

*The Person of the Holy Spirit
and
His Work in Bringing Us to Wholeness*



Notes for your edification

By

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Course Outline

Purpose of the course:

God has a plan and purpose for each and every one of us. This ultimate plan and purpose for our lives has its source in God, is accomplished through Him, and points to Him and is for His glory and honour. All three Persons of the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – are involved in this divine plan for man.

In this series of lessons, in Part 1, we will start by looking at the Person of the Holy Spirit in relation to the triune Godhead, and His part in the overall plan God has for mankind. By considering who He is we will gain understanding of how this relates to the work He performs in us, in bringing us to align with the Father's ultimate plan for Himself, His Son and mankind.

Part 2 deals more specifically with the Holy Spirit's transformation or re-building process in our souls (the renewing of our minds, healing of emotions and alignment of our wills to His) in bringing us to wholeness – the outworking of the Christ life within us.

So our desire and aim in this brief course is to gain a good understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and what His work is, so that we can then consider our response in co-operating with Him as He performs His work in us, bringing us to maturity in Christ and operating as His ambassadors on earth.

Key Verses:

John 16:13-15 ... *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."*

1 Cor 2:12 ... *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God."*

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

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Lesson 1 Introduction to the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

God – The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit form the Trinity of the Godhead. Before we can fully understand the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit we need to first look at how the Holy Spirit fits into what is called the Trinity of the Godhead.

So we will commence by attempting to gain some understanding of the nature and function of the Persons in the Godhead. Who they are; how they relate to one another; and their relevant functions in terms of the eternal plan of God.

Then, in light of this knowledge, we can proceed with understanding to consider in more detail the Person of the Holy Spirit. Who He is; His attributes, much of which is revealed by His names. After that we will look closely at His work; what His responsibilities are in relation to the eternal plan and purpose God has for Himself, His Son, mankind and all of creation. Then, finally, we will look at our responsibilities – the walk in the Spirit we are called to, and the manner in which we achieve this by cooperating with the Holy Spirit – in order that we may participate in, and be fulfilled in, God’s plan and purpose for our lives.

Triune God

Right from the first verse, and throughout the Old Testament, we find that there is a **plural** form used for the name of God, and **plural** personal pronouns that are used to refer to Him.

Gen 1:1 ... *“In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth”.*

The term use here (and in thousands of other places in the scriptures) for “God” is *Elohim* (‘ĕlōhîm). This word *Elohim* is the *plural* form of the word *Eloah* (‘ĕlōah) (*singular*) derived from the root word *El* (*singular*). *Elohim* (plural) represents the plurality of persons in the Trinity of the Godhead.

Some people try and explain away this plurality by saying it is a "plural of majesty," but Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8 make it quite clear this name in its plural form is referring to the plurality of persons.

Gen 1:26 ... *“Then God (Elohim) said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness;”*

Note the use of the plural personal pronouns “us” and “our”. Plural pronouns are also found in the following passages, where other names for God are used, as well as the name Elohim:

Genesis 3:22 ... *“Then the LORD God(Jehovah Elohim) said, “Behold, the man has become like one of **Us**, knowing good and evil...”*

Gen 11:7 ... *and the Lord (Jehovah) said ... “Come, let **Us** go down and there confuse their language...”*

Isa 6:8 ... *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai), saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for **Us**?”*

Then in Deuteronomy 6:4 (“*Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our **God**, the Lord is one!*”), the very verse that declared God’s unity to all Jews, contains the plural name (*Elohim*) for God. Here we have plurality in unity – which without doubt must be an intimation of the Trinity.

So we have one God but three Persons – and these three Persons are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. How can that be? Well, it is better understood if we look at three words:

Equality, Authority and Ministry

Equality:

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are co-equally “God”. As God they are co-equal and co-eternal. None is more “God” than the others. They are co-equally God; they always have been and always will be. They are co-eternally God; Deut 33:27 ... “*The eternal God (Elohim) is a dwelling place*”.

Let us look at a few scriptures that verify their equality as God.

1. *The Father is God:*

1 Cor 8:6 ... “*there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things*”...

Col 3:17 ... “*giving thanks to Him through God the Father.*”

2 Thess 1:2 ... “*Grace to you and peace from God the Father*”...

1 Pet 1:2 ... “*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*”...

2. *The Son is God:*

John 1:1, 14 ... “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

John 10:30 ... *Jesus said ... “I and the Father are one.”*

John 14:9 ... “*Jesus said to him, ...“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”*”

Phil 2:5-7 ... “*Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself...*”

Titus 2:13 ... “*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus.*”

Heb 1:8 ... “*But of the Son He says, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.*”

3. *The Holy Spirit is God:*

Gen 1:2 ... “*the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*”

- Luke 1:35 ... *"The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*
- Acts 5:3-4 ... *"But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*
- Eph 4:30 ... *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*
- Matt 28:19 ... *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."*

Note "the name" (singular) – there are Three Persons who are co-equally God – and God is One.

So in terms of "equality" there is no difference between the Three Persons of the Godhead – they are co-equally God. We can worship each one of them as God.

Authority:

There is a definite authority structure in our Triune God. Without this there would be chaos and disorder. This principle is illustrated in Rom 13:1-2 ... *"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."*

1. The Father – The ultimate and final authority is vested in the Father. He is above all.

John 6:38 ... *"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*

John 10:29 ... *"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all."*

1 Cor 11:3 ... *"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God (the Father) is the head of Christ."*

Rom 11:36 ... *"For from (of) Him (God the Father) and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."*

Heb 2:10 ... *"For it was fitting for Him (the Father), for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation (the Son) through sufferings."*

1 Cor 15:24-28 ... *"then comes the end, when He (the Son) hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He (the Son) has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He (the Father) has put all things in subjection under His (the Son) feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He*

(the Father) is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him (the Son). When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One (the Father) who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

In all these passages it is clear that the Son submits to the Father because the Father is the highest authority figure. The Father is above all in terms of authority. He is the ultimate authority.

2. The Son – In terms of authority He is above all except the Father.

The passage in 1 Cor 15:24-28 that we have just read testifies of this fact, that the Son is above all authority except that of the father. Other scriptures that confirm this are:

John 5:19-23 ... *“Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him.”*

The Father is showing us here that He has set up an authority structure or order and we are to honour it.

Matt 28:18 ... *“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*

John 3:35 ... *“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”*

Heb 1:3 ... *“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*

Col 1:16-17 ... *“For by Him (the Son) all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”*

Phil 2:9-11 ... *“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

3. The Holy Spirit – The third Person of the Trinity of the Godhead in terms of authority. He never magnifies Himself; He magnifies the Person and ministry of the Son.

John 15:26 ... *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”*

John 16:13-15 ... *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”*

So we see a clear authority structure and order in the Trinity – The Holy Spirit honours and exalts the Son; the Son honours and exalts the Father, in whom the final authority rests.

Ministry:

Each Person in the Godhead has a distinct and different ministry function:

1. The Ministry of the Father

First and foremost He is Father. He is the Father of a family who He has birthed (the “born again”) who share His life. He is loving, faithful, compassionate, gracious, caring, provider and protector.

2 Cor 1:3-4 ... *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*

He is the ultimate source of Life and gives that life through His Son

John 5:26 ... *“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”*

John 6:57 ... *“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.”*

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

He is the one who is the architect of the divine plan and purpose for all things. His sovereign will rules supreme.

Isa 46:10 ... *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’.”*

Jer 29:1 ... *“For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”*

Isa 55:9 ... *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Much of the Father’s ministry is summed up in a few of passages in which we see that He is the Great Planner, with a purpose and a will that was established in eternity past, which He is overseeing to bring it to pass. He plans and provides the means that His will may be brought to fruition:

Eph 1:3-6 ... *“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, just as **He chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love **He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of **His will**, to the praise of the glory of **His grace**, which **He freely bestowed on us** in the Beloved.”*

Rom 8:28-30 ... *“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**. For those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom **He predestined, He also called**; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”*

Acts 1:7 ... *“He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”*

Matt 24:36 ... *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”*

Lam 5:19 ... *“You, O Lord, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation.”*

Ps 103:9 ... *“The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.”*

He is the great Authoriser – He gives authority

Matt 28:18 ... *“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*

The Father’s ministry as Sovereign ruler over all is to plan according to His eternal purpose, and to oversee His plans making provision for their fulfilment.

2. The Ministry of the Son

Right from before God created the world the Father had a plan for us, that we would live by the life of His Son and thereby live holy and blameless lives.

Eph 1:4 ... *“Just as He (The Father) chose us in Him (the Son) before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”*

So He made the provision through His Son. The ministry of the Son is to redeem us from sin, to reconcile us to the Father, give us eternal life, so that He can live in and be seen and heard through us. He gave His life so that we could have it and live by it.

He has a redemptive ministry:

Rev 13:8 ... He is ... *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

Eph 1:7 ... *"In Him (The Son) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."*

1 Pet 1:18-19 ... *"knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."*

The Son, Christ, came to give us life; His is the life that has been birthed in us; He lives in us and wants to be seen and heard through us:

1 Pet 1:23 ... *"for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."*

John 10:10 ... *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

1 John 5:11-12 ... *"And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."*

This is His ongoing function and ministry – to be the life in us and to minister through us. That's why we, like Paul, can say:

Gal 2:20 ... *"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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

Col 1:27 ... *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

He is alive in us and we live by His life and by His faith. His ministry was to come to earth to live as a man and show us how man with the divine nature is to live; then He died and rose again so that He could make a way for us to be partakers of His divine nature – to live by His life a holy, blameless, righteous life and to share that life with others.

Christ, the Son, associates us with Him in His ongoing ministry of carrying out the works the Father has assigned for Him to do. He comes to live in us and work through us.

John 9:4-5 ... *"We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."*

Matt 5:14 ... *"You are the light of the world."* (See also John 12:36 ... *"become sons of light."*)

Eph 5:8-9 ... *"for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)."*

(see also John 14:12, 18 ... *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father... I will come to you"*)

The Son functions as the Head of the body, the church:

Col 1:18 ... *“He is also head of the body, the church.”*

He functions as our Shepherd, Advocate and High Priest:

John 10:14 ... *“I am the **good shepherd**, and I know My own and My own know Me.”* (See Ps. 23)

1 Pet 2:25 ... *“For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the **Shepherd and Guardian** of your souls.”*

1 John 2:1 ... *“if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

Heb 4:14-16 ... *“Therefore, since we have a **great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

He reigns as supreme conquering King of kings:

1 Tim 6:14-15 ... *“keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. “*

Rev 17:14 ... *“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”*

Rev 12:11-12 ... *“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.”*

The ministry of the Son is vast and we have only touched on it, but now must move on to:

3. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament differs in one main factor – in the Old He was “**upon**” or “**with**” (but not “**in**”) certain individuals selected out by God for a specific reason (kings, prophets, leaders); in the New He is “**in**” all believers.

John 14:16-17 ... *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides **with you** and will be **in you**.”*

The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts sinners of sin, righteousness and judgement and draws us to Christ, to salvation:

John 16:7-11 ... *“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”*

1 Cor 12:3 ... *“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”*

1 Thess 1:5 ... *“our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”*

He is the Spirit of Truth and is the author (inspirer) of the written Word of God – the Spirit and Word are therefore in absolute agreement:

Acts 4:25 ... *“who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?’”*

1 Pet 1:20-21 ... *“that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*

The prime function of the Holy Spirit towards believers is to reveal Christ who is in them, to them – to renew our minds that we may have the mind of Christ and let Him be seen in all our words and actions:

John 14:26 ... *“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.”*

John 15:26 ... *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”*

John 16:13-14 ... *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”*

The Holy Spirit alone knows the will and mind of the Father and helps us to pray when we don’t have a clear understanding of how or what to pray:

1 Cor 2:11 ... *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”*

Rom 8:26-27 ... *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

He brings to us revelation and knowledge concerning God:

Eph 1:17 ... *I pray ... "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."*

He leads us and guides us in the will and way of the Father to bring us to maturity in Christ:

Rom 8:14 ... *"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."*

He appoints and sends out ministers of the gospel;

Acts 13:2, 4 ... *"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them ... So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus."*

Finally, He will raise us on the resurrection day, when the Lord returns to take us to be with Him for all eternity, and will give us new incorruptible imperishable bodies

Rom 8:11 ... *"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

The Holy Spirit points us to Christ; he convicts and points out the way of salvation through Christ; then to those who are born again, He reveals Christ in them to them to bring them to mature sons – to full stature in Christ; He appoints and anoints for specific ministry that the world may know Christ; then one day He will raise us up and give us new eternal bodies. His ministry in all respects points to and exalts Christ, the Son.

Conclusion:

We have looked at the matters of Equality, Authority and Ministry – as they apply to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

- **Equality:** The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equally God.
- **Authority:** The final authority is vested in the Father. The Son honours and points to the Father and the Holy Spirit honours and points to the Son.
- **Ministry:** The Father is the source of all things – He is **the planner** with an eternal purpose, and provider of the means by which His plans may come to fruition; The Son is **the provision** – He is the redeemer, the way, the truth and the life; The Holy Spirit is **the revealer and facilitator** – He reveals the way of salvation, He places the life of the Son in us (the birthing), He helps us renew our minds to align with the life of the Son in us.

It will be most useful if we keep this understanding in mind as we journey on in this study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit and our walk in the Spirit.

(This principle of equality, authority and ministry also applies to us – men, women and children in our lives and ministries)

Lesson 2 The Person of the Holy Spirit – Character, Attributes and Names

God is a Person

Some false teachers, beginning in apostolic times, have doubted or denied that the Holy Spirit is a Person, thinking of Him as a force or influence exerted by God, rather than a person. This error or misunderstanding may have resulted from the word “spirit”, which in the Hebrew (ruach) and Greek (pneuma) have the meaning “breath” or “wind” as well as “spirit”. So if one thinks of the Holy Spirit as merely the breath or a wind like force of God, then the Holy Spirit could be conceived of as impersonal and not a Being having a separate identity from the Father.

Now, from the Word we know that God is spirit (not material or physical).

John 4:24 ... *“God is spirit.”*

But from the Word we also know that God is a Person and not just some power or force. There are innumerable scriptures that point to this fact that God is a Person. God has a voice (Ps 29), He speaks:

Gen 1:3 ... *“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.”*

God has arms and hands:

Deut 7:19 ... *“the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out.”*

Ps 44:3 ... *“For by their own sword they did not possess the land, and their own arm did not save them, but Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence, for You favoured them.”*

Is 40:12 ... *“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span.”*

God has feet

Zech 14:4 ... *“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west...”*

God has knowledge, foreknowledge and the ability to plan

Ps 44:21 ... *“Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.”*

2 Tim 2:19 ... *“The Lord knows those who are His.”*

Acts 2:23 ... *“this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross ...”*

He is wise

Rom 11:33 ... *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”*

God has emotions

Ps 2:4-5 ... *“He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying...”*

Man is made in God’s likeness

Gen 1:26-27 ... *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ ... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

So, if these, and many other scriptures, clearly show that God is a person, and man, who is made in God's image, is a person, it should not be illogical to think of the Holy Spirit as a person.

The Holy Spirit is a Person

Let the scriptures verify this fact, for there are many that tell of the Person of the Holy Spirit, as well as His separate identity from the Father:

Personal Pronouns

Firstly, personal pronouns are used in relation to the Holy Spirit;

John 16:14 ... *“He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify Me (Jesus), for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”*

Personal Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

Personal characteristics are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, as one might define a person as an individual having intelligence, emotion, and will.

The Holy Spirit possesses intelligence and knowledge:

1 Cor 2:10-12 ... *“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.”*

Furthermore, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are gifts given by the Holy Spirit

1 Cor. 12:8 ... *“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit.”*

The Spirit possesses emotion and feeling: the Holy Spirit loves, and can be grieved (Eph. 4:30).

Rom 15:30 ... *“Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”*

Isa 63:10 ... *“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.”*

Eph 4:30 ... *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

The Holy Spirit possesses a will:

1 Cor 12:11 ... *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”*

Personal Actions of the Holy Spirit

Personal actions are attributed to the Holy Spirit.

He speaks and commands:

Acts 8:29 ... *“Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”*

Acts 13:2 ... *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”*

Acts 28:25 ... *“The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers...”*

He testifies:

John 15:26 ... *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”*

He teaches:

John 14:26 ... *“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.”*

He intercedes:

Rom 8:26-27 ... *“the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

He guides:

John 16:13 ... *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

Acts 16:6 ... *“They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.”*

He ordains:

Acts 20:28 ... *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*

He works miracles and raises the dead:

Acts 8:39 ... *“When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.”*

Rom 8:11 ... *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”*

Personal Vulnerability of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is shown to be a person, according to the feelings and vulnerability which He is said to have as a result of certain human actions.

As we saw earlier He can be grieved: (Eph. 4:30; Is. 63:10)

There is a limit to what He will put up with:

Gen 6:3 ... *“Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.”*

He may be lied to and tested:

Acts 5:3, 9 ... *“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? ... Then Peter said to her, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?”*

He may be resisted:

Acts 7:51 ... *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”*

He may be blasphemed and insulted:

Mk. 3:29 ... *“but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”*

Heb 10:29 ... *“How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”*

Personal Relationships of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit maintains personal relationships with the Father, with the Son and with believers:

In the baptismal “formula”, the Holy Spirit is associated on an equal plane in name and personal identity with the Father and the Son.

Matt 28:19 ... *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”*

His loving and devoted relationship with the Son is one of glorifying and exalting the Son.

John 16 14 ... *“He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify Me (the Son), for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”*

The apostles sought the will and good pleasure of the Holy Spirit in forming the policies of the local church.

Acts 15:28 ... *“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials.”*

The relationship of the Holy Spirit along with the others members of the Holy trinity is expressed through His fellowship with believers.

2 Cor 13:14 ... *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”*

Separate Identity of the Holy Spirit

We can be certain from the last discourse of Jesus, recorded in the book of John (John 14 – 17), that the Holy Spirit has a separate identity from the Father and the Son within the Trinity. In this discourse, several times Jesus makes reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom He calls "another Helper" (JKV "another Comforter"), and it is clear that the "Helper" Jesus refers to is the Holy Spirit, for Jesus calls Him "the Spirit of truth".

John 14:16, 17 ... *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth...”*

In verse 26, Jesus makes this identification of the Holy Spirit and His separate identity from the Father and the Son even more unquestionable.

John 14:26 ... *“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.”*

Once again, in John 15:26, Jesus asserts that He would send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, and in this statement he reiterates the fact that the three persons of the Trinity are separate identities; separate, individual Persons.

John 15:26 ... *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”*

These statements make it impossible for us to ignore the separate identities described. Jesus goes on the further amplify this fact in His words in John 16:7.

John 16:7 ... *“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”*

When the Helper, the Holy Spirit, comes, it will be the result of the Son's praying and sending, the Father's sending in the Son's name, and the Holy Spirit's proceeding.

Heresy Denied

A heresy called Sabellianism, propagated by Sabellius a nontrinitarian theologian and priest from the 3rd century, taught that the Heavenly Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were only different names for the same person and were just different modes or aspects by which God manifested Himself. Now, if this were true, then the discourse Jesus gave in John 14 and 16 about the Helper, the Holy Spirit, would be meaningless, as would be His prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17.

So we can conclusively say the Holy Spirit is not just a force or mode of manifestation, but a Person, a separate identity from the Father and the Son.

The Deity the Holy Spirit

In our last lesson we clearly demonstrated from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son. We also considered God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, our tri-une God, as they relate to one another in terms of equality, authority and ministry.

Therefore, we understand that because Holy Spirit executes the will of the Father and glorifies the Son, not speaking of Himself, this does not denote inferiority; it merely indicates the inner working of the triune God in accordance with the authority and individual ministry functions established by God. Among men, particularly those who don't understand the principle of equality, authority and ministry as established by God for the orderly function of all things, subordination would denote inferiority, but not in the Tn-unity of God. That is a part of the incomprehensible mystery of Godliness. In the Trinity there are three personal identities in the one God, functioning in perfect harmony.

Now, when we contemplate how submission in the Trinity on the part of the Son and the Holy Spirit does not constitute inferiority in position, we can, then, better understand why submission by believers, one to another, does not belittle the believer, but makes him the more pleasing to his Lord. The Body of Christ takes all its unique and individual parts to be in their place functioning as they have been designed to do for the entire body and it's Head to be whole and complete and working in unity, bringing glory to the Father.

Divine Attributes of the Holy Spirit

While we have already considered the scriptural proofs of the deity of the Holy Spirit, in that He is co-equally God with the Father and the Son, let us now go on and look at some other scriptures that point to His divinity.

The following divine attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit:

1. **He is Eternal:** The Holy Spirit is not a created being; He always existed as a part of the triune God. He is as eternal as the Father and the Son (see also Deut 33:27).

Heb 9:14 ... *“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

2. **He is Omniscient:** He knows all things.

1 Cor 2:9-10 ... *“but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”*

3. **He is Omnipresent:** He is everywhere at once. There’s no place in heaven, in hell, or on earth where one could escape the presence of the Holy Spirit; He’s everywhere.

Ps 139:7-10 ... *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.”*

4. **He is Omnipotent:** He is all powerful.

