnecessary care, or use unlawful efforts to better ourselves; but that we acquiesce with, and make the best of our condition, whatever it be. Contentment arises not from a man's outward condition, but from his inward disposition, and is the genuine offspring of humility, attended with a fixed habitual sense of God's particular providence, the recollection of past mercies, and a just estimate of the true nature of all earthly things. Motives to contentment arise from the consideration of the rightness of the divine government, the benignity of the divine providence, the greatness of the divine promises, our own unworthiness, the punishments we deserve, the reward which contentment itself brings with it, the speedy termination of all our troubles here, and the prospect of eternal felicity in a future state.*" **End quote.** Contentment is surely a **humble**, and therefore not a proud view of our **circumstances** in light of God's mercy to us in Christ, and carries a **real** sense of **gratitude** for all that God gives us every day by recognizing His **constant care** and gracious provision for us. It is also a **divine command** in that **Christ** calls us not to worry, fret or be anxious about our lot, and we are also exhorted not to **grumble**, **complain** or **repine** about our **circumstances**.

**Matthew 6:31-34** - 31 "**Do not be anxious** then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32 "**For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek**; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "**Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.** NASB

**Philippians 2:14-16** - 14 **Do all things without grumbling or disputing**; 15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you appear as lights in the world.** NASB

Paul spoke of his **contentment** regardless of his **outward circumstances**. He also explained that we should be content with **food and clothing alone**.

**Philippians 4:11** - 11 Not that I speak from want; for **I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.** NASB

**1 Timothy 6:6-8** - 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 And **if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.** NASB

Now in order to **expand** on this **contentment** and its importance in the Christian life, I would like to consider 4 points;

1. Show briefly that God is in His **Providence is governing** and ordering all the circumstances of our lives

2. Remind us of His great and **precious promises to care for us** and meet all of our needs, and also that His Providence is loving and always has our highest good in mind, not necessarily our earthly comfort
3. Show briefly that **discontentment is a embittering sin** which greatly hinders our enjoyment of God and our ability to glorify Him
4. **Exhort us to contentment** through Philippians 4:11-13

I will be offering comments from **Thomas Watson's** book "**the Art of Divine Contentment.**"

# **1. Show briefly that God is in His Providence is governing and ordering all the circumstances of our lives**

To get started, let's briefly define God's Providence. **PROVIDENCE** - The **continuous activity of God** in His creation by which He **preserves** and **governs** all things that happen at all times. The doctrine of providence affirms God's absolute lordship over His creation and confirms the dependence of all creation on the Creator. It is the denial of the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate. In His Providence **God is working** all things after the counsel of His **own will** (Eph 1:11) and working everything according to His own **eternal purpose** and **decree** (Psa 33:9-11, Lam 3:37-38, Isa 46:9-10, Dan 4:34-35). A simple definition from **Grudem's Systematic Theology**; "*God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) **Preservation**- keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) **Concurrence** - cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) **Government** - directs them to fulfill his purposes.*" **End quote.** **Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary** comments; "*Through His providence God controls the universe (Ps 103:19); the physical world (Matt 5:45); the affairs of nations (Ps 66:7); man's birth and destiny (Gal 1:15); man's successes and failures (Luke 1:52); and the protection of His people (Ps 4:8). God preserves all things through His providence (1 Sam 2:9; Acts 17:28). Without His continual care and activity the world would not exist. God also preserves His people through His providence (Gen 28:15; Luke 21:18; 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Peter 3:12). Divine government is the continued activity of God by which He directs all things to the ends He has chosen in His eternal plan. God is King of the universe who has given Christ all power and authority to reign (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:36; Eph 1:20-23). He governs insignificant things (Matt 10:29-31), apparent accidents (Prov 16:33), as well as man's good (Phil 2:13) and evil deeds (Acts 14:16).*" **End quote.** Scripture gives many examples as this one in Acts 17.

**Acts 17:24-28** - 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, **as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,** 27 that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 **for in Him we live and move and exist,** as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.' NASB

Not only this, but God's **meticulous Providence** is so detailed that **He** is ordering **all** the events of our lives. Consider how the Scripture describes this. It says that even when the sparrows die, it is **appointed** by God's Providence, and that **we** are **more important** than them, and therefore we should not fear because God is caring for our lives according to His Providence. Even the hairs of our head are numbered.

**Matthew 10:29-31** - 29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And **yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.** 31 "Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. NASB

Or consider the **life of Joseph**, how he was brutally sold into **slavery** by his wicked brothers, and how **God watched over him** through many varied trials and difficult circumstances, and ultimately raised him up to be the **ruler of the world**. Of this, the Scripture says, Joseph's **brothers** meant it for **evil**, but **God** worked it for **good**. Even though evil men made seemingly free choices for evil, God was behind the scenes and by His **good Providence** was **designing** it all for the good of many, and especially Joseph.

**Genesis 50:18-20** - 18 Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 **"And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result,** to preserve many people alive. NASB

We shouldn't doubt that **God** has a **purpose** for **everything** that happens because all things are governed by God according to His wise Providence. This includes **all** the circumstances of the life of **everyone** who has ever lived or ever will live.