Acts 10:38 ... *“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”*

Rom 15:18-19 ... *“For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit.”*

5. **He is Holy:** Holiness is seen in His name – “Holy Spirit”. He is the Spirit of holiness who operates in the Church to consecrate believers to God. He separates us from the world, and unto God.

Rom 1:4 ... *“who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.”*

6. **He has Foreknowledge:** He foretells the things that God has planned because He has foreknowledge. For example, the Holy Spirit, speaking one thousand years before Christ through David, foreknew and predicted the betrayal and fate of Judas Iscariot.

Ps 109:8 ... *“Let his days be few; Let another take his office.”*

The Holy Spirit who knew what was going to happen in the future, through Agabus, predicted the great famine.

Acts 11:28 ... *“Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.”*

He also told Paul of what lay ahead.

Acts 20:22-23 ... *“And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.”*

7. **He is Love:** Because God is love, we expect to find love manifested in the acts of all members of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit.

Rom 15:30 ... *“Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me...”*

Divine Works of the Holy Spirit

The following Divine Works are attributed to the Holy Spirit:

1. **He Creates:** In the last lesson saw He was an agent in the creation of all things (Gen 1:1-2). The creative life giving work of the Holy Spirit is also seen in other scriptures.

Job 33:4 ... *“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”*

Ps 104:40 ... *“You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground.”*

John 3:5-6 ... *“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*

2. **He Prophecies:** He speaks of things to come and things from the heart of God through men and women.

2 Sam 23:1-2 ... *“David the son of Jesse declares ... ‘The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.’”*

2 Pet 1:21 ... *“for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*

3. **He Intercedes:** The Holy Spirit in His omniscience knows the mind of God and the will of God for us, therefore He can direct us in prayer so that we pray *‘as we should.’*

Rom 8:26-27 ... *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

4. **He is Responsible for the Inspiration of Scripture:**

2 Tim 3:16 ... *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”*

In this verse *“inspired by God”* is literally *“God Breathed”* (Gk. *‘Theopneustos’*), and the breath of God is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. The inspiration of scripture is further bone out by 2 Pet 1:21.

5. **He is the Agent in Divine Guidance:** The Holy Spirit has infallible knowledge of what we are to speak and to do, and he is able to instruct our minds and to guide us so that we act and speak in alignment with God's will.

Mark 13:11 ... *"When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit."*

The Names of the Holy Spirit

Names portray character, so we can learn something of the character of the Holy Spirit by studying His names. The names of God are not mere designations or identifications; they reveal to us something about God's nature, attributes, or works. This holds true with the names of the Holy Spirit. There are approximately 350 verses in the Bible which make reference to the Holy Spirit, in which we find over fifty different names or titles for Him. We won't consider every name ascribed to the Holy Spirit, only a few of those titles that add to our understanding of His nature or activity.

1. The Holy Spirit:

Luke 11:13 ... *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him?"*

The Holy Spirit is a precious and 'good gift' the Father willingly gives to those who ask for Him. So what we see here is that the Holy Spirit is 'good' for us; the Father is very willing to give Him to us; but we must ask for Him." That aligns with other scriptures which encourage, if not command, us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Eph 5:18 ... *"be filled with the Spirit."*

2. The Spirit of God:

1 Cor 3:16 ... *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the **Spirit of God** dwells in you?"*

1 Cor 6:19-20 ... *"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? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

2 Cor 6:16 ... *"Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

It's important to point out that the "you" and "your" in the first two verses are in the plural, and the last verse contains "we", "them", "their" and "they" to confirm this plurality being emphasised. So, while the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us as individuals and as such we individually are His temple or dwelling place, these verses are pointing to the temple of the Spirit of God being the Church, the collective body of believers. These passages were written by Paul to the Corinthian church which was divided and in which there was unholy living and much strife between individual believers. It would be good to read the context of these verses – 1 Cor 3:1-17; 1 Cor 6:9-20; 2 Cor:6:14-18.

What is being emphasised here is life is not just about ourselves, but about us functioning as one unified, pure and holy body of believers. A corporate body, or temple, in which the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, has been given to point us to Christ, who our life and our all, so that we together can live the Christ life and thereby glorify the Father. We see here not only the Holy Spirit but the Trinity at work: the Spirit of God desiring to bring us to a united whole, expressing Christ, by whose blood we have been purchased, as we interact with one another in love and thereby glorifying the Father.

Another passage that aligns with this is found in Acts 20:28, where again, we see the Trinity at work.

Acts 20:28 ... *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*

From all four above passages we see that the church, the body, or the temple is God’s (the Father), we have been purchased with the precious blood of Jesus (the Son), and the Holy Spirit oversees us Himself and through His appointed overseers. Concerning this matter John Stott (“Acts, seeing the Spirit at work”) poses a question that begs an answer: “If the three persons of the Trinity are thus committed to the welfare of the people, should we not be also?” Or as Jack Hayford (“Rebuilding the real you”) has aptly said, “The Holy Spirit is our primary Helper, But He has willed to use us as instruments in each other’s lives.” See also Rom 14:7 and its context.

3. The Spirit:

John 3:5-6 ... *“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and **the Spirit** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of **the Spirit** is spirit.”*

The Spirit is the Agent in the “born-again” experience in the believer. He is the One who conveys and places the “seed”, the living and enduring Word, Christ, in us, and thereby implanting eternal life in us. It is the Holy Spirit who births the new life, the “Zoë”, God life, in us making us a brand new creation. He does not just take the old and fix it up, He brings about in us an exchange of natures; the old sin nature removed, and exchanged for the divine nature, the life that is in the Son.

1 John 5:11-12 ... *“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

The Spirit births this life in us, making us the “born again”, partakers of the divine nature. After birthing this life in us He is also the one who nurtures this life to bring us to maturity in Christ.

4. The Spirit of the Lord (Jehovah):

Isa 11:1-3 ... *“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The **Spirit of the LORD** will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear.”*

This is clearly a messianic prophecy. See also Isa 42:1 and Isa 61:1. Here the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Jehovah, and the prophetic particulars point to Christ’s earthly ministry.

But looking beyond that, what is of great significance is the important ministry of the Holy Spirit to Christ, when He walked the earth as Man, and to us in whom Christ lives and moves – The Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, the One who knows the thoughts, the mind and will of the Father is the One through whom that wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear (respect) of the Lord came to Jesus and is given to us.

The “*fear of the Lord*” is the reverential respect for God; that He is sovereign and His will is paramount. So in order to revere Him by bowing to His eternal will and purpose we need to know what His will is and how to apply it; and that is where the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and the strength is needed. The Holy Spirit imparts these things to us.

“*He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear*” is significant because on numerous occasions Jesus said that the words He spoke and works He did were not His own but those of the Father (John 8:26-29; 12:49-50; 14:10; 16:13). He learned what the Father’s will was by praying and spending time listening to the Holy Spirit who revealed to Him the Father’s words, will and works. His judgement and decisions came out of what He heard from above.

John 7:15-16 ... *“The Jews then were astonished, saying, ‘How has this man become learned, having never been educated?’ So Jesus answered them and said, ‘My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’”*

Jesus spent much time alone in prayer (Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21-22; 6:12; 22:41) seeking wisdom, knowledge, understanding and the will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit was there to convey to Jesus all He needed to know. He was taught and led by the Spirit to carry out the will of the Father (Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1).

Luke 4:1 ... *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit ... was led around by the Spirit ...”*

Now all of these verses concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, not only point out His role in revealing the will and words of the Father to Jesus during His earthly ministry, but they also highlight the need for us to learn from the Holy Spirit and be led by Him as He reveals Christ to us. That’s why it’s so important for us to pray for wisdom, understanding and knowledge, as Pauls showed us in his epistles. We should pray:

Eph 1:16-19 ... *“making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”*

Eph 3:14-19 ... *“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”*

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

Col 1:9-12 ... *“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”*

2 Thess 1:11-12 ... *“To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

It's as we pray these prayers that the **Spirit of the LORD** will be to us ... *“the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD”*, enabling us to walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh, and as 2 Cor 3:17 says ... *“where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is liberty”*.

5. **The Spirit of the living God:**

2 Cor 3:2-5 ... *“You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 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. Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.”*

The “you” here is the plural, referring to the Church. So the Church is an epistle, a testimony to Christ before all men, not of human works but written by the Spirit of the living God (the One who places or births divine life in us) upon the tablets of the heart. In other words, when the world look at us and “read” or see the character of Christ in action in our dealings with one another, they will understand that this is not just something natural but supernatural, the work of the Holy Spirit, who places the life of the Son in us and then helps us to live by that Christ life – a life of love and unity. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to function as the unified body of Christ bringing forth the character of Jesus from within our hearts in a manner such that others can “read” and see Him through our lives. This is not something we can do without His help. Without His help we will not function in love and unity. But with His help, according to Jesus' words in John 13:35 ... *“by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”*.

While the “you” in this passage is in the plural, referring to the church, the collective group of believers, this passage applies equally well to us as individuals. We individually, as well as collectively, are to be “read” by others as reflecting the character of Christ in our words and actions.

As we submit to the Holy Spirit, the **Spirit of the living God**, He will bring forth the Christ life in us and the world will know we are His.

Also, it would be really good to read the entire chapter, Chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians to more fully understand this one verse concerning the Spirit of the living God and how He has planned for the glory of our Lord to be seen through us, His people.

6. The Spirit of holiness:

Rom 1:4 (NKJV) ... *“and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the **Spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead.”*

To be “holy” means to be entire, complete, sound, without even the minutest blemish of sin, absolutely pure, absolutely and unquestionably true, and altogether righteous – and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, is the personification of these things. So when He declares something to be so, we can stand assured that it is just as He has spoken.

In this passage the declaration of the Spirit of holiness, confirmed by His powerful raising of Jesus from the dead, is that Jesus Christ, who came to earth as the promised seed of David, is the Son of God. If even you doubted the divinity of Jesus or that He is the Son of the living God, then rest assured that the Holy Spirit, who cannot lie, has declared Him to be God’s Son and that He is alive forevermore and through Him God’s grace for salvation has been extended to you!

Lesson 3 The Person of the Holy Spirit – Names

Names of the Holy Spirit continued...

7. The Spirit of judgement and Spirit of burning:

Isa 4:4 ... *“When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the **Spirit of judgment** and the **Spirit of burning**.”*

Isaiah calls the Holy Spirit the *“Spirit of judgement and the Spirit of burning”*. He purges sin and iniquity from Zion by burning and judgment, resulting in salvation. The context of this verse may be understood by reading Isa 1:16-31. The refiner’s fire purges out the dross and leaves only pure metal.

John the Baptist foretold us that Jesus would baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11). He also foretold in Matt 3:12 of how the Holy Spirit would ... *“clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

Now, while the prophecy in Isaiah 4:4 concerns Israel in the end times, it also relates to us as Rom 15:4 says ... *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* and 2 Tim 3:16 says ... *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”* The Holy Spirit’s efforts are directed towards helping us to live the Christ life, a pure and holy life, and He will judge and burn out any sin as we progress to maturity in Christ.

Look at what Paul says in 1 Cor 3:10-17 concerning the burning up of anything we do or stand for that is not holy and pure. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of judgement and burning.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to help us live the Christ life, walking in holiness and purity.

Eph 1:4 ... *“the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”*

1 Pet 1:16 ... *“but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

As partakers of His divine nature, which is holy, righteous and pure, God expects us to live a life of complete separation to Him. Let us therefore who are His blood bought children heed these scriptures and Paul’s words to the Corinthians and the instruction to the Hebrews:

2 Cor 7:1 ... *“let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”*

Heb 12:25-29 ... *“See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.” This expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot*

be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."

8. The Spirit of truth:

John 14:16-17 ... "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the **Spirit of truth.**"

John 15:26 ... "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the **Spirit of truth** who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."

John 16:13 ... "But when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, He will guide you into all the truth."

John 14:6 Jesus said ... *I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.*"

John calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth because He is the agent of divine revelation who will reveal the Truth (Christ and His teachings) to us and enable us to understand all truth.

As we meditate on the Word – the Truth – and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit in prayer He will open up the scriptures and reveal the truth to us. He will help us understand, and intimately know the Truth – Christ. Then, as John has written ... "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). As the Spirit of truth brings us to know the truth; and it is in this intimate knowledge of Him (Christ) who is the way the truth and the life that brings us to walk in freedom and peace.

Whether we are reading the Old or New Testament scriptures we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us see and know Christ, the truth, through what we are reading. In fact if we are reading the Word and don't see Christ in what we are reading, we are probably missing the full truth hidden therein. The Old Testament points to Christ and paints pictures of Him through its typology and prophecy. He then stepped down from on high and put on flesh, and so the Gospels tell of Jesus as He lived and taught as walked and revealed the truth to mankind. The epistles contain revelation of Christ who now lives in us, His redeemed, and it's the Holy Spirit who helps open our eyes to see and know the Christ who now abides within us. He does this as we meditate on the truth, the Word, as He opens the eyes of our understanding.

A priority in our daily life should be remaining in tune with the Spirit of truth, so He can bring us a deeper revelation of Christ, the truth, who is our life and our all.

He is the Spirit of judgement and burning, wanting to drive all sin out of His people, but He also is the Spirit of truth who will help us know the truth and follow truth so that we can walk assured of the fact that our walk and works will survive any fire.

1 Pet 1:6-7 ... "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

9. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation:

Deut 34:9 ... *“Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the **Spirit of wisdom**, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.”*

The folks in the Old Testament did not have the life of Christ in them. For God to convey His plans, will and desires to the people He did this by anointing certain key individuals, like Joshua, with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would enlighten them and give them wisdom from on high, and by following God’s instructions given through the Holy Spirit they would succeed in the thing God appointed them to do. We only have to read through the book of Joshua to see how the Spirit of wisdom gave Joshua the strategies and plans to defeat the enemy and take possession of the land. He could never have succeeded apart from having the divine plans for Israel’s victories imparted to him by the Spirit of wisdom.

From this we can learn (Rom 15:4) that if you need wisdom to defeat the enemy in any area of your life just ask the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to bring you understanding of God’s plan for victory in that area and he will lead you in His triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2:14).

The Spirit of wisdom and revelation also is the One who helps us function in our daily vocations with the mind of Christ.

Exodus 31:3-5 ... *“I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.”*

Ex 35:31-35 ... *“And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs.”*

Skills; all kinds of craftsmanship; artistic ability; ability to design; inventions – all imparted by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. The Master architect, the Master builder, the Creator, the All Knowing God longs to impart to his children the skills and abilities they need to carry out the vocations He has called them to do in His name.

How does he do that in us, His born again children?

1 Cor 1:24 ... *“to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*

The power and wisdom of God are resident in Christ.

1 Cor 1:30 ... *“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”*

Power and wisdom are resident in Christ, and He lives in us!

In fact, before going on, we should read the context of this verse – 1 Cor 1:24-31.

But how do we tap into this power and wisdom that is resident in us in Christ?

Our natural mind, unaided by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, cannot understand or perceive the wisdom of God. But Christ, who is the very life in us, has become to us wisdom from God – and the Spirit of wisdom and revelation opens our understanding and causes us to understand and walk in accordance with that wisdom that is ours in Christ. He reveals the mind of Christ to us. This is how we have and can function with the mind of Christ.

Read 1 Cor 2:1-16.

We have the mind of Christ. The question is: do we function according to the mind and wisdom of Christ and walk in the strength of His might. We can only do this if we are in tune with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation who will reveal the mind of Christ to us and help us express the mind of Christ in our words and actions.

That’s why Paul prays for us and instructs us in the necessity to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation – so that we may intimately know Christ – know Him; understand what is the hope of His calling; what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and what is the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe. He has called, equipped, instructed and empowered us to carry out His will by living and doing the things He has designed each one of us individual, different, unique persons to do and be – functioning in our vocation, in our world, in our neighbourhood, in His name by His wisdom and power. We find this prayer in Eph 1:15-19. We should pray this daily that so that we can live the Christ life as He has planned for us to live – abundant life!

When we read and understand Paul’s next prayer in Eph 3:14-21 it reinforces the importance of submitting to the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to help us know and walk in the wisdom and power of Christ. It also helps us understand that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5) and that he alone is our source, our strength, our wisdom, our all.

10. The Spirit of grace:

Heb 10:29 ... *“How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the **Spirit of grace?**”*

Zech 12:10 ... *“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the **Spirit of grace and of supplication**, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”*

Before we look at these scriptures let us first discuss grace. In most of the passages where the word “*charis*” (grace) appears in the New Testament it signifies the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, affected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Grace is the active communion of divine blessings by the in working of the Holy Spirit, out of the fullness of Him (Christ) who is “*full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

When God shows us mercy it means He does not inflict on us the punishment that is due to us. We don’t get what we do deserve. When God extends to us His grace it means He offers us something that we do not deserve. It’s something He freely and unconditionally offers out of His love, compassion and kindness towards us. The Spirit of grace, another name for the Holy Spirit, is the conveyor or dispenser of God’s grace to us. He is the one who gently woos us to God; He is the one who convicts us of our sin; He is the one who leads us to a knowledge of our need for salvation; He is the one who places the “seed” of the life of Christ in us and brings about in us the “new birth”; He is the one who teaches us Christ; He opens the eyes of our understanding to know Christ and to walk in Christ in wisdom and power; He is the one who comforts us and leads us in times of trouble and points us to Christ in whom we have the victory; He is the one who intercedes through us when we don’t know what to pray; He is the one who helps us grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Christ and helps bring us to full stature in Christ. He is the Spirit of grace – bringing us that which we do not deserve but that which our heavenly Father longs for us to have.

Now back to our scripture verses. It is the very reasonable understanding of some that Hebrews was written by Paul as an addendum or appendix to the Letter to the Galatians. He wrote to the Galatians because they were mixing law and grace. After being born again they were going back to living by the Law and claiming that they had to do certain things to complete their salvation. Judaizers were saying it was by the law that we are saved and they were bringing confusion to the folks in Galatia.

Paul challenges the churches of Galatia by saying:

Gal 1:6 ... *“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.”*

Gal 3:3 ... *“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

Gal 5:2-7, 13, 16-17 ... *“Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?” ...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” ...¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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.”*

So quite clearly Galatians is all about continuing our life in Christ brought to us by the Spirit of grace by cooperating on an ongoing basis with the Spirit of grace who will lead us to live the Christ life and put away the things of the flesh, the law and works. We started in the Spirit of grace and we should continue in the Spirit of grace.

In turn, Hebrews, the addendum or appendix to the letter to the Galatians, places great emphasis on the necessity and conditions of spiritual progress. In it we will find teaching, exhortations and warnings that are applicable to us today that should incite us to possess and enjoy to the fullest our life and walk in Christ. It's about "pressing on" and in it there are many key words to encourage us to do this – words like: "better", "partakers", "let us press on". Hebrews is all about appropriating what we possess and making use of all that is ours in Christ all that has been freely given us by the Spirit of grace. By grace we have been saved and by grace we are led to maturity and full stature in Christ – by the help of the Spirit of grace.

Gods' grace gives us that which we don't deserve and He is very sad when we look His "gift horse in the mouth". The Holy Spirit, the spirit of grace, is the one who conveys to us this amazing grace of God. How dare we insult Him?

Let's look at this in another way. When you buy a new gadget or kit that needs to be assembled before it can be used, you have to follow the instruction manual that is supplied with the kit or gadget. If you carefully follow the instructions on how to assemble and prepare the device to make it work you soon have a useful gadget, tools or whatever it is and are able to use it for its intended purpose. If you don't follow the instruction manual – well disaster looms! It won't work properly and you get frustrated.

Well our life in Christ is exactly the same. When we are born again we are the recipients of the life and nature of Christ. The "seed" of the Father is placed in our spirit and according to [1 Cor 6:17](#) ... *"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit."* Also [Gal 2:20](#) says ... *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* But how do we live by the life of Christ who is in us? How do we express Christ in all our thoughts and actions in daily life? How do we live the Christ life? Well the Father knew that along with the gift of life in Christ we would need an "instruction manual" on how to know Christ, how to hear and express the mind of Christ – and that instruction manual is a combination of the Word and the Spirit of grace. As we submit to and follow the revelation and instruction of the Holy Spirit we learn Christ and can express Christ in our lives. If we don't follow His gracious instructions and go the way of the flesh we will fail in life and end up displeasing our loving heavenly Father.

We are saved by grace and not of works. We cannot live on doing our own thing and disregarding the Spirit of grace. So let us heed the warning and not despite the Spirit of grace and fall into judgment.

11. The Spirit of glory:

[1 Pet 4:14](#) ... *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the **Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**"*

To more fully understand what Peter is saying here we first need to consider what happened when Jesus faced the cross as recorded in John chapter 12. It was the last week, the time of the cross was

approaching and preparations were being made for the feast of the Passover, when Jesus told His disciples that *...The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*" (Jn. 12:23).

In the lead up to this time Jesus has performed miracle after miracle, fed multitudes with a couple of fish and a few small bread rolls, calmed storms, turned water into wine, He has raised Lazarus from the dead, the news about Him has got out and the people are thronging around Him proclaiming Him as their King. Even a certain group of Gentiles, the Greeks, had come to the Passover feast and they had approached Jesus' disciples to see if they could get to see Him.

Now you must picture the scene in your mind and imagine what the people, particularly Jesus' disciples, must have been thinking. These were not Jews, they were Greeks. The Greeks were the intellectuals, the philosophers of the day. They had come to Jerusalem not only for the Jewish Passover feast, but they came to seek after Jesus and to speak to Him. These philosophers, intellectuals, leaders of man's earthly wisdom had heard about Jesus of Nazareth and His amazing wisdom and were seeking out His wisdom and counsel.

Now picture the disciple's thoughts: If ever the moment of glory had arrived this was it, they thought! For not only are there crowds of local Jewish people thronging after Jesus, hailing Him as King, but the Greek philosophers are here wanting to gain wisdom and knowledge from Jesus. He has performed miracle after miracle, raised a man from the dead, crowds are shouting Hosanna, his path is paved with palm leaves, the mighty Greek intellectuals are here, surely this is the moment of His crowning glory! And to top it all they hear Jesus say *"the hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified"*. "Yes!" they think. This is the moment for which they have been waiting! The crowning of their King, the hour of the Son of Man's glory! Yoo-hoo! After all they were His disciples, His chosen, and there would be something in it for them. The ministry looked like it was about to expand into the Greek empire and beyond. They, by association with Jesus, would be world famous! They were reveling in the moment! Or so they thought.

Jesus then throws them a curved ball with His words that followed. Words that they certainly did not comprehend and words that left them dumbfounded. He did not count the miraculous deeds He had done, the adulation of the crowds, or even the presence of the inquiring Greek philosophers and wise men as the glory about which He was thinking and speaking. Having the Greek intellectuals come for His counsel and wisdom didn't register as glory to Him. Often, when He had healed someone he told them to go away and tell no one. He had refused previous attempts by the Jews to make Him King and instead He had withdrawn into the mountains or lonely places, to be alone to converse with his Father. To hear from His Father, to be certain He was "on track" with the Father's plan that was established before the foundation of the world. That's what was occupying His mind. What was going on in the minds of His disciples, glory associated with fame, was not the type of glory He sought, but, in the midst of this all, He clearly states that *"now is the day of the Son of man's glory"*. While He must have been thinking that the presence of the Gentiles as well as Jews was indeed significant, as the day of His glory is a day that does indeed involve both Jews and Gentiles, His thoughts were certainly not in line with those of the disciples. For He immediately follows His statement of the coming of the hour of His glorification with the mind boggling words: *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abides alone"* (John 12:24). It's got to be buried in the ground and die, for only in its death will there be the resurrection and harvest that follows.

This is the law of harvest. The *solitary* seed will bring forth, it will reproduce itself *many* times over. From the *one* will come *many*, all in the exact likeness of the original one. That which you sow, the seed that dies, reproduces exactly after its likeness. You sow a single grain of wheat and many times more of exactly the same thing, wheat, springs up. So what Jesus was saying was that the hour was here for the Son of man to enter into glory, but that would only come about by His falling into death and reproducing Himself, bringing forth the many, exactly after His own kind.

Now back to the 1 Pet 4:14 ... *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."*

Peter, speaking to persecuted Christians and remembering the words of Jesus about His hour of glory, assured them that their sufferings for Christ were their glory and that the Spirit of glory was resting upon them. As they were participating in the sufferings of Christ, they would also participate in His glory.

1 Pet 3:14 ... *"But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed."*

Stephen participated in this glory as a martyr for Christ. Read Acts 7:51-60.

In situations like Stephen faced, the power to face the forces of darkness and walk through in total victory is brought to us by the Spirit of glory. In those situations He helps us "see" the glory of our Lord and we experience the *"surpassing greatness of His power toward us"* (Eph 1:19).

Acts 1:8 ... *"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

The word "witnesses" is not really giving us the real meaning of the word in the original (μάρτυς) "martus" which is the word from which we get our English word "martyr". So the more correct translation is that we are promised power to be Christ's "martyrs", or "witnesses to the point of martyrdom." This is the empowering of the Spirit of glory that Stephen experienced.

There is also another aspect to the Spirit of glory, and the glory of God. Read 2 Cor 3:1-18. This speaks of the glory – the awesome presence – of God. This is the radiating glory that covered Moses face. The glory that radiated from Peter to the point that when his shadow passed over the sick they were healed (Acts 5:15). This is the radiant glory that the peoples saw on Stephen's face when they ... *"saw his face like the face of an angel"* (Acts 7:15).

The work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of glory, is to reveal Christ in us to us and bring about a transformation in our mind, will and emotions, to conform us to Christ, to bring forth the mind of Christ in our words and actions. As He brings us this revelation and we gaze in awe and reverence upon the glory of our Lord and Saviour, His glory will flow out from within our spirit where Christ is resident and clothe us in His glory and we, like Peter and like Stephen, will radiate Christ and folks around us will not help but see and be drawn to Him.

Led by the Spirit of glory, as we submit and live the Christ life in purity and holiness and bow in reverence and awe before our God in worship, in spirit and in truth, His glorious "presence" will be there to strengthen and encourage us!!

Lesson 4 The Person of the Holy Spirit – Names and Symbols

12. The eternal Spirit

Heb 9:14 ... *“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”*

There are a few key words/phrases here that we need to consider so that we may fully understand the message given in this verse that relates to the eternal Spirit.

- “The blood of Christ” – the cleansing agent
- “Himself without blemish” – unblemished, absolutely pure sacrifice
- “Eternal Spirit” – the agent who works these matters of eternal consequence
- “Cleanse your conscience” – something that needs to be kept clean
- “From dead works” – to be distinguished from evil works and good works
- “To serve the living God” – the purpose for our cleansing

Dead Works:

Let’s start off with defining ‘dead works’. Dead works are different from evil works and good works.

Evil or wicked works are those attitudes, words or actions that are absolutely wrong and sinful and emanate from a heart or nature of sin.

John 3:19 ... *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”*

Col 1:21 ... *“you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds.”*

Good works are the attitudes, words and actions we are encouraged to embrace. These are the works we do as we express Christ in our daily living. They come from the heart of the ‘new creature’, the ‘born again’.

Eph 2:10 ... *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

Dead works include those works associated with good things but possessing no spiritual vitality. For example, the things a person does thinking that by doing them they will become more acceptable to God, or more righteous. They may be things done that they think will make their salvation more perfect. It is the addition of law to grace. It’s doing good things but things motivated by the flesh rather than by the Spirit, or in obedience to Him.

These are “dead” works because they are attempts to accomplish that which Christ has already provided. What the law and works could not attain, I find as a gift at the foot of the cross. You don’t work for that which is freely given to you. We are fully accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:6); as

believers we are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:9); As the born again we are complete in Christ (Col 2:10). Paul clearly summarises the futility of dead works in his letter to the Galatians:

Gal 2:16, 20-21 ... *“nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through the faith of Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified ... 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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”*

Gal 3:1-3 ... *“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

If we attempt to do dead works we are guilty of trying to perfect in the flesh that which was begun by the Spirit. To do that is to insult the Spirit of Grace and it certainly is not the actions of one who is co-operating with the eternal Spirit.

Conscience:

Now we need to focus in on “conscience” because our text talks of the cleansing of our conscience from dead works – What is the “conscience?”

Well some definitions may include the following: It is the inward faculty of distinguishing right and wrong. An inward knowing that directs your thoughts. But it’s more than that; it has a divine orientation and describes the whole person in relation to God. This is evidenced in the scriptures, for example:

Rom 2:15 ... *“For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”*

Rom 9:1 ... *“I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit.”*

Conscience is the inward faculty that confronts God’s holiness. We speak of a guilty conscience or a clear conscience. The cleansing of conscience leads to a decisive change in a person’s heart with respect to God and enables that person to serve God according to His will for them. Christ’s cleansing has set us free to serve the living God. Rather than turning against our conscience and putting up a barrier between us and God (Heb 3:12) we are to boldly approach His throne of grace from which we find mercy and grace in the time of our need (Heb 4:16). Then with a clean conscience we can then go on and serve the living God.

J.H. Jowett, in his little book, 'From Strength to Strength', defines and discusses the conscience and this matter of the cleansing of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God really well. The following is his chapter entitled "The strengthening of the conscience":

Acts 24:16 ... "A conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

WHAT is Conscience? I have not created it. It is not an accomplishment which has come to me as the fruit of the years. I did not acquire the faculty at school. It was with me when I began to learn the alphabet. With the dawn of my consciousness Conscience dawned. It has been a part of my equipment from the beginning— an essential part of self, yet not self-created. What, then, is it? The Scriptures attempt to define its position and function by the use of various figures, of which let two be named. The Bible speaks of Conscience as a voice—a mysterious, ghostly voice at the back of my being—a voice which whispers guidance to me, singling out some things as things to be avoided, and other things as things to be pursued. And the strange characteristic of the voice is this, that its tone is not that of timid counsel, of shy, reluctant, hesitating suggestion, but a military tone, of precise and imperative command. 'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." That is one of the scriptural presentations of the Conscience— a voice out of the unseen, with authoritative power to control and command.

But the Bible also speaks of Conscience under another and quite different figure. The Conscience is described as a moral palate, by which I am able instinctively to taste certain differences in character and conduct. With my physical palate I am able to perceive the difference in the composition of material things. I perceive a difference between vinegar and sugar, and I characterise one as bitter and the other as sweet. Now I am told that Conscience is a superior palate —a higher faculty or sense of taste—by which I am to appreciate differences among spiritual things. Without the Conscience all things would taste alike. The thing we call falsehood would taste just like the thing we call truth, and the thing we call malignity would taste just like the thing we call love. But with the Conscience all things do not taste alike. I perceive there are some things which taste spiritually sweet, and others which taste spiritually sour; and, again, there is this strange characteristic, the perception carries with it a rigorous obligation, and what I taste to be spiritually sweet and good I am commanded to welcome, and what I taste to be spiritually sour or evil I am commanded to avoid. Here, then, is a sufficiently clear and workable description of the Conscience, which is quite adequate for our immediate purpose. It is a certain faculty or sense or palate, by which I am compelled to discern certain broad differences in character and conduct; and this perception is accompanied by an authority which commands me to forsake what to me tastes evil, and to foster and encourage what to me tastes good.

Well, now, is this Conscience universal? Has everybody got this moral faculty—this spiritual sense of taste? All testimony and experience leads us to the conviction that no one has been found without it. No race of people has yet been found, even among the most degraded tribes of the most un-illuminated lands, to whom all kinds of character and conduct taste alike. They all recognise a difference, and place some things on the left hand as being bitter and evil—things that must be avoided—and some things on the right hand as being sweet and good— things that must be pursued.

I make no present reference to the quality of their moral perceptions, to the comparative bluntness or refinement of their tastes. I am insisting upon the extraordinary fact that everywhere, among all

peoples, there is an inborn faculty or sense which compels them to recognise that all things are not alike, but that there are broad and essential differences in character and in conduct.

If, then, the Conscience be a spiritual sense of taste, accompanied by a mysterious authority, and if the faculty be universal, let us now ask the further question: Is Conscience of differing power in different people? Does it manifest itself everywhere in equal strength? Is Conscience at work in all our lives with the same scope and intensity? Let us consult our common speech. I think we shall find that our ordinary speech bears witness to the fact that Conscience is of varying degrees of strength and refinement. For example, we speak of a man as possessing a very 'keen Conscience.' What do we mean by the phrase? We mean a Conscience whose powers of perception are so sharp and refined as to be able to taste the rarest distinctions, and to detect the flavour of evil and of good even in their minutest presence. On the other hand, we speak of a 'dull Conscience,' a Conscience that cannot discern fine flavours — a Conscience that needs to have the sweet intensely sweet before it can appreciate it, and that needs to have the bitter intensely bitter before the bitter tastes repellent. A dull Conscience is one that requires moralities and immoralities highly seasoned before its sluggish taste is aroused. These two distinguishing characteristics of 'dull' and 'keen' may suffice to indicate that in our common speech we recognise that Conscience is of differing quality in different lives, of varying intensity and scope.

This, then, is the point we have reached. Conscience is a kind of spiritual taste for the discernment of differences in character and conduct. It is universal. It is of varying power in different lives. Now take a further step. Has the power and dominion of Conscience grown with the race? Has this moral palate become more refined and more discerning with the increase of the years? Or did Conscience emerge at the very dawn of the race full-powered and matured? Does the Bible afford any guidance in answer to these inquiries? It appears to me very evident, even if we confine our attention to the one line of revelation and of history unfolded in the Bible, that in the early days of the world the moral palate of man was able to appreciate only very broad distinctions. Its taste was very loud. It was able to discern only among things that were very highly seasoned. It was unable to detect and appreciate the finer and the quieter flavours. Contrast the loud virtues of the early days with the mild- flavoured, exquisite virtues named by the Apostle Paul as being among the fruits of the spirit, and you will clearly see what I mean. A man may have a palate sufficiently sensitive to taste the bitterness of theft who yet does not detect the bitterness of envy. And this indicates the difference between the Conscience of the early days of the race and Conscience matured. The majority of us can discern the difference between good tea and bad tea, but how many of us have a physical palate sufficiently refined to be an expert tea-taster, able to detect those more subtle and exquisite flavours which lurk not among the good and the bad teas, but among the better and the best? In the primitive days the moral palate was able to distinguish between the good and the bad, but not among the better and the best. At the time of the giving of the law the palate had become so sensitive as to be able to appreciate the difference between purity and adultery, between honesty and theft, but not so refined as to be capable of tasting the more secret flavours of long-suffering, patience, gentleness, meekness and love. Along that line its education and development have proceeded, from fine distinctions to finer distinctions, and along those lines must its development be carried to-day, from the appreciation of the finer to the appreciation of the finest.

Conscience, then, is the faculty or sense of moral taste. We all have it. We have it in varying intensity and power. It has been cultivated through the passage of the years. Does any responsibility attach to

me concerning the condition of my own Conscience? Am I under any obligation in regard to it? Is it a sense or faculty altogether beyond my influence, or is it partially within my control? Have I the privilege and therefore the duty of training it? How is it with the physical senses? Take the sense of sight. I cannot create it. Can I train it? The question commands an affirmative answer. The eye can be trained. I can so compel and direct its attention as to immeasurably increase its powers of discernment. I can compel my eye to gaze at a cloud, which has hitherto appeared quite commonplace, until the cloud stands revealed as an apocalypse of glory. I can compel my eye to detect and appreciate the beauties of a blade of grass. This is very familiar truth, but from the plane of familiar truth we may rise into regions of less familiar truth. Here is the Conscience, a sense or faculty given to me for the appreciation of moral distinctions. I cannot create it, but I can train it to sharper and more exquisite appreciations. And because I can train and exalt it I can also neglect and debase it, and so to me and to all men there is attached the most solemn responsibility as to the condition of the individual Conscience: its health, its power, the scope of its exercise, and the accuracy and intensity of its discernment.

Now, if this be a personal and inalienable responsibility, it would appear to be a wise and useful thing to inquire by what means Conscience comes to be debased, and by what means it may be exalted and refined. How, then, is Conscience debased? Let us first of all get a clear appreciation of the office and function of the Conscience. I have already referred to it, but let us glance at it again from a slightly different angle. The office and purpose of Conscience is this—to make known to me what things are morally sweet, and what things are morally bitter; that is, to reveal to me what things are right and what things are wrong. Conscience reveals to me that a certain thing is wrong; but it does more than that: it warns me and commands me to avoid it. Conscience is therefore the supreme counsellor and commander in my life, and as such it demands the obedience of every faculty and capacity of my being. Thought must be directed according to Conscience. Imaginations must be built according to Conscience. Appetite must be restrained according to Conscience. Feelings must be starved or nourished according to Conscience. Conscience must be the supreme arbiter, and to its imperious decisions everything else in my being must be subdued. I have often thought that the apportionment of the ancient city of Edinburgh is a fair and fitting symbol of every healthy and well-ordered life. There, in the lower part of the city, are the highways of commerce, the channels of trade. A little higher are well-cultivated gardens into which a wearied body can turn for recreation and rest. Still higher are the colleges and seats of learning, where students burrow into ancient lore to enrich a present mind. And high above all there towers the grey old castle, and in the topmost part of the castle stands the time-gun, which every day roars out the royal time, the standard time, the standard to which the clocks are adjusted in the seats of learning and down in the centres of trade. It is to me a symbol of a healthy and well-governed life, in which all the varied activities – the activities of trade, the activities of mind, and the activities of recreation – are adjusted to the royal proclamation of the Conscience, enthroned on high above them all. That is the function of Conscience, to indicate the moral decisions to whose inexorable standard all other appointments must be conformed. The life of the fair city in the northern kingdom would be a motley chaos and disorder if every clock insisted upon forming its own standard, and the royal time-gun were neglected and renounced. And chaos leaps into a soul when every activity claims to act on its own impulse, on that and on that alone: when mind claims to think as it likes, and lust claims to burn as it likes, and the imperial proclamations of Conscience are slighted and ignored.

That is the debasement of Conscience, when Conscience is belittled, and its august indications are despised.

But now see how the debasement of Conscience proceeds. A man cannot despise his Conscience for a year and then next year re-enthroned it as though the neglect and contempt had never been. A dethroned Conscience is not only a debased Conscience, it is a Conscience that is sorely impaired. Conscience can endure anything except rebelliousness; but in the presence of rebelliousness it shrinks down into diminished strength. There is a striking phrase in the epistle to Timothy, in which a debased Conscience is spoken of as *"seared with a hot iron"* (1 Tim 4:1-2). The meaning of the figure appears to be this:

Conscience has been seared as with a terrible heat, blasted as with the fierce lightning-stroke of some rebellious act, and its fine, soft, discriminating touch has gone, and it no longer feels differences where tremendous differences exist. There is another scriptural figure whose interpretation leads to the enforcement of the same terrible truth: *"Their Conscience is defiled"* (Titus 1:15-16). Their Conscience has become infected with a horrible taint. Revert for a moment to the figure of the palate. There are certain things, of a very searching and stringent flavour, which, if I eat, will render me incapable for a time of appreciating things of a finer taste. One strong flavour in the mouth will render another flavour imperceptible I cannot imagine how any man whose mouth is saturated with alcohol can ever, even remotely, appreciate the flavour of the finest fruit. The mouth can be defiled by one taste to the absolute exclusion of another. There is an analogous truth in regard to the moral palate which we call the Conscience. It is possible for a man to so persistently feed himself on the strong bitterness of evil, to so saturate his palate with an evil taint, as to render it incapable of true discernment. That is the teaching of the Bible, which is confirmed in the practical experiences of daily life. We can so defile the moral palate by persistent eating of evil things that at last a truth can be spoken and its delicate flavour never suspected: a lie can slip through and never be tasted: a blasphemy can be uttered and its bitter profanity never even be guessed. The Conscience can be defiled, and for any debasement of this most exquisite gift we shall be held responsible when the Lord makes up His jewels.

Now turn the thought round to the other side. If Conscience can be debased and defiled, it can also be exalted and purified. If it be possible for us to have a Conscience full of corrupting taint, it is also possible for us to have a Conscience *"void of offence towards God and man"* (Acts 24:16 KJV). What is the first step to the possession of a Conscience 'void of offence'? The scriptural answer is this – the defiled Conscience must be purified. Around every Conscience some measure of corrupting taint has gathered, and the first necessity is that this perverting presence should be removed. The taint cannot be got rid of by any devices of our own creation. The corruption has sunk too deep. The Conscience can be purified only by *"the blood of sprinkling"* (Heb 12:24 KJV), the *"sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 1:2 KJV). The deep defiling taint of guilt can be dislodged only by *"the washing of regeneration"* (Titus 3:5). We must bring the sin-perverted, guilt-clogged Conscience to the wondrous grace of God, to all those ineffable powers of renewal which have been made ours by the death of Christ, and the impurity will be surely removed. "I will restore health unto thee, saith the Lord our God" (Jer 30:17 KJV).

But when Conscience has been purified by sprinkling it will need to be preserved and strengthened, and this can only be attained by the twofold means of discipline and communion. It is all-essential, if

we would keep the moral sense fine, sensitive and discriminating, to enter into fellowship with the refined and refining Spirit of God. By communion we become *"partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Pet 1:4); we enter into ever-increasing riches of grace, and are *"filled with the knowledge of His will"* (Col 1:9). With our illuminated 'spirit of judgment' we may then exercise ourselves in the practical things of common life. We must convert light into life, the glory of revelation into 'the beauty of holiness.' We must 'walk in the light' that we may be 'the children of light.' Now the best way to discipline the Conscience is to bring its authority into the trifle. We must exercise it in matters about which we have hitherto been morally indifferent. We must be eagerly jealous about the rectitude of the smallest issues of our life. In our moral dispensations we must recognise not only an avoirdupois measure for the just weighing of the hundredweights and the tons, but also an apothecary's measure for the righteous apportionment of scruples and grains. We must seek to be *'faithful in that which is least.'* Along these lines we shall surely put on *'beauty and strength.'* Given a Conscience purified from all taint by *'the blood of sprinkling,'* and preserved in its purity by *'the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,'* and receiving daily discipline in *'the things which are least,'* and we may have a restful assurance that the life in which it dwells will be as *"a shining light, shining more and more even unto perfect day"* (Prov 4:18) (end of quote).