**Ephesians 1:11** - 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.** NASB

**Lamentations 3:37-38** - 37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, **Unless the Lord has commanded it?** 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth? NASB

**Isaiah 45:7** - 7 The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.** NASB

For this reason, **God** is to be **greatly feared** and **reverenced** and **obeyed**! Simply put **GOD IS IN CONTROL!**

## **2. Remind us of His great and precious promises to care for us and meet all of our needs, and also that His Providence is loving and always has our highest good in mind, not necessarily our earthly comfort**

Not only is **God in control** but He has **promised** to care for and meet the needs of those who love Him and look to Him as their provider. Consider a few of His precious promises to us;

**Psalms 145:18-20** - 18 The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. 20 **The Lord keeps all who love Him;** But all the wicked, He will destroy. NASB

**Psalms 121:5-8** - 5 **The Lord is your keeper;** The Lord is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. 7 **The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.** 8 **The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.** NASB

Not only does He keep us and give us what is necessary for our lives, but He even **designs** the **bitter circumstances** of our lives to **mold us** and **shape us** and **teach us** to **trust** Him more and more.

**Psalms 25:10** - 10 **All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth To those who keep His covenant** and His testimonies. NASB

**James 1:2-4** - 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, **when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.** 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. NASB

If you are a Christian, there is **nothing** that is **happening** in your life that **God** has not **designed** for your **ultimate good**. This includes **every** single circumstance in your life. It does not mean He will only give you comfortable, easy things, in fact He has designed this fallen world, and all the sorrows, afflictions and hurtful pains, to stretch us and test us so that our faith might be refined and **cause our love** and **trust for Him** to grow all the more, that we might grow in holiness. This happens as we learn by **faith** to cling to Him and trust Him for help or deliverance.

**Hebrews 12:10-11** - 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, **but He[God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.** 11 All discipline for the moment seems not



to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, **afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.** NASB

Even though he may **discipline** us at times, He does this out of His **great love** and for our highest good. His emphatic promise to us is, He is working everything in our life, **FOR OUR GOOD!**

**Romans 8:28** - 28 And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God,** to those who are called according to His purpose. NASB

Now how many things is **“all things.”** Is God working **“some things”** for your good? No God is working **“all things”** for your good, that is, if you **“love Him”** and are **“the called according to His purpose.”** Yes indeed, He is working the **good** things, the **bad** things, the **sweet** things and the **bitter** things, the **joys**, the **comforts**, the **sorrows** and even the **dark valley** of the **shadow of death**, He is working for **your good**. Let me mention in the midst of this, He **showers blessings** upon us **day in** and **day out**. Our lives are **filled** with His **goodness** and His blessings. He prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies. (Ps 23:5)

Now because of these great truths we must be **careful** not to **complain against God** for the paths and courses **He marks out** for our lives. We must be **careful** to **acknowledge** that He is wisely governing our lives and giving us what is **needful** for our **life**, even when circumstances seem **contrary**. Consider the **saints of old**, even though they faced great **trials**, and the hand of Providence seemed to be against them at times, yet they **trusted God** and **humbly submitted** to His will. Thomas Watson comments ... *“God is to be trusted when his providences seem to run contrary to his promises. God promised to give David the crown, to make him king; but providence ran contrary to his promise. David was pursued by Saul, and was in danger of his life, but all this while it was David's duty to trust God. Observe, that the Lord by cross providences often brings to pass his promise. God promised Paul the lives of all that were with him in the ship; but the providence of God seemed to run quite contrary to his promise, for the winds blew, the ship split and broke in pieces. Thus God fulfilled his promise; upon the broken pieces of the ship they all came safe to shore. Trust God when providences seem to run quite contrary to promises.”* **End quote.** Let us therefore **appreciate** God's providence to the point that we **worship** and **magnify** God's great name because of it, and seek to always acknowledge His **“invisible hand”** of guidance.

### **3. Show briefly that discontentment is a embittering sin which greatly hinders our enjoyment of God and our ability to glorify Him**

Now concerning the fact that **discontentment** is an **embittering sin** which greatly **hinders** our **enjoyment of God** and our ability to glorify Him, I would like to offer a couple quotes from Thomas Watson, then look at a few scriptures and make a few observations. Thomas Watson writes.... *“Discontent is a fretting humour, which dries the brains, wastes the spirits, corrodes and eats out the comfort of life; discontent makes a man so that he doth not enjoy what he doth possess. A drop or two of vinegar will sour a whole glass of wine. Let a man have the affluence and confluence of worldly comforts, a drop or two of discontent will embitter and poison all.”*.... *“If there is a blessed life before we come to heaven, it is the contented life. And why not be contented? Why are you angry, and why is your countenance fallen? Man, of all creatures, has the least cause to be discontented. Can you deserve anything from God? Does He owe you anything? What if the scene were to turn and God were to put your under a serious trial? Right now things are fairly good for you, you probably deserve much worse for all your complaining... why do you give way to this irrational and hurtful sin of discontent? May the good Lord humble*



*His people for nourishing such a viper in their breast as not only cuts out the bowels of their comfort, but spits venom in the face of God! Oh Christian, if you are overspread with this fretting leprosy of discontent, you carry the man of sin about you, for you set yourself above God and act as if you were wiser than He, and would sassily prescribe to Him what condition is best for you! Oh this devil of discontent which, whenever it possesses a person makes his heart a little hell!” End quote.*

Also concerning the fact that **discontentment** is an **embittering sin** and that it greatly **hinders** our **enjoyment of God** and our ability to glorify Him, consider these 6 points;

**1) Discontentment** is a condition of **depression** or of a downcast and sullen spirit, whereas the Christian is called to always rejoice and be thankful (Phil 4:4, 1 Thes 5:18, Eph 5:20).