The eternal Spirit:

With 'dead works' and 'conscience' defined, let us now consider how these relate to the work of the eternal Spirit as portrayed in Heb 9:14 ... *"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."*

The eternal Spirit placed the seed of the eternal Son of God into virgin Mary's womb giving birth to the Son of Man – Man who was pure, holy and without sin; He is the Spirit that led and taught Jesus when He walked the earth as Man – he was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15); He is the Eternal Spirit that comforted Christ as He approached the cross to carry out the eternal plan – to be the unblemished sacrifice for the sin of mankind and the redeemer of sinful man; He is the Eternal Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of the Eternal Father; He is the Eternal Spirit who presented the risen Son of Man and His shed blood before the mercy seat in heaven obtaining our eternal redemption; He is the Eternal Spirit that placed the "Seed" of the eternal Son into us, birthing eternal life in us; He is the Eternal Spirit who leads and teaches us the Christ life and shows us how to walk in Christ – part of this training is His revelation to us of who we are in Christ, our standing in Christ and showing us that we need not engage in any "dead" works to try and become who we already are or what we already have in Christ; He is the eternal Spirit who convicts us of any sin and defilement and urges us to confess our sin and maintain a clean conscience, for *"if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9); He is the eternal Spirit who helps us work the works of Christ and thereby serve the living God; He is the eternal Spirit who is training and bringing us to maturity in Christ and preparing us as the "bride", and preparing us for our eternal home; He is the Eternal Spirit who will, one day, quicken our mortal bodies and resurrect us and give us incorruptible bodies to live eternally in the presence of the Eternal Father, where we, for all eternity, will sing praises and give worship to the Eternal Lamb by whose blood we were forgiven and by whose life we live for eternity as the redeemed, the righteous, the holy sons and daughters of God, the Body of Christ, the bride of Christ.

Let us, therefore, co-operate fully with the eternal Spirit walking in submission and obedience to Him with consciences cleansed by the blood of the eternal Lamb, so that we may live to serve the living God – now and throughout eternity.

13. The Holy Spirit of promise

Eph 1:13 ... *“In Him (Christ), you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him (Christ) with the **Holy Spirit of promise.**”*

The Holy Spirit was promised, by the Father, to all those who would believe in the Son and in his redeeming work on the cross. The Spirit of promise brings about in us the new birth that was ordained by the Father to those who believe, placing the “Seed” of Life – Christ – in us, making us His very own children, and not only that, but also the Spirit of promise Himself and His presence in us is the very “seal” of the Father designating us as His own.

In days gone by, when a registered letter was sent it was sealed with hot wax and embossed or imprinted with the “mark” or “stamp” – the “seal” – of the sender so that the recipient could see no one had tampered with it. Sealing was done to protect the document from being opened by anyone except the addressee. The sealed document was only handed over to the addressee who personally, with proof of identity, signed for it. Sealing designates that which is securely enclosed. It is a mark, a seal, which signifies something to be the personal property of the one who placed the seal on the object. In the Old Testament God set a sign on His chosen ones to distinguish them as His own possession and to keep them from destruction (Ezek 9:4-6).

So the seal of the Spirit of promise denotes both ownership and protection. He is the promise of the Father to those who believe in and have received the life of the Son – the seal that denotes us as the property (the children), and under the protection, of the Father. He is the “seal”, the custodian of believers to protect them, nurture them, teach them, care for them, and lead them until the day of redemption when He will finally hand us over to the One to whom we belong and who signed for us with His own blood.

Let us rejoice in the fact that our salvation, our redemption, is certain and secure!

The symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to the names and titles ascribed to the Holy Spirit, a number of symbolic figures of speech are employed in Scripture to reveal characteristics of the Holy Spirit. The Jews expressed themselves more by word pictures than by abstract terms. The teaching of Jesus is exceedingly rich in symbols and figures of speech. The study of these symbols of the Holy Spirit should help us better understand the ways and works of the Spirit of God.

1. Wind:

One of the meanings of the Greek (*pneuma*) and Hebrew (*ruach*) words for “spirit” is that of “breath” or “wind.”

John 3:8 ... *“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

On the Day of Pentecost, a “rushing mighty wind” is associated with the Holy Spirit's outpouring.

Acts 2:2-4 ... *“And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”*

Wind symbolizes the invisible, everywhere present, powerful, and life-sustaining influence of the Holy Spirit. You can't see Him or feel Him in the natural, but He is always there in and with you as your dependable Helper. Sometimes the wind is just a very, very gentle breath, sometimes it blowing a gale – sometimes the Spirit is very quietly and gently whispering to you. Are the ears of your heart attentive to these gentle promptings? Sometimes He blows like a gale – to get the attention of a person whose mind is far away and set on the flesh and in need of a shake up.

2. Oil:

Oil was used in the anointing of kings and priests as a symbol of the Holy Spirit's endorsement and empowerment for their work. The Hebrew root word *mashach* means ‘to anoint’ or ‘anointed’. From this root comes another word, *mashiach* which means ‘Messiah’ or ‘Anointed One’. The people prior to the dispensation of grace did not have Christ the Messiah, the Anointed One, in them, so God would appoint and anoint certain men, (kings and prophets) to carry out His orders, to speak (prophetically) for Him, or to do certain miraculous works on his behalf. The anointing was external, the Spirit “upon” them, never “in” them. His presence upon them was not permanent. When King Saul rebelled against God, the Holy Spirit anointing was withdrawn and placed upon David.

Now, in the dispensation of grace, all believers have Christ, Mashiach, the Anointed One, permanently in them and the work of the Holy Spirit, who is also now permanently in us, is to help the believer to know and function in the knowledge and power of the Anointed One, and to walk in the anointing – walking in Christ is to walk in His anointing – utilising and releasing that anointing to touch others in Jesus name. The Holy Spirit is the facilitator of the release of the anointing, evidenced outwardly as the supernatural gifts.

We need to understand that we are no longer operating in the Old Testament dispensation when the anointing was external and temporary. For us now, in the dispensation of grace, seeking an outward Anointing is tantamount to trying to do things apart from Christ, and Jesus very clearly said, “apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The Holy Spirit, the oil, still symbolizes the anointing, but now He has the focused ministry of exalting Christ, the Anointed One, and bringing us to know and operate in Christ, and in the gifts, the outward manifestation of the anointing.

3. Dove:

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism in the form of a dove (Mt. 3:16). The dove symbolizes the qualities of gentleness, purity, love, innocence (Matt 10:16), and beauty. The Holy Spirit will never force Himself upon us, He is gentle. He desires our loving co-operating. He wants us

to willingly submit to Him as He gently and lovingly leads and teaches us to bring us to maturity in Christ. He is patient and kind, He is never forceful. But like a dove if we are rebellious we can “chase Him off” or “quench” Him. Let’s not quench Him but rather give heed to His quiet gentle voice that directs us.

4. Water:

The Scriptures picture water in the form of rain, dew, rivers, and springs. Water symbolizes the Holy Spirit's refreshing, satisfaction, and fertilization. In the application of this symbol, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are closely related, as in John 4:14; 7:38-39 and 1 Cor. 10:4.

John 4:14 ... “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him **shall never thirst**; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water **springing up** to eternal life.”

John 7:38 ... “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will **flow** rivers of living water.’”

1 Cor 10:4 ... “and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which **followed** them; and the rock was Christ.”

The emphasis being shown here concerning the symbolic water, whether in the form of rain, dew, springs or rivers, is that it is eternal and inexhaustible. God has given His Spirit “without measure” – permanent, abundant and inexhaustible.

5. Fire:

Fire speaks of the Holy Spirit's purging. As we learned when considering the various names for the Holy Spirit, as the “Spirit of judgement and Spirit of burning” (Isa 4:4), the fire of the Holy Spirit is the Refiners fire that purges out the dross of sin. He is the “Holy” Spirit and does not tolerate sin in His presence.

6. Wine:

While wine is often used figuratively of the blood of Christ (Matt 26:27-29), it is also used of the exhilarating effect of the Holy Spirit’s fullness (Eph 5:18). Some of the onlookers on the Day of Pentecost, hearing the apostles speaking in tongues, remarked that they were drunk on new wine. Peter said that they were not drunk, but that they were filled with the Spirit as prophesied by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:13-15). The world seeks alcoholic wine for stimulation and merriment, but believers, the “born again”, receive enhancement of their abilities and true joyfulness in Christ from the indwelling Holy Spirit. The world’s spirits give a temporary lift with a painful let-down; the believer’s wine of the Spirit brings lasting inspiration without desperation.

So let us heed Paul’s encouragement to ... “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph 5:18), for ... The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom 8:6).

The Spirit and the Word are in harmony and full agreement. This has to be so as the written Word was inspired by the Holy Spirit. So being filled with the Spirit is being filled with the Word (compare Eph 5:18-19 and Col 3:16). The following list of references, where the Holy Spirit and the Word are

mentioned together, illustrates the importance of recognizing the ministry of both the Spirit and the Word, and demonstrate the harmony between the Word and the Spirit:

- 2 Sam 23:2 ... *"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."*
- Prov 1:23 ... *"I will pour out my Spirit on you; I will make known my words to you."*
- Isa 40:7-8 ... *"The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."*
- Isa 59:21 ... *"My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth."*
- Zech 4:6 ... *"This is the word of the LORD ... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."*
- John 3:34 ... *"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."*
- John 6:63 ... *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."*
- John 14:26 ... *"The Holy Spirit... will... bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*
- Acts 1:16 ... *"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David."*
- Acts 4:31 ... *"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness."*
- Acts 10:44 ... *"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."*
- Acts 11:16 ... *"I remembered the word of the Lord ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*
- Acts 13:4-5 ... *"Being sent out by the Holy Spirit ... they began to proclaim the word of God."*
- Acts 15:7-8 ... *"That ... the Gentiles should hear the word ... giving them the Holy Spirit."*
- Acts 16:6 ... *"having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia."*
- Acts 28:25 ... *"after Paul had spoken one parting word, 'The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers'."*
- 1 Cor 2:13 ... *"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."*
- 1 Cor 12:8 ... *"For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit."*
- Eph 1:13 (KJV) ... *"After that ye heard the word of truth. . . ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."*

- Eph 6:17 ... *"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*
- 1 Thess 1:5 ... *"Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit."*
- 1 Thess 1:6 ... *"Received the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit."*
- Heb 2:3-4 ... *"After it was first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed ... by gifts of the Holy Spirit."*
- Heb 6:4-5 ... *"partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God."*
- 1 Pet 1:12 ... *"those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit."*
- 2 Pet 1:21 ... *"no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."*
- 1 John 5:7 (KJV) ... *"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ."*

Lesson 5 The Work of the Holy Spirit and Our Walk in the Spirit – The ‘Heart’

Co-operating with the Holy Spirit as He Works in Us

First of all, God the Holy Spirit will never force anything on us. He will do a lot to draw us and encourage us to listen to him and follow Him but He has given us a free will to exercise, and He will not violate our free will. His desire is that we willingly submit to Him so that He can teach and lead us.

Then, there are two important things we as believers must do in co-operation with the Holy Spirit if He is to be free to reveal Christ who is in us to us. For Him to teach us Christ and to bring us to live the Christ life these two things are necessary:

- a. We must know the difference between soul and spirit and separate soul and spirit.

Heb. 4:12 ... *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the **division of soul and spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

- b. We must learn to rightly divide the Word of truth.

2 Tim. 2:15 (NKJV) ... *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”*

The Holy Spirit is not interested in and does not deal with our religious ideas or doctrines. So we do well to lay aside all our preconceived ideas and let Him renew our minds. He wants to deal with our Spirit where Christ is joined to us, and He wants to reveal and open up to us, to our minds, the Scriptures that apply to the Christ in us – so he can build us up in Christ. The Holy Spirit has been given to believers first and foremost to reveal Christ to us (John 16:13-14), for Christ alone is Truth (John 14:6). It is knowing the truth – intimately knowing Christ – that sets you free (John 8:32).

The Holy Spirit has been given to us to reveal Christ to us and to mature us in Christ so that His life and love may flow out from us in all our words and actions.

Rom 5:5 (KJV) ... *“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

To better understand how the Holy Spirit functions in our hearts to bring us to the knowledge of Christ we need to take a moment to look at what our “heart” is made up of and how we can divide between soul and spirit so that the “rightly divided word of truth” in the hands of the Holy Spirit can build us up in Christ.

The Heart

What does the frequently used word ‘heart’ mean? What is the ‘heart’?

Many authors and preachers use the word 'heart' interchangeably with the word 'spirit'. Are these two words interchangeable? This is something we need to check against the scriptures. What does God's word have to say on this matter?

If 'heart' = 'spirit' then how do you interpret the following verses?

Prov 15:13 ... "A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken."

Psalms 77:6 ... "I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart, and my spirit ponders"

Psalms 12:2 ... "They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak."

Ezek 18:31 ... "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"

If these two words are interchangeable then why have them both in the same verse? Or is it possible that they are not interchangeable?

GREEK – in the Greek there are two different words for 'heart' and 'spirit'. They are separate and distinct from each other. We will also include a third word, 'soul' as this also sometimes gets used interchangeably with 'heart'.

- 'kardia' is the word for 'heart'
- 'pneuma' is the word for 'spirit'
- 'psuche' is the word for 'soul'

HEBREW – in the Hebrew there are also separate and distinct words for the three words in question.

- 'leb' or 'lebab' (pronounced lev or levav) is the word for 'heart'
- 'ruach' is the word for 'spirit'
- 'nephesh' is the word for 'soul'.

1 Thess 5:23 ... "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."

That which makes up your "**entirety**" is your spirit, soul and body. That's the complete 'you'. Note the order, it starts from the innermost part and works outwards; spirit – soul – body. You are a spirit; you have a soul and are housed in a body.

The Old Testament people were exactly the same as those of the New Testament, they were spirit, had a soul and were housed in a body.

Dan 7:15 ... "I, Daniel, was grieved in my **spirit** within my **body**, and the visions of my **head** troubled me" (Other translations use "mind" in place of "head").

So it is clear that we are made up of spirit, soul and body. These three parts work together to make us who we are.

One day, when believers go to be with the Lord in heaven, we will leave our old bodies behind (in the grave) and our spirits and souls will go together to heaven where we will receive new incorruptible bodies. Our spirits and our souls will not be two separate blobs floating around in heaven; they will be inseparably connected and housed in our new bodies for all eternity.

Let us look more closely at the word 'spirit'.

"spirit" ('pneuma') is used or interpreted three ways in the New Testament:

- The "spirit" referring to the real inner person as referred to in 1 Cor 14:14 ... "*For if I pray in a tongue, my **spirit** prays, but my mind is unfruitful*".
- The "Spirit" referring to the Holy Spirit who works within us as mentioned in Rom 8:26 ... "*In the same way the **Spirit** also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the **Spirit Himself** intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*".
- The "spirit of your mind" referring to "attitude" of mind as mentioned in Eph 4:23 ... "*and that you be renewed in the **spirit of your mind***".

All three of the above passages use the Greek word "pneuma" (spirit) and it is by context that we interpret them to the three different meanings. The one we are interested in is the spirit that refers to our inner person.

Now back to spirit, soul and body.

Salvation in the three parts of a person takes place in different stages. In relation to redemption we are *past, present* and *future* beings:

PAST – our **spirit was saved** (redeemed) – made new, perfect and complete – instantly at the time we were born again.

1 Pet 1:23 ... "*for you **have been** born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God*".

The imperishable seed, Christ, is placed in your spirit and you experience a re-birthing. This work of salvation is instant and complete. Nothing you do or don't do will make it more or less complete.

2 Cor 5:17 (NKJV) ... "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*".

PRESENT – our **soul is being saved**. It is an ongoing renewal process. This process started at the time we were born again in spirit. This requires that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as he teaches us Christ and how to walk in Christ in our daily lives.

Jas 1:21 ... "*Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able **to save** your souls*".

This ongoing salvation process that takes place in the soul involves the mind, will and emotions in a renewal process. It is a process in which we align (renew) our mind and will in particular with the

mind and will of God as expressed implicitly in His word. We learn Christ and put on the mind of Christ. This process of salvation of our souls will continue until we go to be with the Lord.

FUTURE – Our **body will be saved**; this is an event for the future. It will be exchanged for an incorruptible body at the coming of the Lord Jesus when He comes to take us to be with Him for all eternity.

1 Cor 15:51-53 ... *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 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 will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality”.*

This three part salvation of spirit, soul and body is summed up in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians:

2 Cor 1:10 ... *“He (God) ... who delivered us (spirit) from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us (soul), He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us (body)...”*

At salvation an exchange takes place in your **spirit**, the ‘old man’ is exchanged for the ‘new man’. Christ comes to take up residence in your spirit. 1 Cor 6:17 ... *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit”.* This work of salvation is instant and complete. The **soul** (mind, will and emotions) does not experience any immediate change at salvation, but does change over time as our minds are renewed. The soul experiences an ongoing process of salvation. At salvation the **body** does not experience any change. As we grow older so our bodies begin to tire out and wear out until one day, when we go to be with the Lord, then we will receive a brand new body. So salvation of the body will happen in an instant sometime in the future.

Your spirit, which is one with Christ, is the real you. But inseparably attached to your spirit is your soul. Your spirit and soul make up your ‘spiritual’ part and that is housed in your body which is your ‘fleshly’ part.

As the spirit is complete and perfectly saved, and as the body will be changed some time in the future, so our attention now should be directed to co-operation with the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation of our souls.

When we are born again the incorruptible seed (Christ) is placed in our spirit and we become one in spirit. The incorruptible is just that, free of sin. ... *“In Him there is no sin”* ... (1 Jn 3:5).

1 Jn 3:9 ... *“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”.*

This is referring to your born again spirit. Your spirit, in which Christ dwells and with whom you are one, cannot sin. Sin cannot come from that which is incorruptible. The incorruptible “Seed” lives and abides there and He cannot sin.

So thus far we have seen what we are comprised of spirit, soul and body and we have confirmed that the born again spirit is incorruptible.

However, we know that believers, the born again in whom the incorruptible seed lives, can and do commit sin. So if sin cannot come from our regenerated spirit then where does it come from?

1 John 1:5-1 John 2:6 ... *“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 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. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

When our mind is fixed or focused on the sin affected flesh, the pulls of the body, and we follow the flesh rather than the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit within us (who points us to Christ), then we sin. Our soul (mind, will and emotions) play an important part here. As Paul so clearly said to the believers in Rome:

Rom 8:6 ...*“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

To the degree our minds are renewed and we choose to submit to the Spirit, we will be doers of the Word and walk in the light. To the degree it remains unrenewed, we will find ourselves yielding to the flesh and walking in darkness.

As discussed earlier, the soul is in the *process* of being saved or renewed.

Now with this understanding of the ‘spirit’ (saved, complete, whole) and ‘soul’ (not yet perfect and in the process of being renewed) let’s turn to the word ‘heart’.

This word ‘heart’ is used, by some, interchangeably with either spirit or soul.

In most places in the Bible where the word ‘heart’ is used it is used to refer to the spiritual rather than the physical part of a person. That is, it is seldom referring to the organ that pumps blood around your body. So it is the spiritual ‘heart’ in which we are interested.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines the Hebrew word for heart (lebab) as: “the totality of man’s inner or immaterial nature”.

However, if we simply interchange 'heart' for 'spirit' and vice versa we run into difficulties with some scriptures:

Mark 11:23 ... *"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and **does not doubt in his heart, but believes (in his heart)** that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him".* The part in parentheses is added as it is implied.

So this verse tells us that we can believe or doubt in our heart. But if 'heart' can be interchanged with 'spirit' we have a problem because we have established that the spirit cannot sin. Doubt is sin according to Rom 14:23 ... *"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin".*

So in scriptures like this one we find the word 'heart' is used negatively and positively, or, that the heart can sin or act righteously. If 'heart' in these cases means 'spirit' this is not possible, so 'heart' cannot just mean 'spirit'.

On the other hand, we could possibly say 'heart' can mean 'spirit' or 'soul', and we get to select which it is each time. But if we did that then every scripture would have to be subject to your own interpretation, and that would lead to trouble.

So there has to be something consistent in the Word of God about 'heart' and its use.

Deut 2:30 ... *"But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his **spirit** and made his **heart** obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as he is today".*

Ezek 18:31 ... *"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a **new heart** and a **new spirit!** For why will you die, O house of Israel?"*

Heart and spirit are found in the same verse, so they cannot mean the same thing.

Ps 12:2 ... *"They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a **double heart** they speak".*

1 Chr 12:33 ... *"Of Zebulun, there were 50,000 who went out in the army, who could draw up in battle formation with all kinds of weapons of war and helped David with an **undivided heart**.*

Literally, "not of divided heart". Have we got two spirits? No.

Ps 73:7 ... *"The imaginations of their heart run riot.*

KJV says ... *"they have more than heart could wish."* So apparently a 'heart' can imagine or wish.

Prov 6:18a ... *"A heart that devises wicked plans".*

So a 'heart' can devise evil and sin.