**2) Discontentment** is **arrogance**. The discontented Christian sets themselves above God who has ordered their circumstances in such a way as He sees best for them. Shall we say of God He has treated us unfairly? If you got what you deserved you would be banished to eternal darkness forever! Shall we command the God of Providence and infinite wisdom how He ought to order His world? Do you suppose you have a wiser plan than God? Would not God and His world be better off if you were at the helm? Why then would we complain disrespectfully against God’s wise providence? Shall the clay say to the potter, why did you make me like this? Shall the dog bite the hand that feeds it? (Jonah 4:1-11)

**3) Discontentment** is **ingratitude**. It surely sees past any thankfulness for our present condition and would demand of God that He do us better? Shall our sinful heart be more discontented over one loss than thankful for one hundred mercies? Shall God rescue us from sin and death by the sacrifice of His only holy Son just for us to return and grumble that He has not been gracious enough to us? Remember the parable of the unmerciful servant and his bitter end!

Discontentment forgets its real condition of blessed mercy and cries with lust that it is not happy with the portion of mercy God has given. In effect, for the Christian it denies the mercy of God in the Gospel.

**4) Discontentment** is often accompanied with **anger, envy, jealousy, and covetousness**, which is idolatry. God will supply all our needs, shall He satisfy our lusts too? So often it is our lust for more (greed) that causes us to overlook the manifold blessings God has poured into our laps, and are always and ever thinking that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, only to find it is a bitter and sour field to graze in. This is frequently the source of quarrels and discord in our families and relations, because we are not happy, so no one around us will be happy, and we with malice and a bitter spirit will make sure of it! (James 4:1-3)

**5) Discontentment** is the motive of **grumbling and complaining** against the goodness of God. Complaining is the choir song of the wicked and is not fitting for a saint in glory! It is unbecoming for those who have received a thousand mercies more than they deserve to complain that Christ is not enough to satisfy. Are you content to have Christ? Then why do you grumble that God ought to give you something more, as if Christ were not the most valuable jewel in your crown of eternal life. It is for this sin of grumbling that many in Israel were destroyed. (1 Cor 10:5-13)

**Psalms 106:25-27 - 5 But grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the Lord. 26 Therefore He swore to them, That He would cast them down in the wilderness,** 27 And that He would cast their seed among the nations, And scatter them in the lands. NASB

**Philippians 2:14-15 - 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent,** children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, NASB

**6) Discontentment** is a *lack of trust and faith in God* and is often accompanied with an anxious and fretful heart. Has God promised that He will never leave us or forsake us and yet we will continually worry that we will not have enough or shall abandon our faith fretting that all will be lost? So we have lost some precious thing or some valuable supply, shall our faith and patience go to? Shall we abandon our faith when God has designed this trial to teach us the very lesson we need to learn? When will we, like Paul, LEARN to be content?

**Philippians 4:5-7** - 6 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, **shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus**. NASB

**Philippians 4:11** - Not that I speak from want; for I have **learned to be content in whatever circumstances** I am. NASB

**Philippians 4:19** - 19 And **my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory** in Christ Jesus. NASB

God has promised to meet all of your needs....do you believe Him? Now all of this is **not** to say that there is **never** a **time** to offer **complaint to God**. Surely there is, and often enough.

**Job 10:1-2** - 1 **"I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2 "I will say to God**, 'Do not condemn me; Let me know why Thou dost contend with me. NASB

**Psalms 142:1-2** - 142 I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord; I make supplication with my voice to the Lord. 2 **I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him**. NASB

The issue is that we are not offering complaint because of our **lust for more**, or offering our complaint with a **disrespectful** and **ungrateful attitude**, or that we complain in a **proud, embittered** or **arrogant** way before **God**. It is entirely unbecoming of a rebel sinner who has been saved by the free grace of God to arrogantly tell God He has not been gracious enough. Rather, when offering complaint to God it should be for **relief** from hurtful pains of body and soul, at the bitter losses that have come in the fallen world, or of losses that our loved ones are facing. And even then, we come **humbly** before the God of all grace, **seeking His comfort** and care, with a **broken** and **contrite spirit**, with such God is well pleased and for whom He is disposed to give comfort and rest from our wearying trials. We must realize that we are **not entitled** to anything but **death** (eternal separation from God), therefore the least amount of blessing is sheer **grace** on God's part. Beggars cannot be choosers.