Prov 15:28a ... *"The heart of the righteous ponders (KJV "studieth") how to answer"...*

The 'heart' can study or think and make decisions.

Hos 10:2 ... *"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images".*

If their 'heart' is divided does that mean their spirit was cut in two?

Man was made in the image of God. God is spirit and He made us in His image and likeness. We are spirit, we have a soul and we are housed in a body. Cats, dogs, cows, sheep, birds and fish were not made in God's image and likeness. They are not spirit beings. So consider the next verse:

Dan 4:16 (NKJV) ... *"Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast"...*

If 'heart' can be interchanged with 'spirit' that means animals would have to have spirits, and that is not so.

Mark 2:8 (NKJV) ... *"But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"*

The two different words are used in this verse. Why, if they are interchangeable?

Heb 3:12 ... *"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God".*

James 3:14 ... *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*

Both of these were addressed to the "brethren", the born again, who cannot have evil or unbelief in their born again spirit.

So what is the 'heart'? It cannot refer to the 'spirit' alone.

The Answer

The answer lies in Peter's words:

1 Pet 3:4 ... *"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."*

The 'hidden person' of the heart is the spirit. The spirit is not the heart. The spirit is **part** of the heart. It's the 'hidden part' in which Christ dwells; the part which is understood by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The heart is made up of the spirit **and** the soul. The 'heart' is the totality of the spiritual part of a person. Body is the flesh part.

That's how you can have a "divided heart". When your spirit and soul are not aligned and are in opposition to each other.

Ps 86:11 ... *"Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name."*

Another way we might say this is: Unite my heart; let my soul and spirit be aligned. Let my mind, will and emotions line up with my spirit, in which You dwell, O Lord.

Prov 3:5 ... *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding”.*

You are one in spirit with Christ, now let your soul (mind, will and emotions) align with the spirit, align with the living and abiding word of God. Don't have your mind, will and emotions aligning with what you see, hear, feel, taste and touch around you in the corrupted world. Let all your heart (spirit and soul) be aligned. The Holy Spirit's work is to bring you to have a united heart.

Prov 14:14 ... *“The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied with his.”*

The only part of the heart that can backslide is the soul part. If our soul (mind) is fixed on the things of the flesh, the cares or the world, the hassles around us rather than on the spirit, it will pull away (backslide) from the truth. We then end up with a divided heart, a backslidden heart and all the troubles that brings. That's why the first generation of Israelites did not make it out of the wilderness, because they had evil unbelieving hearts.

Heb 3:10,11 ... *“therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'; as I swore in My wrath, 'they shall not enter my rest'.”*

The battlefield is in the soul part of the heart. We are made up of spirit, soul and body. The soul is in the middle. It is pulled by both the spirit or by the flesh. Which way it yields is dependent on what our mind, will and emotions are focused on; spirit or flesh.

One of the prime objectives of the Christian walk is to enter God's rest. We do this by co-operating with the Holy Spirit as He aligns our soul with our spirit, in which Christ the living and abiding Word is resident. *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27).

That's why there is so much in the Word of God concerning the renewing of the mind. This is the “saving of the soul” we talked about earlier.

Rom 12:1-2 ... *“Therefore I urge you, 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. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Our bodies, the flesh and its pulls and desires, are to be presented as a sacrifice. The mind is to conform to God and His will, not to the pulls and temptations of the corrupt world.

2 Cor 10:4-5 ... *“for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 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.”*

The fortresses are in the mind, in the soul part of a person. We destroy these fortresses by placing every thought in obedience to, or alignment with, Christ. This requires alignment of our will, our mind and our emotions (our soul) with the incorruptible seed, the living and abiding Word.

Phil 4:8 ... *“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, dwell on these things.”*

NKJV says ... *“meditate on these things”*. KJV says ... *“think on these things”*.

Isa 26:3 (NKJV) ... *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”*

Why is the control of our mind, will and emotions (soul) so important? Because that’s the only part that the devil can get to and try and captivate. If he can prevent us from knowing Christ and putting on the mind of Christ he renders us ineffective. That’s why we have been given the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to us and to bring us to maturity in living the Christ life – living the ‘abundant life’ Jesus spoke of in John 10:10 – if we will co-operate with Him in this renewal process.

Satan cannot touch your re-born spirit. But if he can control your soul (mind, will and emotions) he can divide your ‘heart’ and a person with a ‘divided heart’ is on the pathway to trouble. That person will not enter God’s rest. They will not walk in the power and beauty of the Christ life.

The only way you, in co-operation with the Holy Spirit, can effectively release the power of the living and abiding Word, with Whom you are one spirit (1 Cor 6:17), from within you, is by having a united heart. A heart in which the soul is completely aligned with the spirit, which is one with Christ.

3 John 2 ... *“Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers”*.

Amos 3:3 ... *“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”*

James 3:11 ... *“Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?”*

So let us resolve to submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing our soul and spirit into agreement, because **unity** is the means by which the **power** is released.

Col 3:12-17 ... *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect **bond of unity** (unites the heart). **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 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. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”*
part in parenthesis added

You live by the contents and condition of your soul. Where or on what is your soul focused?

Rom 8:6 ... *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

Mark 11:23 ... *“Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes (in his heart) that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him”.* The part in parenthesis is added as it is implied.

‘To doubt’ is the same as saying ‘to differ’. True believing is to line up spirit and soul so they do not differ.

Jas 1:6-8 ... *“But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*

Doubting creates a difference, a division, between spirit and soul and prevents your faith from working. You cannot go in two directions at once. It’s the unity of soul and spirit, the united heart, which releases the faith and power of Christ within you. It’s when **all** our heart is yielded to God, that good things happen.

David knew this very well.

Ps 119:2, 10, 34, 58, 69, 145 ... *“How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with **all their heart**.”*

¹⁰*With **all my heart** I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.*

³⁴*Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with **all my heart**.”*

⁵⁸*I sought your favor with **all my heart**; be gracious to me according to your word.*

⁶⁹*The arrogant have forged a lie against me; with **all my heart** I will observe your precepts.*

¹⁴⁵*I cried with **all my heart**; answer me, O LORD! I will observe your statutes.”*

All of these verses speak of seeking and keeping God’s word with a **whole heart** (all my heart).

Now our understanding of the ‘heart’ is becoming clearer, we can return to our verse from Hebrews.

Heb 4:12 ... *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of **soul and spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the **heart**.”*

(The context of this verse is the matter of “entering His rest” and it is worthwhile to study Heb 3:1-4:16).

Spirit, soul and heart are all used in this passage, for a good reason.

- The Word is the only thing which will divide, or tell apart, what's in your soul from what's in your spirit.
- The Word is the only thing which will tell which part of your 'heart' your thoughts came from; your spirit or from your flesh (your carnal mind). It also knows your true intentions.

Why the mention of 'joints' and 'marrow'?

Joints are compared to the soul, while marrow is compared to the spirit.

Joints:

- Joints are the hinges that join two things together and the soul is the 'joint' between my spirit (spiritual part) and my body (carnal part).
- The joint can bring two parts closer together or separate them further apart.
- The soul is like a projector screen. Messages are transmitted onto it from either the spirit or the flesh. Depending on which way it is pointing.
- It can vacillate between the two sides, the spirit or the flesh, but ultimately it must make a decision and tell the body to act in accordance with the decision it has made.
- It can lean towards the spirit and receive godly instruction and then get the body to act accordingly. Our words and actions then align with the word of God.
- Or it can lean to the flesh, often influenced by a weak will and the emotions or feelings, and decide to tell the body to follow the cravings of the flesh.
- So one way or the other, the soul, the joint, is either aligned with the spirit (a united heart) or it is aligned with the flesh (a divided heart).

Marrow:

- Marrow is like the spirit, there's life in the marrow and life in the spirit.
- Marrow produces new blood and "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11). Christ is the producer of life and he's resident in our spirit.
- Everlasting life is in your spirit

The Word is the sword of the Spirit.

Eph 5:17 ... *"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

The Word of God pierces ... *"as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both **joints** and **marrow**" ...*

The Word is ... *"able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the **heart**."*

Prov 23:7 (NKJV) ... *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."*

Matt 12:34 (NKJV) ... *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."*

So the living active Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, can stand between soul and spirit and judge the thoughts and intentions that are going on in your 'heart'. It is the arbiter of those thoughts and intentions. The Word is the truth and it will stand as judge of the thoughts and intents and will declare a verdict that they are either pure (aligned with the Spirit, that is aligned with the Word) or

evil (aligned with the flesh, the carnal part that is opposed to the Word). This is how the Holy Spirit confirms or convicts us.

The Word, the sword of the Spirit, is a light that penetrates and illumines the recesses of our heart. It allows our soul to see, know and understand that which is in the spirit where Christ dwells and to see that which is consistent with His ways and desires. The more we submit to the Holy Spirit and meditate on God's Word, the sword of the Spirit, which is in total harmony with Christ who is our life and with whom we are one spirit, the more our soul (mind, will and emotions) is fed the truth and is renewed – the more we will have a revelation of Christ and be able to walk in Him.

The spirit is the "*hidden person of the heart*" (1 Pet 3:4). So that's why we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us. The word penetrates between soul and spirit and by revelation we "see" and "understand" as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding of the truth and what He desires to accomplish in us.

So we should pray for a "*spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*" (Eph 1:17) and then cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He teaches us Christ.

As we submit to the Holy Spirit, and the sword of the Spirit, as He reveals the truth – Christ – to us and brings us to operate with a united heart, let our desire and heart cry to God be:

Ps 86:11-13 ... "*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and will glorify Your name forever. For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*"

And also pray:

1 Thess 3:13 ... "*that He may **establish your hearts without blame in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints*".

Amen!

Lesson 6 The Work of the Holy Spirit and Our Walk in the Spirit – A ‘United Heart’

Purpose and Product of a “United Heart”

John 15:1-26 (Phillips) ... *“I am the real vine, my Father is the vine-dresser. He removes any of my branches which are not bearing fruit and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit to increase its yield. Now, you have already been pruned by my words. You must go on growing in me and I will grow in you. For just as the branch cannot bear any fruit unless it shares the life of the vine, so you can produce nothing unless you go on growing in me. I am the vine itself, you are the branches. It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful. For the plain fact is that **apart from me you can do nothing at all**. The man who does not share my life is like a branch that is broken off and withers away. He becomes just like the dry sticks that men pick up and use for the firewood. **But if you live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts**, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you. **This is how my Father will be glorified—in your becoming fruitful and being my disciples.***

⁹⁻¹⁵ *“I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. You must go on living in my love. If you keep my commandments you will live in my love just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and live in his love. I have told you this so that you can share my joy, and that your happiness may be complete. This is my commandment: that you **love each other as I have loved you**. There is no greater love than this—that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do. I shall not call you servants any longer, for a servant does not share his master’s confidence. No, I call you friends, now, because I have told you everything that I have heard from the Father.*

¹⁶ *“It is not that you have chosen me; but it is I who have chosen you. **I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will be lasting**; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*

¹⁷⁻²⁵ *“This I command you, love one another! If the world hates you, you know that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own. But because you do not belong to the world and I have chosen you out of it, the world will hate you. Do you remember what I said to you, ‘The servant is not greater than his master’? If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you as well, but if they have followed my teaching, they will also follow yours. They will do all these things to you as my disciples because they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. The man who hates me, hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them things that no other man has ever done, they would not have been guilty of sin, but as it is they have seen and they have hated both me and my Father. Yet this only fulfils what is written in their Law—‘They hated me without a cause’.*

²⁶⁻²⁷ *But when the helper comes, that is, the Spirit of truth, who comes from the Father and whom I myself will send to you from the Father, he will speak plainly about me."*

What is the origin of the life we, as believers, bear about within us? What is our relationship to our God and Creator? It is simply this – our life comes from Him and is to be lived for His glory. Not only does our life come from Him, but it is dependent upon Him. Just as a quivering leaf hanging attached to the branch of a tree depends on the tree for its support and life, so does every one of us hang upon our Lord and depend upon Him as our stay, support and source of life for our existence.

What is Christian life? According to our common jargon, or religious clichés, it is a life redeemed by Christ's death. Yes it is, but more closely defined, it is a life of ruin and sin that is taken away and buried, in exchange for life of Christ. We are placed in Christ and Christ placed in us. We are grafted into Him. Apart from Him we are but dead with withering branches, having no life. But attached to Him, becoming one with Him, we become living branches covered with leaves and fruit.

Christ is the one single central source of Life and we live only in and by Him, with our little fragment of being utterly dependent upon Him for every bit of beauty, blessing and hope He imparts. We live only in and by Him. He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. He takes our weakness and unites it, like a branch grafted into a tree, to His own glorious omnipotence. Our emptiness He fills with His divine completeness. Our lives feed upon Him, and in every sense are utterly dependent upon Him. Apart from Him we have nothing, and we are nothing. But abiding in Him, with our mind fixed upon Him, we are complete. We have the mind of Christ. We are strong. We shine. We bear the fruit that is the evidence of His life sap flowing in us.

A "united heart" is the condition of one who is abiding in Christ the Vine – the source of Life. When our soul (mind, will and emotions) are fixed upon Christ, with whom we are one in spirit, submitted totally to Him, acknowledging that He alone is our all in all, we then are in a position or condition where His life flows out through us and is evidenced in our words, actions and feelings. The fruit of the spirit can only develop on, and be borne by, the branch that abides in the Vine. This requires a "united heart" – where with the help of the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, we completely align our thoughts, our will and our feelings, with Christ the Life giver, no matter what is going on around us by way of circumstance or situation.

We are not our own.

1 Cor 6:20 ... *"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

We are here for a purpose and destiny. That purpose and destiny is found in Christ, and follows the Father's eternal plan and purpose for Himself, His Son, us and all of creation. That's why *knowing* Him (Christ) is so important. The work of the Holy Spirit is to encourage us and lead us to a place of submission to Him so that He can bring us a revelation of Jesus Christ, so that we may intimately know Him and allow Him to live through us, and thereby participate in the eternal plan.

Our conceptions, our thoughts concerning the life we live are a most important matter. Conception is formulated and cherished in the heart. No one builds higher or better than his or her plans. No artist surpasses on canvass the beauty imaged in his or her soul. Our life cannot arise in grandeur above the thoughts of life which live our heart.

For our perception and conception to be true and worthy it must consider life in accordance with the eternal perspective. We must not be limited to what we see and feel in the earthly or natural realm, but look beyond into immortality, into the eternal heart of the Father as revealed in Christ, and in that light and knowledge understand our important relations and solemn responsibilities.

The lives we live are not little separate atoms of existence, each complete in itself and independent of all other atoms. Our lives are not limited only to the time we spend on earth, ending when this body expires. We can only begin a meaningful journey of life here if we take into view, plan and act in accordance with the Father's eternal plan that extends beyond the grave. We must come to see life as sweeping away into eternity if we would grasp its meaning and have a true sense of its grandeur and realise its solemn responsibility.

In line with this eternal view of life and its responsibilities, J.R. Miller so eloquently states the following:

“There are streams among the mountains which, after flowing a little way on the surface in a current broken, vexed and tossing, amid rocks, over cascades, through dark chasms, sink away out of sight and seem to be lost. You see their flashing crystal no more. But far down the mountain, amid the sweet valley scenes, they emerge again, these same streams, and flow away, no longer tossed and restless, but quiet and peaceful as they move on toward the sea. So our restless, perplexed lives roll in rocky channels a little way on the earth, and then pass out of sight, and it seems the end. But it is not the end. Leaping through the dark cavern of the grave, they will reappear, fuller, deeper, grander, on the other side, vexed and broken no longer, but realising all the peace, joy and beauty of Christ; and thus they will flow on forever. This is no poet's fancy, no Utopian dream of a golden age, no mere picture of imagination. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. Since Christ has risen again, death is abolished, and to everyone who believes in Him there is the certainty of an endless life of blessedness in His presence and service. We only begin to live when the consciousness of immortality breaks upon our hearts.”

Then there is another essential element in every true conception of life. No life hangs in mid-air, without relations, connections or attachments, without dependences and responsibilities. We cannot live in selfish isolation, cutting every tie, casting off all responsibility, living without reference to God or man, law or duty, and fulfil in any sense the true meaning of life.

As we saw earlier, Christ is the source of life in us. We are totally dependent upon Him. As we abide in Him, His life is evidenced through us in the form of the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

But this relationship is not only one of dependence; it is also one of far-reaching obligations or duties towards God – obligations of gratitude, praise, trust, obedience, and service. Our life is not our own. Its purpose is not fulfilled unless it is lived to accomplish the end for which it was created and redeemed. Everything has been made with some design. The tiny grain of sand has its uses and purposes. It forms part of a high mountain range, or it is part of the great levee we call a beach that surrounds and holds the ocean in its place, or its infinitesimal weight helps to balance the earth and keep it in place in its orbit around the sun. A drop of water has its purposes and uses. It sinks down to the roots and revives the drooping flower. It may help to quench the thirst of a dying soldier. It glistens as a rainbow in the skies. It may help to keep an ocean liner afloat.

And if such minute things have their purpose, how much grander must be the purpose and end for which each human life was made and to whom the very life of Christ is imparted!

Think on a bit further, and we will come to realise around us a wondrous network of attachments binding our little fragments of being to the great web of life around us. There are innumerable relationships which link us to our fellow-men, to home, to church, to country, to society, to truth, to humanity, to duty; and every one of these connections implies responsibility. Obligations touch our lives on all sides. Duties come to us from every point. Every human relationship is solemn with its weight of responsibility.

And if we think on even more, we find that we are in a world in which even our minutest actions and words initiate results that go on forever. The little ripple caused by the splash of the paddler's oar in the quiet bay goes rolling on and on until it breaks on every distant shore of the ocean; the word spoken in the air causes reverberations which go quivering on and on forever in space; and these scientific facts are but feeble illustrations of the "ripple effect" of influences of human actions and words in this world.

Just look again at [John 15:16](#) ... ***"I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will be lasting."***

So if we ask the question: "Why is the fruit bearing Jesus spoke of so important?" – it's because of the "ripple effect" – the eternal or lasting effect we as believers have on those around us through even the smallest action or the most casual conversation.

Just look at the fruit of the spirit and what it represents in the light of eternity. Consider the potential of the "ripple effect" it has on those around us. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Love – unconditional love. *"There is no greater love than this—that a man should lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). True unending love is defined in [1 Cor 13:4-8](#).

Joy – that looks past the pain into the eyes of the Father and know He has it all under control. *"Fixing our eyes on Jesus ... who for the joy set before Him endured the cross"* (Heb 12:2)

Peace – in the midst of turmoil. *"The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace"* (Rom 8:6).

Patience – in a selfish self centred world.

Kindness – in an environment of harshness and competitiveness

Goodness – in a world of poverty and helplessness

Faithfulness – when the world's norm is to give up

Gentleness – in a world of harshness

Self-control – in an impulsive world

Living the Christ life and bearing fruit of the spirit is vital because one day we will have to account for what we have done with the precious life of Christ that is given to us and the deeds done in the

body. This accountability extends to the minutest thoughts, words and actions that come from our heart, lips and hands as we go through life. It even reaches the unconscious influences that breathe out of us like the fragrance of a flower – like the peace we unconsciously emit that is unseen but “felt” by others.

We will see a re-run of our whole life before God’s throne and give account not only for what we have done – the evil as well as the good – but also for what we failed to do, that which we should have done – the undeveloped possibilities of our lives and their unimproved opportunities.

It is in the light of this knowledge that we must consider the Christ life that is given to each of us. It’s not easy to live in the manner necessary to fulfil the end for which we were made and redeemed. Life’s not a game to play or something that ambles along aimlessly. We’re redeemed and here for a purpose. Every moment of our life is real and charged with eternal purpose and responsibility. It is when we look at life in this way that we see our need of Christ and absolute dependence on Him, and, therefore, our dependence on the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to us and to bring us to live by His life – to spontaneously express Him. Apart from Christ there can be only failure and ruin. But if we yield to the Holy Spirit’s gentle working He will nurture the life He has placed in us, in Christ, and prepare us for a glorious and effective life here and for all eternity.

The thoughts we have and the words and deeds that these initiate and send out go out carrying a power that affects the hearers of our words and recipients of our actions. We may not be conscious of, and may never know, who we have influenced and whether that has been for good or bad, but lives and circumstances will change as a result of our lives. Those changes have eternal consequence. This fact should gain and hold our attention. There is not a moment of our life which does not exert a power that shall be felt millions of ages hence. There is something about the vitality and the immortality of human influence that is fearful to contemplate and that makes it a grandly solemn thing to live, especially when we remember that these qualities belong to the evil as well as the good of our lives.

So we must let the words of Jesus resound through us ***“I have appointed you to go and bear fruit that will be lasting”*** and remember that it is only as we abide in Him – have our minds fixed on Him – and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to us that His fruit will form and be evidenced in our lives, words and actions.

So the purpose of a “united heart” is that we may know Christ and the product of that union is the fruit we bear and share that has eternal consequence in the lives of others.

Rom 11:36 ... *“For from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*

How We Know the Holy Spirit is Working in Us.