If we raise complaint to God about the circumstances of our life, let us be sure to do it **seeking consolation** and **comfort**, and never speaking a cross word or in **anger** against God's Holy counsel, lest we find ourselves deeper into the pit of suffering. Consider the words of Thomas Watson.... *"Let us be content that God should rule the world; learn to acquiesce in his will, and submit to his providence. Does any affliction befall you? Remember God sees it is that which is fit for you, or it would not come."* **End quote**. We must come to that place of **humble submission** to God where we realize **He knows far better** what we need than we do ourselves. The circumstances which God has ordered for our life are indeed that which works for our highest good and God's greatest glory!

**Lamentations 3:39-40** - 39 **Why should any living mortal, or any man, Offer complaint in view of his sins?** 40 Let us examine and probe our ways, And let us return to the Lord. NASB

**Isaiah 57:15** - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And **also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite**. NASB

Let us therefore **learn** to be **content** and to **humbly trust God's goodness** in giving to us what he decides is best and looking to Him for blessing, deliverance and consolation.

## Being Thankful for Providence

Dear friends, consider in the goodness of God to us, how we ought to be thankful! God has promised that every single thing in our lives will ultimately work for our good. Consider that if God would not spare His own Son, but gave Him for us, won't He then also give us everything we need?

**Romans 8:31-32** - 31 What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, **how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?** NASB

If God will give His people a Kingdom when they die, will He not also give them daily bread while they live? If Jesus would suffer and die to bring me to Himself, will He not also hear my prayer when I cry to Him for help? Indeed He will, more than that, he will crown me with eternal life and grant me to see His glory forever more in His glorious Heaven, what more could I have from the good hand of Providence! Learn then, that it is fitting for the upright to praise God! Thanksgiving to God is pure praise! It is direct honor to God who gives us life and breathe!

**Psalms 50:23** - **He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;** And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God." NASB

For those who know the goodness of God, we have no other response but the high praises of our King! Thanksgiving is the blood that runs through the veins of a saint! Praise is the garment that fits handsomely on our backs!

**Psalms 145:9-10** - 9 The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works. 10 **All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O LORD, And Thy godly ones shall bless Thee.** NASB

Consider that the mouth of the wicked is filled with grumblings and murmuring and complaining! But this is not fitting for a saint! The wicked cannot praise God, neither are they thankful. The poison of asps is on their lips, and with the tongue they profane the name of God!

**Psalms 33:1-5** - **Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.** 2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings. 3 Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy. 4 For the word of the LORD is upright; And all His work is done in faithfulness. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.

Let us therefore give God the thanksgiving and praise which is due to Him! That no matter what cup He gives us to drink, no matter what bitterness of soul should afflict us, no matter what great trial may befall us or try us, that we shall stand in the company of the saints, with the glorious praise of God in our mouth, knowing that He shall give us nothing but that which works for our good as a wise and loving Father! It is God's will that we should give Him thanks in every circumstance!

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** - 18 **in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus. NASB

**Ephesians 5:20** - 20 **always giving thanks for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; NASB

## 4. Exhort us to contentment through Philippians 4:11-13

In the book of Philippians the Apostle Paul is writing to thank them for their support and exhort and encourage the believers to remain **steadfast** in the **faith**. Paul is writing from jail, and even though in a **bitter circumstance**, he writes with much **joy** and **thanksgiving** exhorting them to live in this way also. That no matter what they face, whether difficulty, trial (2:17-18) or severe lack, or even persecution (1:27-30), they can **rejoice** in the goodness of God and **learn** to be **content** by faith and trust in Him. Chapter 4 culminates with several such exhortations to **contentment** and **thanksgiving** from the Apostle who is himself in midst of a bitter trial.

**Philippians 4:5-7** - 6 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by **prayer and supplication with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, **shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus**. NASB

**Philippians 4:11** - 11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. NASB

A. 11 Not that I speak from want – Here Paul is simply commenting on verse 10 where he is commending the Philippians for providing for his welfare. Here he is saying that he is currently in a situation where he has **no unmet needs**, but rather that he is **amply supplied**.

B. for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am – **Contentment** is a **lesson** that we must **learn**, **“I have learned to be content.”** It does not come naturally or by easy means. It only comes after we have found ourselves in **plenty and in need**, in happiness and in sorrow, on the mountaintop and in the valley, and in all of these places have **learned** that **God** is our **source**, He is our shield, **He** is our comfort and our hope. Through these ups and downs we **learn** to be **content** that **God** is on the throne and in control, and **ordering** the events of our lives according to His **wise Providence** and for our highest good and His greatest glory!

**Psalms 37:23-24** - 23 The **steps of a man are established by the Lord**; And He delights in his way. 24 When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; **Because the Lord is the One who holds his hand**. NASB

**Psalms 121:1-5** - 1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my help come? 2 **My help comes from the Lord**, Who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 **The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade on your right hand**. NASB

**Philippians 4:12** - 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. NASB

A. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; - Here Paul explains he knows how **no to be distressed** or anxious **when he is in need**, nor to complain against God when resources are meager but rather be content. Moreover, he knows how to **“live in prosperity,”** that is, to be **content** with what he has and not driven by a continual lust for more, but rather **humble** and **thankful** to God for the many blessings. Notice that there is **temptation** in **either circumstance**, whether having barely enough or plenty, we are tempted to either **complain** against **Providence** or take it for granted and be **greedy for more**.