The Holy Spirit wants you to learn and to know Christ. That is, to know from Him everything that is pertinent to the new life you have in Christ. When God birthed a new life in us, it was so far beyond the our human ability to understand that it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to be sent to reveal the Christ Who was birthed in us, to us. This was a significant part of God's love program. Not only did He love us enough to give us a new life, but He loved us enough to send a Teacher along with the new life to explain how to live with Christ in you.

Now, there are a number of things by which we can know that the Holy Spirit is working in us. They include:

1. You will have that **inner knowing** that the life in you is Christ, and that you live by the life of Another. Rightly divided Scriptures – Scriptures that relate to Christ's work for you and in you – will bring you to the new realisation that the old you is dead, certainly in God's eyes, and now you have a new life.

Gal 2:20 ... *"I have been crucified with Christ; 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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

Rom 6:3-8 ... *"do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."*

2 Cor 5:17 ... *"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

2. You will begin to see Jesus coming through you. Your language will change from "I think this or that" to "He thinks this and that." Your attitude toward others will change. You will see them differently. If they are believers you will see Christ in them, regardless of their actions or words toward you or others. You'll view them through the eyes of Christ – the way you see others will be in accordance with the Father's eternal viewpoint. He sees them complete in Christ. He sees them altogether righteous in Christ. He sees the end product – mature sons and daughters in Christ. No matter how bad the other person's words or actions are, because the Holy Spirit has brought you to a revelation of Christ and His love, the love of Christ in you will be in control. You will see the person as "work in progress" in the Master craftsman's hands.

This is where you will see the love of Christ in you flowing out and in action. Love will "filter" your vision and hearing. Your response to the other person's words or actions will be love. This is where 1 Cor 13:4-8 comes alive in you.

... *"Love is **patient**, love is **kind** and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is **not provoked**, **does not take into account a wrong suffered**, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but **rejoices with the truth**; bears all things, **believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.**"*

3. You will begin to see Christ working in all things – regardless of what the natural mind may

think of as being good or bad. You will see through every obstacle, every setback, every pain, and every circumstance and situation, to Christ.

2 Cor 4:18 will become a reality in your life ... *“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.”*

You will come to understand that Christ has to do with all things.

Col. 1:16-17 ... *“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together”.*

You will know and understand that these are things working for you for your good.

Rom. 8:28-29 ... *“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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

4. You will come to the awareness that you are created to bring glory to God and this is the greatest thrill you can have. You will know you are not your own, but that you belong to Him and live for His glory. Your every desire will be to honour, worship, love and serve Him. You will *know* that you have been born again for a purpose – and that purpose is to be vessel through which Christ may be seen, touched and felt by the world. Like Paul your heart cry will be ... *“for to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21)*. John 15:8 will have become a reality to you.

... *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”*

This is where you'll have the inner compulsion to serve and bless others in Jesus name. This is true worship – “lifting your hands” – serving – in His name. This has eternal consequence and is God glorifying.

5. You will have discovered that the greatest power you have is when the Holy Spirit is teaching you Christ. Revealing more and more of Christ to you, and as a result releasing Christ through your thoughts, words and actions. Thoughts, words and actions backed by heaven, feared by hell, and eternally life changing for the recipients.

Acts 1:8 says that, *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

“Witnesses” is a translation from the Greek word ‘martus’ – a word from which the English word “martyr” comes. We are “empowered” to be expended – as grains of wheat fall into the ground and die, but in dying, spring up and bear much fruit (John 12:24).

6. You will have some emotional feelings and responses, depending on your personal, individual make-up. Every believer is created differently so his reaction to the Holy Spirit may be different from other believers. But your response to being filled with the Spirit, occupied with the Spirit and led by the Spirit will be a desire to release praise and thanksgiving to God and encouragement to others.

Ephesians 5: 19-20 ... *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”*

7. You will have a zeal for the Word to open up to you. You will find that rightly divided Scriptures that speak to you personally concerning Christ who lives in you will be the greatest thrill of Christian living. The more the Holy Spirit reveals of Christ to you from the Word, the more your hunger for this revelation will grow. Because the more you come to intimately know Christ, and the more His life is expressed by you, the more you will see others come to know and receive Him and the more you will desire to know more of Him so you can be even more of a blessing to others and honouring to God.

In particular, study John, Chapters 14, 15 and 16, John’s letters and the Epistles – for these scriptures speak specifically concerning Christ in the believer.

8. The Holy Spirit will be a great comfort; in fact, Jesus calls him the “Comforter”. For a new believer in particular, the Christ-life is a new and inexperienced way of living. At first, the believer will find it difficult to live all of the things he has learned, because of the great battle that goes on in the unrenewed mind as it starts the process of renewal. Even though there may be very little the believer knows at this time and even though the right decisions may not be made every time, the Holy Spirit will be a comforter and carry that person through the newness of the life in Christ.

Like a parent picking up and dusting off the toddler as he or she is learning to take their first few steps and encouraging them to try again until they can eventually walk and run, so the Holy Spirit is our comforter to encourage us in learning to walk in Christ.

Be encouraged as you live the Christ life, bearing and sharing the fruit of the spirit. Don’t let the fear of failure stop you from going out and being a blessing to others in whatever way the Lord directs and chooses to use you. The Holy Spirit will always be there to pick you up, dust you off, and encourage you to try again! As long as you submit to Him He will eventually bring you to maturity in Christ.

Lesson 7 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – Rebuilding ‘Broken Walls’

This second half of our study concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit and our walk in the Spirit concentrates on His work and our walk. We now consider our walk, living as new creatures in Christ, being guided, helped and instructed by the Holy Spirit as He brings us to maturity in Christ.

God’s plan from the beginning was that we should be in Christ and living by His life, whole, holy and victorious.

Eph 1:4 ... *“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him”*

John 10:10 ... *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

But because of sin and the destructive work of the “thief” (Satan), we have all, to a greater or lesser extent, lived very “broken” lives before coming to Christ and being born again. Without exception, we all have un-renewed minds that need renewing. Having been born again, made new in spirit, with Christ as our life, we now find ourselves on a path of transformation of soul (mind, will and emotions) where the Holy Spirit is tasked with helping us restore the “broken walls” of our lives.

When we use the term ‘walk in the Spirit’ this is not just some airy fairy theological tenet we declare about wafting in and out of some super-spiritual state – no, it’s not that at all. Rather it speaks of the *practical adjustments* in our sin stained lives – some re-construction and transformation that is necessary in the mind/will/emotion part of our lives to bring us to wholeness and to where we can, in daily and ongoing practice in our lives, have and walk with the mind of Christ, and the ability to hear or sense what the Spirit is saying without the ‘clutter’ or ‘noise’ of damaged and distorted minds and/or emotions.

Nehemiah

To help us understand the work of the Holy Spirit in this transformation or re-building work in our lives, we look at the book of Nehemiah. The book of Nehemiah is all about the re-building of broken walls and it points us to the Helper and the help He has for us, and from the book we will see a picture of how He wants to help us. We will learn how to partner with the Holy Spirit on our personal renewal project.

God’s word shows us that there is a genuine possibility of personal restoration and fulfilment for everyone, regardless of what our past may hold, but that personal restoration only takes place if we submit to the guidance and tutelage of the Holy Spirit. The Helper longs to help us and eagerly waits for us to turn to Him for help.

Every one of us has experienced brokenness in one way or another. Some have experienced broken homes, broken relationships, abusive relationships, long arduous health issues, financial disaster, rejection, homelessness, persecution, bullying, and you can add whatever painful thing that is missing here that you’ve experienced.

We may not all be complete basket cases, but we do all have some ‘damage’ and are in need of restoration. Our heavenly Father is larger than any brokenness and is the source of life itself. He is

the Father of love, and He desires for us to walk in wholeness, living by the life of His Son, expressing and representing Him in all we do and say. His loving desire is to bring us to where we can live in accordance with His intentions for us, intentions He planned from before the world was created.

He sent His Son to redeem us, to restore our relationship with the Father, and to be the life in us. His desire is for us to live the 'abundant life'; to have the mind of Christ; to walk in Christ, whole, pure and strong. The same power He displayed in raising His Son for the dead is available to us, making nothing impossible in bringing us to wholeness in our walk and expression of Christ (Eph 1:19-20; Eph 3:14-21).

The Father didn't just place His Seed, the divine nature, in us and leave it at that; He also sent the Holy Spirit to teach us how to live by the life of His Son, Christ in us. The Holy Spirit, whose purpose is to glorify Christ, does this by bringing us to express Christ through our individual personalities. The Helper is ready to bring us to this fulfilment of God's purpose, in which we will experience fulfilment and walk in our highest destiny. He will do that if we will co-operate with Him.

The Helper is waiting for you to call upon His help.

A Picture of the Holy Spirit from History

We now turn to take a walk through the Book of Nehemiah which presents us with a beautifully encoded picture of the Holy Spirit's person, style, and ministry, and how we can participate in the rebuilding of our own souls.

In case you may be wondering how an historical book from the Old Testament can serve this purpose for us who live in the dispensation of grace let me remind you of some scriptures written by Paul, the minister of grace:

2 Tim 3:16-17 ... *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Rom 15:4 ... *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

1 Cor 10:11 ... *"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."*

The Book of Nehemiah was written approximately 450 years before the birth and life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and yet the Holy Spirit, the One who inspired the writing of this book, was making sure that we, more than two and a half thousand years later, would have a picture, a vibrant portrayal, of His restorative work in human lives.

There are historical facts, moral and spiritual lesson and pictures of New Testament truth contained in this book, but most important is that threaded throughout is a very clear picture of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit assisting the believer in rebuilding the broken places of human life.

Our study is not going to be a verse by verse exposition of the book, our main interest is to simply look at Nehemiah, his work, his leadership, and his influence.

Background Setting

The Book of Nehemiah begins in the year 446 B.C. This was ninety years after Cyrus, ruler of the Medo-Persians, had given permission to release more than fifty thousand Jews. Following this decree, Zerubbabel's leadership was instrumental in returning the Jews to Jerusalem.

Of those Jews that returned very few had ever been there before. The returning exiles were actually the children and grandchildren of people who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar during the Babylonian conquest and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem. Not only did Nebuchadnezzar level and burn the Jews capital city, he also removed them from their homeland taking them off to a distant culture, in the hopes that this would totally break their spirit and dissolve their identity as a people.

During the period prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exiling of the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar had installed puppet kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, to govern the area, to keep it under his rule and to gain taxes from the people. However, the continual resistance and rebellion of the Jews against his government made him decide to level the city and exile all prisoners to Babylon.

Jeremiah was prophet to the nation during the reign of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, warning of judgment to come because of the Jews' wilful disregard to live as God commanded. Jeremiah's prophecy even predicted that the length of their captivity would be seventy years. He also prophesied that after the seventy years were up, the exiled people would be released to return to Jerusalem where they would restore their temple and resume their worship of God. (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10-14.)

This was a period when a number of major international events prophesied by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Haggai were fulfilled. The balance of world power had shifted from Babylon to Persia and the fate of the exiled Jews was in the hands of the latest conquerors, but all of this was simply sovereign God at work manoeuvring nations and leaders to unknowingly bring about His plans for the restoration of the Jews to their land.

The end result was a decree issued by Cyrus that that all Jews who wished to return to Jerusalem were free to do so. Now take a moment and think about this. All of this was in accordance with prophecies declared hundreds of years previously. Jeremiah had foretold the length of their time in captivity and the fact of their return once that time was up (Jer 25:11; Jer 29:10-14), and Isaiah even named Cyrus by name two centuries before he was even born (Isa 44:28; Ezra 1:1-4). Ezekiel, who lived with the people in captivity in the regions of Babylon, also prophesied concerning their return and the reconstruction of their temple. All of this happened just as the prophets had declared, regardless of the complexity of the situation, and the unlikeliness of their release let alone the timing of it all. But in the year 536 B.C., exactly seventy years after the first contingent of exiles had come to Babylon, Cyrus issued his decree and the Jews deliverance occurred right on schedule. Amazing! But that's God! He's amazing!

Nehemiah uses the terminology "*the Jews who had escaped*" (Neh 1:2). This refers to the group of exiled Jews who had been released by Cyrus and who had returned to Jerusalem. They had returned to begin rebuilding their city and their nation. In captivity they had learned their lesson, polytheism

was forever to be shunned and Jehovah was their one and only God and to Him alone they would bow. They returned as a people for whom the pure worship of the one true God was a priority.

So with a desire to honour God, upon return, their first major undertaking was to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra (Ezra 3-6) records the return of the people from exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and goes on to describe the difficulties they encountered and how these obstacles were overcome through the spiritual inspirations of the prophets Zechariah and Haggai.

Building was completed and the temple dedicated in the year 516 B.C., twenty years after their return and commencement of the reconstruction program (Ezra 6:15). Their relationship with God was back on track, their spirits were lifted once again and they could now gather in the new temple to worship their one true God whose hand of favour, true to His promises, had lifted them out of despair and re-established them as a nation.

A City, a Temple, but No Walls

Then two more generations later, ninety years after their return to Jerusalem or seventy years since the temple was re-built, Nehemiah, a Jew who held a position of responsibility in the Persian Empire, finds out that his ancestral city, Jerusalem, was still without walls. His people were re-established in their land and in their worship, but as a nation they had no evidence of a re-established rulership. The city still had no walls. Any of their enemies could pop in and out of their city at will and cause trouble, and they had no defence against such incursions. This was a truly embarrassing situation. Nations around them would have been justified in mocking them and questioning the power of their God who allowed them to live like squatters.

This news caused Nehemiah to become grieved and concerned about his people. The city had no walls; it was a blot upon the name of the Jewish nation and a reproach upon the name of their God. Nehemiah's response was to weep, mourn, fast, and pray.

Neh 1:1-11 ... *"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. ³ They said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.'⁴ When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ I said, 'I beseech You, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, ⁶ let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; ⁹ but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of*

you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’¹⁰ They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.¹¹ O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man.’ Now I was the cupbearer to the king.”

Neh 2:1-6 ... *“And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.² So the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.’ Then I was very much afraid.³ I said to the king, ‘Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?’⁴ Then the king said to me, ‘What would you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven.⁵ I said to the king, ‘If it please the king, and if your servant has found favour before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.’⁶ Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, ‘How long will your journey be, and when will you return?’ So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.”*

We immediately begin to see the character of Nehemiah in his concerns and actions. He gives no thought to his own security, prestige, or convenience – his concern is focused on his people and their well being. His thoughts are directed towards how they will be established, strengthened, and respected as a stable nation. In Neh 1 we find him weeping, concerned and interceding; in Neh 2 we see him risking his life and obligating himself in their interest; in Neh 4 he secures their safety; in Neh 5 he unselfishly gives of his own resources; In Neh 6 he commits himself to the completion of a task that will remove their shame, and on and on it goes.

What we find here in this man, Nehemiah, and in what he does for his people, is a picture of the Holy Spirit emerging.

So to start with, we’ll focus our attention on the Holy Spirit, we’ll refresh our minds on who He is and what his mission is, and then we will begin to explore how the Book of Nehemiah can show us how to partner with the Holy Spirit through the complex and challenging task of rebuilding the "walls" of our lives.

The Helper

In our previous lessons we have learned that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is a person; He is God. He is not some abstract force or distant cosmic influence. The Holy Spirit is one expression of the God who created us, loves us, redeemed us, and longs to bring us to full maturity in Christ, to the realization of His original intent and purpose for each of us.

Let’s be reminded of what we learned about the Holy Spirit when we considered His place in the Trinity by looking at the matters of Equality, Authority and Ministry – as they apply to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

- **Equality:** The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equally God.
- **Authority:** The final authority is vested in the Father. The Son honours and points to the Father and the Holy Spirit honours and points to the Son.
- **Ministry:** The Father is the source of all things – He is **the planner** with an eternal purpose, and provider of the means by which His plans may come to fruition; The Son is **the provision** – He is the redeemer, the way, the truth and the life; The Holy Spirit is **the revealer and facilitator** – He reveals the way of salvation, He places the life of the Son in us (the birthing), He helps us renew our minds to align with the life of the Son in us.

In John 14-16 Jesus spoke at length concerning the Holy Spirit and His ongoing function in being our Helper, Our comforter, our Counsellor, our Teacher to reveal Christ to us and to bring us to maturity in Christ. His mission is to help us understand and know Christ so that Christ may be seen through us – in our daily lives. That does not mean He is here just to give us facts *about* Christ. He is here to bring us the revelation of Christ as our only life – the life we are to live by – and to help us live out of that life. The Comforter has come, and His mission is to help us to move forward as growing sons and daughters of the Most High God. His presence and work in our lives will be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit that we bear; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control. The enabling presence of the Holy Spirit helps us see who we are in Christ so that Christ will be seen more perfectly in each of us.

We All Need Help

Amongst believers there can be a wide variation in their response to the Holy Spirit. Some are hesitant to allow the Holy Spirit an unrestricted liberty to work in their lives. This hesitation or refusal is often related to, and proportional to, the nature and depth of difficulties the person experienced in life prior to being born again.

With many God's help is not invited until things have deteriorated to a critical state. Self pride thinks it is weakness to seek help and that we can tough it out and do it alone. We also give way to the false notion that unless our situation is absolutely critical we will be unnecessarily hassling God by asking Him for help. The result is that by the time we eventually "crack" and in desperation turn to the Holy Spirit for help, we have suffered unnecessary and excessive "damage".

Now, whether we have good "survival" skills or not, and whether we have had a "good" or "bad" past, we all have suffered "damage" to one degree or another and we all, without exception, need the Holy Spirit's restorative work in our souls. We need to co-operate fully and give Him free reign to commence and carry out the process of re-building our souls.

The Holy Spirit Helps Us Grow

Having been born again we have started our life in Christ. But that's just the start. What do we do now? How do we go on from here? Is our progress left up to us? Well Paul confronted the Galatians with a similar question:

Gal 3:3 NLT ... "After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?"

You see, the work the Holy Spirit began by birthing Christ in us was just the beginning, not the end, as far as God's plan for our lives. The Holy Spirit started something in us, placed the life of Christ in us, and now He wants us to mature in Christ and this takes His help and our co-operation. This is not something we can do without His help.

There's no doubt that most of us want to grow and mature in Christ. However we all have some obstacles to this growth – things that relate to our past life. When we are born again all of our sin is forgiven and we are brought into a relationship with our heavenly Father, but that does not necessarily remove the consequences that are a carryover from our past life in sin. We may still have some hangover habits, attitudes, mindsets or past hurts that we are nursing. It will take more than self effort to grow out of these things – we need the help of the Holy Spirit to bring us to mental and emotional wholeness so that Christ may be seen in us. God has made the provision, He sent the Holy Spirit to be our Helper, but we need to embrace His help as He brings us to wholeness in Christ in every area of our lives.

Nehemiah: A Picture of the Comforter

The Book of Nehemiah provides us a picture of a people who had been given a new start to life but who, rather embarrassingly, were unable to show convincing evidence of this renewal. They had returned to Jerusalem in their homeland, the temple was rebuilt, but they had failed to fully restore and secure their city walls and therefore remained insecure and vulnerable as a nation. But a kinsman of theirs, a leader in a distant nation, heard of their situation and distress and came to their rescue to help them rebuild and fully restore the walls of Jerusalem out of the rubble from past destruction.

Their return to Jerusalem and reconstruction of the temple may be likened to our rebirth and their need for help in restoring and rebuilding the broken city walls may be likened to our need for help in the renewing of our damaged souls. And so, the king of the distant nation commissioning Nehemiah to go and assist his people in their rebuilding program provides us with a picture of the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Lord to be our Helper in rebuilding the walls of our souls.

Nehemiah was sent with an authority that overruled the local governors – an authority that stirred up confidence in the people to get on with the task in the face of adversarial attacks. He is a picture of the Holy Spirit, our authorised leader.

Nehemiah did not go to do the work alone. His job was to lead and provide direction to the people and to co-ordinate their efforts in the rebuilding program. Similarly, the Holy Spirit has been sent to lead, guide and help us rebuild and fully restore our souls out of the rubble of our past.

The name Nehemiah comes from two Hebrew words: *nacham* which means “to breathe strongly”, “to pity”, “to console”, and from *Yah* which is the sacred name for God. So putting them together Nehemiah means “the consoling breath of God.” “Pity” also speaks of an “active interest in another”. So, not only is Nehemiah a good picture of the “breath of God”, the Holy Spirit, but also his name is virtually synonymous with that of the Holy Spirit. Nehemiah represents the “Comforter”. Further, it is interesting to note that the root from which *nacham* is derived (נחם) means “change attitudes”. One of the Holy Spirit's prime purposes in coming to us is to help us “change attitudes” – renew our minds!

So what we see is that centuries before Christ's entry to our world – long before He ascended back to heaven and sent us the Holy Spirit – God implanted a coded message in His Word, in the book of Nehemiah, concerning the rebuilding and recovery ministry of the Holy Spirit. Unknown to Nehemiah himself, he represents, for us centuries later, a picture of the manner in which the Holy Spirit assists the “born again” in renewing and restoring our souls that were ruined by sin.

Besides being rebirthed (made new in spirit) we need to be restored, and so our Lord sent the Holy Spirit to help us renew and rebuild our soul (mind, will and emotions). So as well as being a book containing historical facts, leadership principles and valuable lessons for life, Nehemiah contains the encoded message concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the restoration of our souls – taking us from brokenness to wholeness and from weakness to strength in Christ.