B. in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need – Here see that his knowing how to get along deals with **“any and every circumstance,”** which means beyond just having food and shelter. See here that contentment is **necessary** in **all the situations of life** we find ourselves in. This means being content with our spouses, our careers, our children’s temperaments, our health or sickness, our homes, our in-laws, our neighbors and any other things in our lives. Learn here that Paul calls it **“the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”** Consider, could one actually be content in **“going hungry”** or **“suffering need”**? Or what about **“being filled”** and **“having abundance,”** can we be content in that and not lusting for more, grateful for what we have? Surely we can, and Paul tells us **“the secret”** in the next verse.

**Philippians 4:13** - 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. NASB

A. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me – Now this grand statement of the apostle begs the question, **“How many things is all things?”** And, in this context of being

contented, surely Paul means to say that no matter what **circumstances** we face, we can be **contented before God**, and happy in Him. Consider Job, even though Providence had dealt him a very bitter hand, yet he did not **lose his faith** and **trust in God**. In the midst of his terrible suffering he says,

**Job 1:20-22** - 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and **he fell to the ground and worshiped**. 21 And he said, "**Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.**" 22 Through all this Job did not sin **nor did he blame God**. NASB

In all of this, "**Job did not sin nor did he blame God.**" Consider, if Job can face what he faced and **still worship God** and **not blame God** in a disrespectful way, but rather trusted in and praised God no matter what he faced, how much more can we, who have the knowledge of Christ and the indwelling Spirit to comfort? In fact, we "**can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**" Barnes comments... *"I can do all things. From the experience which Paul had in these various circumstances of life, he comes here to the general conclusion that he could "do all things." He could bear any trial, perform any duty, subdue any evil propensity of his nature, and meet all the temptations incident to any condition of prosperity or adversity. His own experience in the various changes of life had warranted him in arriving at this conclusion; and he now expresses the firm confidence that nothing would be required of him which he would not be able to perform. In Paul, this declaration was not a vain self-reliance, nor was it the mere result of his former experience. He knew well where the strength was to be obtained by which to do all things, and on that arm that was able to uphold him he confidently relied."*

Dear Christian, shall you poison your blessed days with the sour water of discontent? Why not look beyond the "**light and momentary affliction**" (2 Cor 4:17) to Christ, your strong Savior, and there find all of the **comfort** and **grace** needed to endure. In fact, your trial is designed by God's good Providence to drive you to the feet of Jesus, and in **humble trust** for you to cast your cares upon Him.

**1 Peter 5:6-7** - 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 **casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you**. NASB

Let us therefore learn Paul's secret here....it is **Christ who strengthens us** in this life. If you want to be happy, if you want to be settled and peaceful no matter what you face, if you desire to be content in "**any and every circumstance**," you "**can do all things through Him who gives you strength!**" Surely the Lord cares for you and will uphold you in the day of trouble!

## **Remedies and exhortations to contentment**

1) Learn to delight in God and be thankful (1 Thes 5:16-18). Count your blessings ever and always!

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** - 18 **in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you** in Christ Jesus. NASB

2) Be careful not to get too attached to things in this world (1 John 2:15-17), for you do not know when they will be taken from you. You must be willing to part with anything, should the Lord require it of you.

**1 John 2:15-17** - 15 **Do not love the world, nor the things in the world**. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. NASB



3) Be sure that you are valuing Christ above all other things in your life. If you are not, your value system is broken and in desperate need of repair, because He is most valuable.

**Matthew 22:36-40** - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment."** 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB

4) Always remember that God knows what is best for you and will never give you more than you can bear (1 Cor 10:13), but will always be a refuge for those who call upon Him for deliverance (Psalm 145:18-19). God has designed your suffering to work for your good, and will at the proper time give you relief. His will shall never lead you where His grace will not keep you.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** - 13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape** also, that you may be able to endure it. NASB

**Psalm 145:18-19** - 18 **The Lord is near to all who call upon Him,** To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; **He will also hear their cry and will save them.** NASB

5) Let a Christian often think with himself, *"who hath placed me here, whether I am in a high sphere, or in a lower. Not chance or fortune, as the purblind heathens imagined; no, it is the wise God (Lam 3:37-38) that hath by his providence fixed me in this orb."* Thomas Watson

**Lament 3:37-38** - 37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? 38 **Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?** NASB

6) When facing a bitter trial, remember that God has promised never to leave you or forsake you (Heb 13:5-6), but will be your strength and hope no matter what you face. You must come to Him personally for strength.... **"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me!"**

**Hebrews 13:5-6** - 15 Let your character be free from the love of money, **being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"** 6 so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" NASB

7) Prayer gives vent to your sufferings. Pour out your complaint to God, with humility and contrition ask Him what response He might be seeking from you. Then leave your care at His feet, as often as possible, expecting either His deliverance or His grace to endure. He is worthy of your trust and you can believe his promises to care for you.

**Job 10:1-2** - 10 "I loathe my own life; **I will give full vent to my complaint;** I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2 "I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; **Let me know why Thou dost contend with me.**" NASB

**1 Peter 5:6-7** - 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 **casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.** NASB

8) Consider; *"Your sufferings are not so great as your sins: put these two in the balance, and see which weighs heaviest; where sin lies heavy, sufferings lie light. A carnal spirit makes more of his sufferings, and less of his sins."* Thomas Watson

## Faith

Another very important virtue in the **Christian life** is that of **Faith**. The word is used in various ways and has a few different meanings, but primarily **faith** is a **belief in** or **confident attitude toward God**, involving **commitment** to **His will** for **one's life**. It is not often used in the Old

Testament, however in the New Testament it is used to describe the life of faithful saints of the Old Testament. The following brief is adapted from **Nelson's Bible Dictionary**.

For example we find the **heroes** of the “**faith**” in Hebrews chapter 11 where many Old Testament saints are described as having lived life, in all of its difficulty and trials “**by faith**.” According to **Hebrews 11**, **faith** was already present in the experience of many people in the Old Testament as a **key element** of their spiritual lives. In this chapter, the various heroes of the Old Testament (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses) are described as **living by faith**. In addition, the Old Testament itself makes the same point. Abraham “believed in the Lord” (Gen 15:6); the Israelites “believed” (Ex 4:31; 14:31); and the prophet Habakkuk taught that “the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4). In this sense “**faith**” was a **fundamental principle** of life in which they both **believed** in the unseen reality of God and **trusted** in Him and His commandments as the ultimate guide and resource for life. In the New Testament, “faith” covers various levels of personal commitment. Mere intellectual agreement to a truth is not the **kind** of **faith** that saves (James 2:14-26), this is because **saving faith** involves more than just **mental assent**, but also a **whole-souled commitment of trust**. Saving faith involves **personally depending** on the **finished work** of **Christ's** life and death (active and passive obedience) as the **only basis** for forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God. But **saving faith** is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in **obedience** to His commands. It has such a **quality** that it guides the whole course of one's life through its trust in God and His Word, and the general course of one's life becomes obedience to God and trust in Him for His life giving grace and power to live, both now and forever. Faith is part of the Christian life from **beginning to end** and the fundamental principle by which we Christians live.

**Faith** then, is actually an important **virtue** of the Christian life that we are told to **possess, exercise, pursue and cultivate**. Let us briefly consider the **nature** of **saving faith** and then discuss its **relation** to the process of **Sanctification**.

Let us understand the **origin** of **saving faith** is **God** Himself as **faith** is a **gift** given by Him in **regeneration**. This is why regeneration precedes faith in the **order** of **salvation**, because faith is that gift imparted by God to us at regeneration.

**Ephesians 2:5-9** - 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**, 6 and **raised us up with Him**, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;** 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. NASB

Paul's point couldn't be clearer, the **grace** and **faith** you received from God when you were dead in sin came in His regenerating work, by His grace He granted you the faith needed to **know, understand** and **trust** in Christ to be saved. **Faith** is “**is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.**” It is not manufactured by humans but given by God as a gift. In fact, the natural man, who is dead in sin and without the Spirit cannot even **know** or **understand** the “**things of God.**” This is why Jesus taught us that we must be **born again** to see and enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-7).

**1 Corinthians 2:12-14** - 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God**, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But **a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them**, because they are spiritually appraised. NASB

Now **saving faith** is made up of **three essential elements** which are **knowledge, agreement, and trust**. Faith is not only knowledge about the truth of the person and the work of Jesus, but such knowledge is certainly required to be saved. In other words, one must have an understanding of the fact that they are alienated from God, and that God has provided Christ as a means to be reconciled through His sacrifice of atonement for the forgiveness of sins. This basic knowledge is **required** and it is these facts that one assents to in faith. But mere knowledge of these facts is not sufficient to save as one **must certainly agree** with the facts and have some level of **approval** with them. They must sincerely believe them to be true and **give hearty approval** that they are good and necessary. But even such a sincere intellectual consent is not enough to meet biblical faith. For example, even the **demons** know and understand that God is real and know the facts about the person and work of Jesus, yet they have not given their allegiance to God.

**James 2:19** - 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; **the demons also believe, and shudder**. NASB What is still lacking with **knowledge** and **agreement** is the element of **trust**. The element of **trust** is that essential and third part of faith that makes it real and genuine, vowing the **allegiance of one's will** unto God. This is clearly seen in places where people are given the Gospel, and may know and agree with the facts, but are unwilling to give the allegiance of their will in trust. The rich young ruler is an example of this.

**Luke 18:22-23** - 22 And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, "**One thing you still lack**; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 23 **But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich**. NASB

He knew the **facts** about **Jesus** and **agreed** that they were **good**, but was unwilling to part with that which the Lord required of him. He did not give the **allegiance of his will to Christ** above his **allegiance** to his **possessions**. When **saving faith** is present, this element of **trust** is normally easy to perceive. Saving faith not only believes that Christ exists and has the power to reconcile us to God, but gives hearty approval and with humility surrenders authority in one's life to Jesus as both Savior and **Lord**. Further, Jesus requires that we come unto Him in **personal relationship** with Him, **trusting** in His **saving work** for salvation and forgiveness.