What Happened at the “Fall” of Man?

Before we go further we need to understand fully what happened when man “fell” – what changed, what was “broken” and what needs to be “fixed”. For when sin entered the world a major change occurred.

God created man ... *“in His own image”* (Gen 1:27) with a specific purpose that was to operate out of a personal relationship with God. God's plan was that man was to reflect His image, His nature. That nature included having and exercising a free will.

Part of God's purpose for man was that he was to exercise responsible dominion over the earth and all it contained. Every relationship – with fellow man, with the creatures and the resources of the earth – were to be carried out in a manner that was consistent with the nature of God.

The authority and ability to successfully exercise rule over the earth and all it contained was to flow out of a relationship of continued obedience and reverential worship of the Creator. So while man was given a free will he would only find true fulfilment in his God ordained purpose by submitting his will to the ongoing instructions that flowed from the Father.

So it is clear that rulership over God's creation exercised out of a relationship with Him is fundamental to our created purpose.

Both were broken by the “Fall”, and unless our relationship is restored and our dominion recovered we cannot operate in the Father's original purpose for our lives. Until the destructive outcome of the “Fall” is reversed in our lives we will be unable to live the abundant and victorious life, find true fulfilment, or experience His eternal purpose in and through us.

Having a clear understanding of the impact of the “Fall” is vital because unless you fully comprehend what has been destroyed and lost, you won't know what is included in the provision of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Totality of Redemption's Provision

The message of redemption correctly starts with preaching and teaching that focuses on restoring us to a personal relationship with God. The gospel message shows how the cross of Jesus Christ has bridged the chasm that sin has caused between God and man and how salvation through the shed

blood of Christ provides us a way back to God. We must be born again (John 3:3). This step is essential if we are to be restored in relationship with the Father.

But redemption's plan does not end there. We are restored in relationship in order that we may go on to participate in God's original purpose for man – that ... *“those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”* (Rom 5:17). God's desire is to return us to fully restored rulership. Our full restoration includes a recovery of self-control, an understanding of our identification in Christ and a walk in Christ with stabilised temperament and character.

By His grace God wants to restore us to His original purpose for our lives.

1 Pet 5:10 ... *“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”*

While being born again restores us in relationship to the Father, the essence of the rebuilding project is a focus upon restored rulership – the recovery of a godly people's identity as self-governing and their city's restored appearance as a capital centre of wholeness and strength. Instead of dwelling in insecurity amid the rubble of the once-glorious city of Jerusalem, the people will arise, rebuild the walls and live in peace and victory on a daily basis.

Distress and Reproach

The book of Nehemiah opens with a conversation between Nehemiah and Hanani, a relative, along with some men from Judah, who visited him with a report concerning the state of returned exiles in Jerusalem.

Neh 1:3 ... *“They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”*

This report spoke of a people who had evidence of a relationship with God. In fulfilment of prophecy, God had returned the Jews from exile to their home land. Following their return, God had helped them rebuild the temple, and when completed they conducted regular, God-honouring worship in their new temple. In other words, their relationship was restored with God and they faithfully offered up to Him pure worship.

While enjoying worship out of a right relationship with God the people recognised their situation was incomplete and that they were vulnerable as a nation. Their sentiment was ... *“We have a temple, but our capital city – our centre of government – is in disarray and is insecure.”* They recognised that a city without walls and secure gates was open to invasion and disruption by enemy forces. They had no way of keeping back an adversary. Also they realised that there was no proper seat of government, as in those days the city gates were the place where the rulers of a city sat and from which they governed.

They were highly embarrassed, as they had a relationship with God but outwardly had no evidence of its affect on their daily lives. Jerusalem was their capital city – their *“face”* to the world around –

a city with a beautiful temple but no walls, just rubble where walls should have stood tall and strong. As a result they were vulnerable and drew mockery from their critics concerning the inability of their God to take full care of them.

This may be a picture with which you are familiar. You may be born again, but your life may be a contradiction to the power of the God you worship. You may have had critics point a finger and say ... “You claim to be a Christian ... born again ... but look at the mess your life is in.” If you honestly evaluate your life and see how much is broken down and “burned with fire,” you may experience the same sense of reproach and distress that Hanani expressed to Nehemiah. If you do, take hope, because Nehemiah presents us a message about a people who after being restored in their relationship with God went on in that relationship to recover their potential to function as citizens of a secured city. They learned what it means to “reign in life.”

So we find that the Book of Nehemiah presents us with the pathway to full recovery. The return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple is a picture of restored relationship with God – being born again; made new in spirit. The rebuilding of the walls and restoration of the gates picture renewed souls – whole in mind, will and emotions. It’s a story that parallels how born again people can once again walk in Christ, holy and whole, ruling and reigning according to God’s eternal purpose for our lives.

The Ruin Sin Leaves Behind

Despite many warnings from a number of prophets, Israel chose the path of disobedience. Their sin bore severe consequences, as sin bears within itself the deadly seeds of its own penalty. Judgement came upon the nation, their city was destroyed and they were taken captive and carried away to a distant place where they lived in exile.

Once, by God’s grace, they were returned to their nation and to Jerusalem the restored people rebuilt the temple and engaged in meaningful worship of their God. But despite all this good they were still a dismayed and humiliated people because the evidence of their past sin, the rubble and burned gates, was there before them in full view.

It is no different for us. Sin and the consequential damage it causes often leaves behind a painful residue, evident even after we have been born again. We end up being the possessors of eternal life but void of confidence and wholeness.

This damage means that many of us are plagued with the inability to shut out depressive thoughts from our mind, often dominated by fear, unable to withstand temptation, and constantly have a feeling of worthlessness. Does that sound familiar?

But there is hope. For in salvation’s plan our Lord not only offers restored relationship but also the possibility of renewed souls. We can be fully reinstated in relationship and rulership.

However, we need to see the need and the goal of this full recovery if we are to come to wholeness. We also need to understand that the timing of this rebuilding process varies from individual to individual.

Be Patient and You'll Be Fully Restored

The degree of “damage” varies from person to person depending on the nature of their past. Even though they really love the Lord and desire to be His steadfast disciple the residue from past issues continues to hold them back. Frequently the result is that frustration and confusion plagues them, especially when they see other “less damaged” people growing faster than them.

So it is important to let patience perform its perfect work in us. Some things in our lives can be instantly changed as we obey God's word, while other areas of weakness will take more time and co-operation with the Holy Spirit as He helps us “put on Christ” and come to wholeness in those areas. The restoration of our souls is a process which the rebirth makes possible but which takes time to achieve.

This rebuilding process involves three steps:

- Co-operation with the Holy Spirit, your Nehemiah
- Allow Him to help you to identify the areas of your life where there are “broken walls and burned gates.”
- Be diligent to submit to the Holy Spirit and God's word and do your part in the “working out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). This includes the working together with the others that the Holy Spirit places in your “team”.

Through diligence and dedication you will eventually, by God's grace, be whole, strong and secure and able to live the “abundant life” that Christ promised and for which He made provision. Not only will your spirit, formerly dead in sin, be reborn, but also the “rubble” of your soul (your mind, emotions, and will – decision-making ability) will be brought to being fully restored. The “broken walls and burned gates” of your life will be repaired as God brings you to wholeness and security through the power of His love.

It is important to point out that the “broken walls and burned gates” are not always the direct consequence of your own sin. The vast majority of the “remnant” that returned to Jerusalem were not the generation that had sinned and been taken exile. They were children and grandchildren of the original offenders. So they inherited the destruction that was the result of an earlier generation's failure.

This is why many of us have struggled in our walk in Christ due to the constraints resulting from inherited difficulties or weaknesses that were passed on to us from an earlier generation. At times the transmission has been through direct actions we have faced. Painful scarring can result from misunderstanding or mistreatment from parents or other authority figures, whether this was intentional or not. There are also the genetic transmissions we may inherit – and these may be physical, spiritual, emotional, or mental ones.

The good news is that no matter how severe the damage, if we are patient and diligently co-operate with the Holy Spirit He will bring us to wholeness, to maturity in Christ, and we ... “*will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ*” (Rom 5:17).

Lesson 8 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – Division of Soul and Spirit

Spirit, Soul and Body

1 Thess 5:23 ... *“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.”*

It's important that we understand our total make up, and particularly understand the difference between soul and spirit. These terms are often used incorrectly, very loosely and sometimes interchangeably by some people. You would be surprised how many people have no idea of the constituent parts of their being, the differences, their functions and why.

This matter is not just academic. Just as the broken walls of the city of Jerusalem and the temple built within the city are distinct entities, so there is a clear distinction between soul and spirit. The temple was not a building established to defend the people of the city against invaders, and neither were the walls of the city constructed for the purpose of providing a place for worship.

The walls and the temple are distinctly different structures, and yet each is a vital and integral part of the whole – the restored city. Jerusalem, with its new temple but with no walls, was incomplete. So the new shiny temple, in the middle of a city that had no walls, was at risk. Anyone with evil intent from outside could invade the city and destroy the temple or at least hurt the worshippers inside it.

As we look at the Book of Nehemiah we see it gives us a clear picture of the relationship between our spirit (the temple) and our soul (the city walls).

Our spirit is the relational, worshipful, living centre of our personality – the innermost part of our being. It is a hidden spiritual part within us that cannot be seen.

Our soul is the command centre of our personality, which includes intellect, emotions, and will – it's that part between our spirit and body. The part that tells the body what to do – laugh, cry, love, hate, obey or disobey. It is also an invisible spiritual part of us, but it drives the body parts.

Our body houses our spirit and soul – it's the outer, physical and visible part of us.

In our rebuilding program it's how the two distinct hidden inner spiritual parts, spirit and soul, function and co-operate that we need to understand and focus upon. While the Word distinguishes between our soul and spirit, together they make up who I am. When you look at me you're seeing the “soul me” and the “spirit me” expressed through the “body me”. You can't see the separate “soul me” or “spirit me” parts that make up “me”. It takes all three parts to make up “me”. However, if I am born again (which means my spirit is complete and whole), but my soul is still “broken” (not yet renewed and whole), then “me” that you will see will be reflected in less than holy or whole actions or words (the body expressions of “me”) and you'll know the “soul me” is still in a “broken” state. For us to be whole, both our spirit and soul need to be made new – by the re-birthing and renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

It is vital that we fully understand this distinction between soul and spirit in order that we can co-operate more fully with the Holy Spirit as He works in us to bring us from brokenness to wholeness.

Besides the passage from 1 Thess 5:23 there are other scriptures that make a clear distinction between our soul and our spirit:

Heb 4:12 ... *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of **soul** and **spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

After Elizabeth’s greeting and confirmation that Mary was bearing the Messiah, Mary sang this song of praise to God

Luke 1:46-47 ... *“My **soul** exalts the Lord, and my **spirit** has rejoiced in God my Savior.”*

From the Word we see the distinction between soul and spirit and that God wants to accomplish His work in us. From the Book of Nehemiah God gives us a clear picture as a parallel with what He wants to accomplish in us.

The temple, an integral part of the city of Jerusalem and central to worship, is a picture of our spirit. The people sinned, the temple and the city of Jerusalem were razed and they were taken away to a distant pagan land. Many years later they returned and rebuilt the temple and resumed their worship. Our sin destroyed our relationship with God and separated us from Him. It destroyed our capacity to worship Him. But being born again, with the seed of the Father, the resurrection life of Christ in us, we were made brand new creatures – sons and daughters of the Father. Back in relationship with Him and re-established as worshippers.

The city, with its secure gates and walls, the centre from which the surrounding country was governed, can be compared to our soul. In the same way in which the walls and gates of the city of Jerusalem had been demolished as a result of punishment for sin, so, through sin, our soul was stained and broken down, losing its capacity and ability to live under and in accordance with the direction and governance of God.

The peaceful and fruitful land of “milk and honey” surrounding the city of Jerusalem, or so it was meant to be, may be compared to our body. Once we have been born again, made new in spirit, and have been restored in soul, God can channel and manifest the life and witness of His Son through us. The fruit of the Spirit is made visible and able to be enjoyed by those around us.

Now, the downcast and distressed state of Jerusalem that confronted Nehemiah may be compared to our “broken” and un-renewed state before the Holy Spirit comes to carry out His restoration work in us. We’re born again, forgiven, restored in our relationship with our heavenly Father who we lovingly worship but we struggle to live the “abundant life”. We struggle to overcome the pulls of the flesh, we seem to constantly fail and feel like failures, we frequently compromise when we should stand apart from the world and its ways, we succumb to the rejection and injustices the enemy so delights in serving up to us, and we put on a facade to pretend we are what we are supposed to be but have not been able to attain just to “look good” and meet expectations. All our pretence and vain efforts do not and cannot restore what is broken.

Nehemiah's Concern – Broken Walls

Neh 1:3-4 ... *“They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire. When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”*

When Nehemiah heard that the walls were still in ruin, he was saddened and dismayed. It was twenty years since the people returned and rebuilt the temple, yet the walls of Jerusalem remained broken down. Nehemiah knew what he had to do. He needed to go and help the people rebuild the walls. In the same manner the Holy Spirit, whose concerned heart yearns for us to be whole, especially for believers who were born again many years ago but who are still living with un-renewed minds and damaged emotions, knows exactly what is needed in our lives and He's been sent to be our Helper.

Nehemiah's concern and focus on the walls is a picture of the Holy Spirit's concern and focus on our souls. When we hear Nehemiah's words ... *“when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days”* we hear the sigh of the Holy Spirit as He looks at us, the born again, with concern over the manner of our conduct, which betrays our broken down condition of soul. He looks at us and says, *“Their temples have been rebuilt, but their walls are still in ruins.”*

The parallels are evident. Even though we are born again and brand new in spirit (a new temple has been built), we must grow up in Christ, no longer conformed to the world with its darkened understanding and unstable emotions, but renewed in our mind and walking as children of light.

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

Eph 4:17-18, 23-24 ... *“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart ... and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*

Eph 5:7-8 ... *“Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.”*

According to Eph 4:30 and its context, we grieve the Holy Spirit when we, who are born again, live in the rubble of lives steered by un-renewed minds and damaged emotions. Brokenness and malfunction of soul does not mean we are damned, but it does grieve the Holy Spirit.

The Soul – The Command Centre

Our soul is the command centre of our lives. The state and focus of our mind, will and emotions will determine our actions. To the extent we are renewed in our minds we will express Christ in every

part of our being. Therefore our attention needs to be focused on co-operating with the Holy Spirit as He helps us rebuild our souls.

As we have previously seen our soul is made up of three parts which together establish our personality:

- Mind – the process centre of thoughts, intellect, intelligence
- Emotions – the process centre of feelings, attitudes, temperament
- Will – the process centre of decisions, choice, determination – ultimate command centre

Our will interacts between our thoughts and emotions and is where the ultimate decisions are made. Our will determines our destiny. It looks at the range of options of thoughts and emotions being offered and chooses which to follow. So through the steering of the will the soul functions as the command centre and ultimately determines our personality.

So whatever is happening in your soul determines how you think and feel today – joyful or sad, happy or grieved, peaceful or stressed out, teachable or unteachable, caring or unloving, forgiving or hateful, excited about learning more to grow in Christ or just couldn't bother, and so on.

Our desire to understand and grow in Christ grow is determined by what goes on in our soul and has to do with the state of our soul. If we want to follow Our Lord and obey His will there will be certain thoughts, attitudes and feelings contrary to this desire that we will have to take captive and reject.

1 Cor 10:5 ... *“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.”*

It is so important that we understand the need for restoration of our soul because the state of our soul will determine whether we remain unfulfilled, downcast, disturbed, lacking in victory, depressed and frustrated, or whether we are walking in freedom in Christ, fulfilled, victorious, joyful, forgiving, loving and becoming more and more radiant shining forth the glory of our Lord.

We may be born again, one with Christ in spirit, able to worship God, but it's our transformed and renewed soul that will determine and bring us to true fulfilment, peace and joy and the “abundant life” in Christ.

If we have a dam full of beautiful fresh rainwater but no well built and maintained pipe system in place to get the water from the dam to the city or to the farms, what benefit is the water? We will remain thirsty and the crops won't have the essential water for growth and there will be no harvest. Our soul is the “pipe line” that conveys the life of Christ from within our spirit to be a blessing to both ourselves and those around us.

Tears, Assessment and Action

Nehemiah's identification with his people and empathy for their brokenness initiated his tears, but he did not just sit there having a pity party and crying, he set in his mind to devise a plan whereby the people would be restored in their dignity, secure in their city and respected as a nation. In the same way the Holy Spirit understands our individual situation and in a compassionate way and He is right there with exactly what you need to rebuild and transform any area of brokenness in your soul.

Neh 2:11-17 ... *“So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work. Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”*

Just as Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to get a firsthand account of the situation – to evaluate the damage and form a plan of action for restoring the broken walls and gates – so the Holy Spirit comes to us, evaluates our needs and provides us with a “building plan”.

Whether they are from our early years, mid way through life or even from recent difficult circumstances and situations, everyone of us retain to a greater or lesser degree some emotional scars and mental wounds, even if we are not conscious of this and have forgotten the actual events.

Some of the things we faced, particularly in our early years, may have caused us to become insecure and fearful resulting in an identity crisis. Just like Jerusalem with its broken walls, we have no established boundary of identity or secured line of defence. The city without walls could not keep the enemy out, and our “broken walls” hinder us from being able to resist unwanted thoughts and deprive us of the emotional strength and ability to be courageous or stable in times of crisis.

Assessing the Situation

Where do you sit in this matter? Are you able to resist temptation? Do you have bad habits? Are you generally fearful, guarded and mistrusting? Do you struggle with doubt? Is it hard for you to forgive? Has mental or emotional pain resulted in physical illness of some form? Could it be that the walls and gates of your soul are damaged leaving you in a state of vulnerability and insecurity?

What is going on in your mind? Are your thoughts destabilising you? Are they preventing your spiritual growth? Like the people whose city had no walls, has reproach and embarrassment left you weak, vulnerable and unable to resist your enemies? Are you wavering in doubt? Do imaginations or lack of concentration distract you from focusing on important and significant matters? What about impure thoughts? Is reasoning and the ability to make logical decisions an area of difficulty for you? You love the Lord, you desire to have the mind of Christ, you want to submit to the will of God, but with all you have faced it’s just all too hard – is that you?

Now let’s talk about your emotions. How’s that part getting on? Are you crippled by hurts? Are you simply just “numb”? Is anger and bitterness burning in you? Are revengeful attitudes festering in you? Do fears grip you concerning your future? Is succumbing to lust giving temporary satisfaction to

the “flesh” but gradually eating away your inner integrity making it more and more difficult to resist the temptations?

Why do we ask these probing questions? Because our negative mental and emotional forces work against us. They cripple our confidence and undermine correct decision making. They weaken our resistance, erode our integrity and make it hard to rise up above the difficulties we face. They make it so hard for us to express Christ in all our thoughts, words and actions and walk in His will. So it is very important that we invite the Holy Spirit to help us lay it all before Him and with His help ask the hard questions and assess our weaknesses and allow Him to map out a path for recovery – a plan for transformation and reconstruction so that we can be whole and strong, replacing the weak areas of our soul with the sufficiency of the abundant life we have in Christ. Where He who is resident within our spirit may be evidenced throughout our entire being.

In all of this, no matter what you have faced and the pains and brokenness it has brought, in Christ there is hope. God has a plan – the temple has been built – You’re born again and in spirit you are alive in Christ. Now with the help of the Helper you can know, understand and live by that life. He will bring you to a place where the life of Christ in you will permeate your thoughts, infiltrate your emotions and guide your will if you submit to and allow the Helper to do His transformation and restoration work in you. Let our heart cry align with the words of the psalmist:

Ps 139:23-24 ... *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.”*

The Holy Spirit – Our Helper

We have a loving Heavenly Father that knew us before He formed us in our mother’s womb (Ps 139), with a plan in His heart, established before the foundation of the world, that we would live in and by the abundant Christ life (Eph 1:4), and that plan is for our wellbeing and not for calamity (Jer 29:11). His plan and purpose for us are long term plans. Included in His plan is that we will be moved from being marginalized in life to finding and walking in His purpose of our life, and in place of being fractionalized we will become whole – ...*“holy and blameless before Him”* (Eph 1:4) – completely restored.

Deep within your spirit you know you’re born again and have the life of Christ resident within you (Gal 2:20). You don’t question your salvation, and you love the Lord dearly and know He loves you unconditionally. Your heart’s desire is to know Him and serve Him. But possibly you’re looking at yourself and asking the question, “If I belong to Christ, if I’m His, and I’m born again, then why am I feeling the way I am – downcast, depressed, fearful, angry, insecure, and unsure. Why has all this bad stuff happened to me?” Well, there is an answer. We find it in the story from Nehemiah. Restoration as well as redemption is included in God’s gift of salvation. Our salvation includes a reborn spirit and a restored soul—a complete recovery. All that was stolen and destroyed will be replaced.

Jerusalem’s walls had not been reconstructed through lack of building skills or absence of desire to rebuild them. It was simply that the opposition they faced and lack of resources prevented the reconstruction program. But when Nehemiah appeared on the scene a solution to the dilemma was

provided. He assessed the situation, made plans, enlisted the people to carry out the work in accordance with his plans, and together they got to work. It was a joint effort.