**John 6:37** - 37 "All that the Father gives Me shall **come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. NASB

**John 5:39-40** - 39 "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; 40 and **you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life**. NASB

These passages give the **intensely personal picture** of what is involved in **saving faith** and coming to **Jesus** for the **life** He offers in salvation. We must trust Him personally to be our righteousness before God with a **whole hearted commitment** of our **life** to Him as both **Savior** and **Lord**. In fact, Jesus Himself called us to a level of commitment which demands utter abandonment of all our earthly treasures to follow Him, trust in Him, **love Him supremely** and do His will.

**Matthew 10:37-39** - 37 "He who **loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me**; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is **not worthy of Me**. 38 "And **he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me**. 39 "He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost **his life for My sake shall find it**. NASB

**Luke 14:25-27** - 25 Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and **does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple**. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. NASB

So we see that **saving faith** has this element of **trust** or **settled conviction** to not only know and understand who Christ is, but to do His will, and this no matter what may come in life as we follow Him. Indeed we **trust** in Him **by faith**, and trust Him to guide, direct and provide for our

lives, even though we cannot see Him or touch Him. The Christian lives by **faith** in the unseen reality of God's Kingdom and not by **sight** of the earthly world around us!

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 5:7** - 16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 **while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal....** **5:7** - 7 for **we walk by faith, not by sight.** NASB

And this because we have that **God given gift of faith** which gives us **assurance, hope** and fortitude to **persevere** in life.

**Hebrews 11:1-3** - 11 Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.** 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 **By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God,** so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. NASB

It takes faith to believe that **God** exists, and that He made the world and governs it also.

**Hebrews 11:6** - 6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him,** for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. NASB

Moreover then, for those who have it, this faith in **God's** guiding power and **providence** gives us much **comfort** and **consolation** even in life most difficult trials. The prophet Habakkuk could trust God to be his **joy** and **strength** even in the midst of the **impending doom** of God's judgment upon his own people Judah as God was sending the ruthless Babylonians to come and devastate and conquer them.

**Habakkuk 3:16-19** - 16 I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because **I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us.** 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 **Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord God is my strength,** And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places. NASB

Habakkuk's faith in God **connected him to God** in such a way that he could rely upon God for **joy** and **strength** even though the circumstances of the world around him were very bad.

Habakkuk had the victory of faith even when it seemed contrary to circumstances. **Christian Faith** is that **virtue** which **upholds us** and gives us **victory** over life's trials because it connects us to God and His loving care for us, and it gives us the settled conviction that God loves us.

**1 John 5:4-5** - 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.** 5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who **believes** that Jesus is the Son of God? NASB

**Faith** is this **fundamental principle** of Christian life which is that **clinging to God** and drawing from Him **all** that is necessary for **life** and godliness. We have died to our old, natural and earthly way of life to follow Christ and live our life for Him. This is what it means to **live by faith.**

**Galatians 2:20** - 20 **"I have been crucified with Christ;** and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,** who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

Therefore we seek to **cultivate** our **faith** and cause it to **grow** and **flourish.** This cultivating of faith causes the Sanctification process to **hasten** and **flourish** causing us to bear the image of God in greater degree.

**Philippians 1:25-26** - 25 And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all **for your progress and joy in the faith,** 26 so that your **proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus** through my coming to you again. NASB

**2 Thessalonians 1:3-4** - 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because **your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;** 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. NASB

When **faith** is **pursued** and **cultivated** by the means of grace that God has provided, it flourishes and strengthens our relationship with God and causes our life to be **fruitful** and **effective** in our love for God and also for our neighbor. This maximizes our joy and enjoyment of God, and it maximizes the glory that we render to God through the various means He has provided. These **means of grace** for pursuing and **cultivating faith** include the **ordinances** of **baptism** and the **Lord's supper, prayer, reading/meditation on the Word, praise and worship, giving, service to others, fellowship, and evangelism**. As we partake in these activities it strengthens our faith and causes it to flourish. This also

The more **faith grows** and is strengthened, the more **obedience** to God it creates to the many and varied imperatives of Christian life. In the New Testament the Christian life is seen as "the faith," that body of teaching handed to us by Jesus and the Apostles. As such, the word faith is used to identify the **whole body of Christian teaching** and life.

**Ephesians 4:4-7** - 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. NASB

**Jude 3** - 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**. NASB

**2 Corinthians 13:5** - 5 **Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith**; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test? NASB

Therefore **living by faith** will include, at some **level** or **degree**, **obedience** to these **imperatives**. Because these are all through the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, keeping the faith, being established in the faith, and persevering in the faith are all elements of living by faith. For example, Paul says, the life he lives he **lives by faith** (Gal 2:20). And this faith in the teaching of Paul is a faith that denies "**ungodliness and worldly desires**" and also is "**zealous for good deeds**," and produces a life of **good "works"** as a result. This life of faith has both elements of living in the restraint of godliness from certain types of sin, and also the active pursuit of certain acts of godliness or good deeds.

**Titus 2:11-14** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, **bringing salvation to all men**, 12 **instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly** in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds**. NASB

**Titus 3:8-9** - 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that **those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds**. These things are good and profitable for men. NASB

In fact, the New Testament makes it clear that the **kind of faith** that **saves**, is accompanied by works that **prove it genuine**.

**James 2:14-17** - 14 **What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?** 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself**. NASB

Moreover this faith is seen as a persevering faith that **continues throughout life** until the end. It does not shrink back or recoil in difficult times, but is faithful, holding fast to Christ come what may.

**Hebrews 3:13-15** - 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For **we have become partakers of Christ, if we**



**hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;** 15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." NASB

So we have seen that this **virtue of faith** is very important in the Christian life. In fact, it is the gift of faith from God that has allowed us to lay hold of Christ and comprehend who He is, as well as understand the **spiritual world of God's reality** and embrace all that the Bible teaches. We are taught **spiritual words** by the Holy Spirit which cause the Bible to come alive in all its spiritual reality. This has happened by the gift of faith that God had given in regeneration. This faith then, has become that **fundamental life principle** by which we live in constant communion with God and Christ, by the Spirit. So **fundamental** to our **new life** in Christ is it that we call the Christian life, "**the faith.**" Therefore we must always and ever be seeking to **cultivate** this faith and cause it to **flourish** and **grow strong** that we might **maximize** the **glory** that we **render** to God as stewards of all that He has given us, and **maximize** our own **joy** and **enjoyment of God.**

**2 Peter 1:5-11** - 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply** moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For **if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;** 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **will be abundantly supplied to you.** NASB

Cultivating the faith by the means of grace that God has given cause it to **flourish** and **grow strong** in **virtue** and also **good works.** This **living by faith** causes our degree of obedience to the **imperatives** to increase so that our life is largely lived serving God and others. This is the **pattern** of Christian life given us by **Jesus**, and also the faithful saints who have followed Him. We are to become **imitators** of them by much **diligence** to **cultivate faith** and carry out the **work of service** and **love**, both to **God** and **others.**

**Hebrews 6:9-12** - 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. **10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.** 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to **realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** NASB

The New Testament is full of encouragements to strengthen faith, and we would do well to notice them and focus on carrying them out. Remember the life of faith has both elements of living in the **restraint** of **godliness** from **certain types of sin**, and also the active **pursuit** of **virtue** accompanied by certain acts of **godliness** or good deeds. Consider the passage in Ephesians chapter 6 concerning the armor of God.

**Ephesians 6:10-12** - 10 **Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.** 11 **Put on** the full armor of God, **that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.** 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. NASB

Or consider the passage in Romans chapter 12 where the whole chapter is devoted to telling us how to **cultivate faith** and cause it to **flourish** and **grow.**

**Romans 12 :1-2** - 12 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** 2 And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,** that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB

Paul calls Christians first to recognize that our **bodies** are for **serving** the **Lord**, and this is how we worship. But this is done by first realizing that we must not be "**conformed to the world**" and its system, but rather "**transformed by the renewing of the mind,**" and to think and then

act on the new reality of **following Jesus**, being crucified with Him, and allowing Him to live **His life through us**.

**Romans 12 :3-8** - 3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as **God has allotted to each a measure of faith**. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 **And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly**; if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. NASB

Paul points out that every Christian has some **measure of faith** given to them by the grace of God. Therefore, we should use our treasures, **time** and talents to **“exercise”** our gifts from God as a stewardship of them to **serve Him** and **His people**, the members of the **body of Christ**. He then moves us through many **imperative instructions** about how to **cultivate faith** and make it **strong**. In these he calls us to many **virtues**, and then also to **deeds** of love and service to God, and to other Christians.

**Romans 12 :3-12** - 9 **Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good**. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor**; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, **serving the Lord**; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 **contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality**. NASB

But these **virtues** and **deeds** are also to be lived out to our neighbors and to the world around us as well. God is greatly concerned with how we treat other people, even when we are the object of their scorn and derision.

**Romans 12 :3-12** - 14 **Bless those who persecute you**; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly**. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 **"But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink**; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**. NASB

Let us see in these exhortations to **cultivate faith** an ongoing important element in the Christian life. We must continue to stay focused on pursuing Jesus by pursuing the life of faith. That is, that we **cultivate faith** and cause it to grow strong by the **pursuit of virtue** in our own **character** and good deeds in our actions. See then that the virtue of faith is an all-encompassing and important element in Christian life, that must be nourished. **Faith** is this **fundamental principle** of Christian life which is that **clinging to God** and drawing from Him **all** that is necessary for **life** and godliness which produces that life in virtue and in good deeds. We have died to our old, natural and earthly way of life to follow Christ and live our life for Him. This is what it means to **live by faith**.

**Galatians 2:20** - 20 **"I have been crucified with Christ**; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

Therefore we seek to **cultivate** our **faith** and cause it to **grow** and **flourish**. Let us employ the means of grace that God has given to see our faith flourish and grow. This cultivating of faith causes the **Sanctification** process to **hasten** and **flourish** causing us to **bear the image of God** in greater degree over time. As faith grows strong, the **glory** that we **render to God** is maximized and so is our joy and **enjoyment of God**.

This series on Sanctification ends here... but needs to be completed in the future.