It's important to note that although decades had passed since the people had returned to Jerusalem and to that time no work had been done on the walls, Nehemiah did not despise the people or look upon them with contempt for not having started to rebuild the walls. He focused on the solution, not the problem and simply stood up to lead and invite the people to join him in the rebuilding program.

The Holy Spirit will never condemn us for failing. His desire is for our wellbeing and is eager to help us get the job done. He knows our need, He knows the plan, He will lead us, but He needs our buy in. It's a joint effort that will get the reconstruction done.

Pray – Seek Help

In his grief and dismay Nehemiah could have joined the masses and become depressed like they were, or he could have become angry, exploding in condemnation and blame, but that's not what he did. Instead his immediate response was to take the matter to God in prayer – to the One he knew who could help. Throughout the book we will find there are seventeen prayers. Nehemiah knew where to get help and that ... *“the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”* (James 5:16). He sets us a good example to follow.

Neh 1:4-11 ... *“When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, “I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’ They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man.”*

Prayer Wrapped in Worship

The first few words of his prayer ... *“I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments”* (1:5) show Nehemiah's understanding of the not only God's omnipotence but also

of His compassion. This first line clearly links God's greatness with His mercy, for He knows we are but dust and fallible, and yet He is all powerful to lift us up and make us whole. In this first part of the prayer we see words of respectful worship for our Almighty God who has a covenant of mercy with those who love Him.

The last part of the prayer also offers up reverential worship. ... *"may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name"* (1:11). The prayer starts and ends with worship.

Leads On to Obedience

The prayer also shows us the close relationship between loving God and obeying Him. It reveals the heart of pure intent – the desire to do what pleases God ... *"those who love Him and keep His commandments"* (1:5) ... *"Your servants who delight to revere Your name"* (1:11). We may be far from perfect, but God sees, knows and will honour prayers that come from a pure heart that seeks to submit to Him and intends to obey Him. If we pray with this attitude we can expect a positive answer.

These were people who had become overwhelmed by the situation, and had basically failed. But they were worshippers whose desire was to obey. God overlooked their deficiencies because of the pure intent of their hearts. That's exactly what He will do with you and me if we have the right attitude and intent of heart before Him. It's not what you have or have not done that counts in God's eyes, it's your heart attitude. Along the way you may make more mistakes, but to God that is not as important as maintaining a heart with pure intent – an intent to obey. He will help us until we "get it right" if our heart is right.

1 Sam 16:7 ... *"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

Confess Your Sins

Neh 1:7 ... *"We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses."*

For the Holy Spirit to help us break the chains that bind us we need to acknowledge our sin before God. Confession, repentance and remorse for sin releases God's power in our lives to overcome and stand strong against future onslaughts of the enemy. Confessing our sin clears our "line" to heaven, and heavens response to us so that we can hear and know God's will for our lives.

Ps 66:18 ... *"If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear."*

Whether the sins is yours or that of others, as an intercessor like Nehemiah, identify with the one/s who have sinned and confess the sin that has brought on the trouble and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. Jesus on the cross said, *"Father forgive them for they don't know what they're doing."*

Sin may not necessarily be some unkind, very bad, or immoral deed we have committed, it may be something morally okay that we have attended to and given our time instead of doing what God has told us to do with our time. An example would be: I like playing golf. There's nothing morally or sinfully wrong with playing golf. But if God has told me that for the next month I must spend my

“golf” time in fasting, prayer and intercession for some particular person or situation and I go off and play golf as normal, then I disobey God and that’s sin. So we need to constantly search our hearts to make certain there are no “blockers” there – things that come between us and God.

Pray the Word

Like Nehemiah we need to know and pray God’s word. Nehemiah’s prayer is filled with quotations from the scriptures. He prays ... *“Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses”* and goes on to quote statements taken from Lev 26, Deut4 and Deut 28. His prayer also contains statements that are found in the word regarding God’s loving-kindness and mercy. Because, through his knowledge of the word, Nehemiah has seen God’s hand at work in kindness and mercy among His people in the past, he has faith in God to hear him and respond favourably in his current situation.

As we pray we need to ask the Holy Spirit to quicken our minds to speak out the scriptures relevant to the situation we face, remembering that God is gracious, kind and merciful and desires that we come to wholeness. His word is His will. Praying according to His will ensures a positive answer.

Present Your Requests

Neh 1:11 ... *“make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man.”*

Nehemiah needs the king’s favour to give him leave of absence to attend to matters in Jerusalem and so he makes a specific request to God for this to happen. But this request comes only after he has first commenced in worship acknowledging the greatness of God, expressed a desire to obey Him, reminded himself and God of his sin, failures and disobedience, and remembered and declared in accordance with the word God’s faithfulness and help towards his people in the past.

If we approach the throne of grace in an attitude of worship, with humble, open, trusting hearts, we are assured that the Holy Spirit will be along side of us to help us pray in line with God’s will. How amazing is that! When we don’t know, or are not sure, what to pray, the Holy Spirit, our Helper, steps in and helps us pray God’s perfect will for our situation.

Rom 8:26-27 ... *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

This will result in our situation and circumstances ... *“working out for good”*.

Rom 8:28-29 ... *“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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.”*

But it is important to note the order of these verses. Things only work together for our good when we first partner with the Holy Spirit in prayer and pray in accordance with the will of God. The second thing to note is that ...*“being conformed to the image of his Son”* is His goal for us. Isn’t that exactly what the transformation of our souls, the rebuilding of our “broken walls” is all about!

But what Nehemiah is really showing is – to pray! We can't succeed without divine help. But with Him, all things are possible! So high on our daily agenda for growth in Christ should be prayer.

Jude 20 ... *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”*

Eph 6:18 ... *“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit.”*

Rom 26-27 ... *“the Spirit... helps our weakness ... intercedes for us ... according to the will of God”*

Prayer is not trying to twist God's arm to do something He's reluctant to do for us, it's inviting Him to do what he longs to do – conform us to the image of His Son. That should be the basis for our requests.

Holy and Whole

Eph 1:4 ... *“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”*

Col 1:22 ... *“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.”*

2 Cor 13:9 ... *“this we also pray for, that you be made complete.”*

Col 1:28 ... *“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”*

In these verses we see the words “holy”, “blameless” and “complete” – something God wants for us to be.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “holy” or “holiness”? For many words like “holiness” and “sanctification” have become religious words that point to legalism or religious programs, lots of “do's” and “don'ts”. Do you see it as something unapproachable or unattainable? Something more “feely” than fact? It must be an important word as “holy” (or its derivatives – holiness, holiest, hallow, hallowed) occurs around seven hundred times in the Bible.

In the simplest of terms we may understand it this way.

- Being born again brings to our spirit **holiness**. In Christ we are made holy. Being partakers of the divine nature we are made holy, as holiness is the foundation of God's essential being. Holiness is that attribute of God by which He preserves the integrity of His own being.
- Being renewed in our soul, with transformed mind, will and emotions, we are brought to **wholeness** – made complete.

Just as Nehemiah was concerned for his people and committed to helping them in their re-building program, so the Holy Spirit is concerned and committed in teaming up with us to bring us to wholeness. He has brought holiness to us through the birthing of the holy life of Christ in us. Now He wants this to flow out into our soul and bring to it wholeness. So holiness brings to us wholeness, and then through wholeness holiness can be expressed.

Rom 5:5 (KJV) ... *“the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the holy and whole life of Jesus Christ into the whole of our being, so that the holy and whole love of God can be seen in us and shared with the people of the world around us so they may come to holiness and wholeness.

Our English word “holy” is derived from the medieval English word “hal”. From this root word have come our modern words “health”, “hale”, “whole”, and “holy”. So we see the link between holy and whole in our language. Holiness is not an intangible attribute that only belongs in the realm of the spirit. It is something operative and real in us influencing who we are.

- Your spirit is one with Christ (holy, complete and whole – with nothing we can or need to do to improve it)
- Your soul, your mind, will and emotions, can be restored (made whole) – by aligning soul with spirit
- Your physical body, its habits and condition, can become disciplined, and brought to well-being (kept healthy).

When we look at holiness and wholeness this way it makes holiness and wholeness desirable, practical and attainable. God wants to make us holy and whole – complete in our entire being – just as He is. When we are brought to wholeness then holiness can be expressed through our thoughts, words and actions. When that happens we walk in the Spirit, we walk in love, we walk in peace, and we walk in purity and integrity. We express Christ to the world around us.

When, where, who, and how does this process of sanctification or being brought to wholeness occur? The answer is found in Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 5:23 ... *“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*

- It’s for now – *“Now may the God of peace sanctify you entirely”*.
- It’s something God Himself will do in you – *“the God of peace sanctify you”*
- It involves your entire being, spirit, soul and body, and brings you to peace, completeness, and wholeness – *“sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete”*
- It is a process that will go on until the coming of our Lord to receive us up into glory – *“without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus”*

More simply, the God Holy Spirit is ready to do everything He can to bring you to completion, starting today and continuing His work in you until you go to be with the Lord in glory!

It is the ... *“God of peace”* who puts you together. The word “peace” speaks of unity, the bringing together of separated parts or fragments of something that has been broken. Just a Jerusalem’s broken walls were re-built as a complete, sound structure, so our fragmented soul can be put together – united – brought to peace. The God of peace, the Comforter, will bring wholeness from brokenness.

A Chip off the Old Block

1 Pet 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.’”*

Peter quotes Lev 11:44 and Jesus says something very similar:

Matt 5:48 ... *“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

So from Old and New Testament we hear the Father’s heart cry for us – His desire for what He wants us to be to be and what we can be because He is the Father whose holy “seed”, Christ, has been birthed in us. Holiness and perfection is not some unattainable ethereal goal. It’s our Father saying the life I have placed in you is holy, so live by that life, let it flow from your spirit to your soul and out through your words and actions. Be seen as My children and express My holiness. Be a “chip off the old block”.

This heart cry was not intended by the Father to produce fear and condemnation in us, it is something He desires that offers us hope. It’s not something that should have us scurrying around in condemnation trying to do things to try and meet some unattainable standard. There’s nothing you can “do” to be holy. Holiness a gift from God. In Christ you have been made holy. All God wants from us is to “be” who He has made us – His holy children, living by the source of holiness in us, Christ. Put on the (holy) mind of Christ. Let the (holy) mind of Christ direct your thoughts and actions.

So, for us to come to wholeness and be able to express the holiness of the life of Christ in us, this matter has to be once and for all settled – we have been “made” holy by virtue of the life of Christ birthed in us. In other words, when we received Jesus Christ as our Saviour, when we were “born again”, a new holy life was placed in us – in our spirit. When the Father looks at you He regards you a holy because he sees Christ in you (Gal 2:20), and Christ is holy and perfect. Now for us to express the holy life that is in us, we need to “put on Christ” in our mind, will and emotion area so that we can think, respond, speak and act out of that holy nature. The “putting on of Christ” is a growth thing – a process – and the Holy Spirit helps us in this “process” of coming to maturity or completeness in Christ. Because our Father is holy, we as His birthed children are assured that we have His holy nature (His holy DNA) and, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, will grow and mature to where that holy nature is visible in our outward actions.

God is holy and He us unchanging. Holiness is that attribute of God by which He preserves the integrity of His entire being. Because He is holy that automatically means he is loving, kind, just, merciful, gracious, tender, wise. To be anything other than these things would be in violation of His essential holiness. He doesn’t have to “do” anything to be kind, good, loving or merciful; these are who he is by virtue of the fact that He is holy. Because God's very nature is holy, He will never be anything less than that. His holiness guarantees the changeless integrity of His entire being.

That very nature, God’s holy nature, His changeless nature, His perfect, loving, kind, gentle, caring, nature that flows out of His holiness, is the very nature that was birthed in you and me in Christ when we were ‘born again’. It’s there – in your spirit. It’s eternal, incorruptible – it cannot change.

1 Pet 1:23 ... *“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

You can't add or subtract from it by doing or not doing things. All God asks of us is that we allow Him to let that life flow from our spirit into our soul, to renew our damaged mind, will and emotions so that we can be made complete, have a "united heart", and express His holiness in all we think, say and do. He wants to be seen in us, so the world can see Him and come to Him.

Why would we want to live anything less than who we are in Christ?

1 John 3:6, 9 ... *"No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him ... 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."*

At face value this looks like its saying that we are not born again if we commit as sin, or, that if we are born again we cannot sin. But the reality is we do commit sins from time to time. But a closer look gives us the answer. The present tense of the Greek verb translated "sins" conveys a continuous action. So more clearly translated this says ... *"no one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who continually sins has seen him or knows Him ... no one who is born of God continually practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot continually sin, because he is born of God."*

What this is really saying is that the more we "abide" and grow in Christ the more of His sinless nature, holiness, will be expressed by us and the less our un-renewed sin stained mind, will and emotions will express sinful, unholy, things. Our renewed conscious will make it harder and harder for us to sin. That's why we get the very uneasy feeling, that knowing it's just wrong, the 'check in our spirit', when we have bad thoughts or are about to say or do something we know we should not say or do. This passage from 1 John is also saying that the holy seed of His new life in me assures me that my destiny is to walk in holiness and thereby banish sinning from my life and conduct.

God is saying, "I have birthed My life in you, and therefore, My attributes will be seen more and more in you as you come to wholeness through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. My holy nature will progressively flow into your broken, weak, and damaged soul. The world will see and know you are my child.

Complete Restoration Guaranteed

We go back for another look at Nehemiah's discourse with the king of Persia.

The king saw Nehemiah was sad and asked him why. Nehemiah told him about the state of affairs in Jerusalem and that he needed to go there for a while to help get the walls rebuilt. Then the king asked him how long he needed to be away, to which Nehemiah replied:

Neh 2:6 ... *"So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time."*

That "definite time" we learn from Neh 5:4 was twelve years.

Why twelve and not some other number?

Twelve is a very significant number throughout the scriptures, as are some other numbers.

Jacob had 12 sons who headed up the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus had 12 apostles. Rev 21:10-21 speaks of the 12 gates to the New Jerusalem, the 12 angels, the 12 foundation stones.

The number 3 represents “divine perfection”.

The number 7 represents “spiritual perfection”

The number 12 represents “governmental perfection” or “perfect administration”

So the “twelve years” Nehemiah requested speaks of the time that would be necessary to rebuild the broken walls and restore the ability of Jerusalem to perfectly administer the security of their city.

For us “twelve years” speaks figuratively of the time it will take Holy Spirit to help us in the process of renewing our minds, wills and emotions to a point of “governmental perfection” – a point of “completion” where soul and spirit are perfectly aligned and Christ “governs” our entire being.

This tells us that the Holy Spirit will be with you and me as long as is necessary to bring us to wholeness where we are constantly living by and expressing the life of Christ.

Ps 138:8 ... *“The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting.”*

There’s no time limit, the Holy Spirit is committed to healing, reprogramming and re-building your soul and bringing you to completion – where holiness and wholeness permeate your entire being and are seen in you to the honour and glory of our Lord.

A Final Word

All the Holy Spirit asks is that we co-operate with Him so He can bring us to completion in Christ.

We have the choice.

Rom 8:6 ... *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

What will you do?

Lesson 9 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – First Steps in the Re-building Program

Mic 4:6 NIV ... *“I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief.”*

Isa 61:3 ... *“beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”*

As we consider the first steps in our re-building program let us be reminded from these two scriptures that Christ’s resurrection power brings us new life, His redemption brings us new hope.

Resourced and Authorised to Build

Neh 2:4-20 ... *“Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” ⁶ Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, “How long will your journey be, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. ⁷ And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me. Then I came to the governors of the provinces beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰ When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹² And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. ¹³ So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. ¹⁴ Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned. ¹⁶ The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work. ¹⁷ Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.” ¹⁸ I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” ²⁰ So I answered them and said to*

them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."

For any building project you need permits, materials, schedules, contractors and contracts to be in place before you can start work. From the scriptural parallel that we draw from Nehemiah we see it is the same for the re-building of our soul.

Once he was given leave of absence by the king, Nehemiah made some requests in preparation for his sixteen hundred kilometre journey from Susa to Jerusalem and for the re-building project once he got there. The requests provide us with insight into our re-building needs, the resources, timing and authorities necessary.

- Time – Nehemiah was granted an extended leave of absence from his duties in the king's palace. As we learned in our last lesson the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to us to be with and in us to do the transformation work of our souls, and He will be at it for as long as it takes to bring us to the place of "perfect administration" – to wholeness of soul, to the state of having a "united heart". We are assured of His patience and mercy as He works in us. We can be ... *"confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:6).
- Authority – He was given letters of authority to enter and pass through the provinces that lay between Susa and Jerusalem. In Christ we have been given all the authority we will need to enter, and work through and overcome whatever ... *"rule and authority and power and dominion"* that we may face in our soul restoration journey.
- Resources – He was granted the resources, the timber, which he would need for the building project. We have been blessed ... *"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph 1:3) and therefore have everything that is necessary for our re-building process.
- Reinforcements – Nehemiah was given military troops to secure his mission and support him against opposing enemy forces. We have been given angels to guard us and assist us against the destructive forces of darkness that would attempt to interfere with our re-building project.

Let us now consider these resources that have been given to us. We need to gain some insight into them so that we can co-operate more efficiently with the Holy Spirit's transformation work in us.

1. Time

We have dealt with time in our last lesson so will not elaborate further, other than to say that He who brought us to Christ and birthed in us new life will also be with us for as long as is necessary for the transformation of our souls

2. Authority

The Persian Empire was made up of over a hundred provinces. Each province was governed by a satrap who served under the emperor and took care of his interests, such as taxation and local government issues. Just as we have today, there were the customs checks on travellers and the need for "passports". Nehemiah needed evidence of the king's commissioning authority because in Jerusalem he would be functioning under this special order which, while it would not displace the

authority of the local satrap, would make Nehemiah answerable to the king rather than the satrap. So while engaged in his task of re-building the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah was invested with an authority higher than that of Sanballat, the local satrap. With Nehemiah having total charge and control of his work it gave him freedom of passage and freedom in decision making not having to bow to the whims and fancies of the local governor.

Jesus assured us with His words:

Matt 16:18-19 ... *"I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."*

We have been given "letters of authority" by the King of kings, and the Comforter is with us to see that this authority is enforced.

John 14:13 ... *"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*

Matt 7:7 ... *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."*

Luke 10:19 ... *"Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you."*

Eph 3:20-21 ... *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever."*

Col 1:13 ... *"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."*

2 Pet 1:3 ... *"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."*

Rev 12:11 ... *"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony."*

All authority has been given to us to go in His name and accomplish that which pleases Him. The Helper is here to help us use this authority to overcome the failures, the pains, the hurts, the unrenewed thoughts. He has come to help us walk in wholeness in Christ.

These are our credentials granted us by the King of kings and Lord of lords. Ours is the privilege of being able to praying and operate in the name of Jesus knowing that whatever we ask in His name He will do it! The Holy Spirit is here to teach us to function in our blood bought rights. To overcome we need to know and enforce our rights and privileges when we are challenged. And we will be challenged because Satan is going around ... *"seeking whom he may devour."*

Sanballat and the other officials challenged Nehemiah, but Nehemiah verified his higher authority and succeeded in re-building the walls.

Neh 2:19-20 ... *“But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king? So I answered them and said to them, “The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem.”*

Just as Sanballat’s authority over Jerusalem and its residents was over-ruled by the king’s letters of authority in Nehemiah’s hand, so the Holy Spirit has come to enforce Heaven’s orders concerning you and me. So whenever the deceiver tries to trip you up, to make you feel depressed or condemned, or whenever he tries to deviate you from God’s higher purposes for your life, or when he tries to prevent you coming to wholeness and an understanding of who you are and what you have in Christ, simply give him a thrust of the Sword of the Spirit. Let him know that:

Isa 54:17 ... *“No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me,” declares the Lord.”*

1 John 4:4 ... *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”*

2 Chr 32:7-8 ... *“Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria nor because of all the horde that is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.”*

Stand your ground and declare that ... *“there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom 8:1) and that God’s love in you ... *never fails* (1 Cor 13:8). In Jesus’ name declare your rights to freedom and wholeness and remember:

Gal 5:1 ... *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”*

3. Resources

What are the materials we need for our project?

Neh 2:8 ... *“and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go.”*

Because we have so many different building materials now days (steel, aluminium, plastics, synthetic materials, bricks, cement, etc), if we are not careful we may miss the significance of Nehemiah’s request for “timber”. He needed large timbers for the structural framework, without which he couldn’t complete the project.

Also, the fact that timber was all he asked for does not mean that timber was the only material he would need and use. The vast majority of material needed for re-building the walls was already on the site in Jerusalem – the broken bits and pieces of stone from the original walls were right there. These stones would be picked up, cleaned up, some may be reshaped a little, and then re-used to build the walls. Some of the pieces of stone may have been broken into little pieces and may not have retained their original size and shape. Nevertheless, all would be salvaged and re-used with the end result being sturdy intact walls once again around Jerusalem. It is important to note that all of the stones used to build the new walls would have to come out of the debris of the original walls.

So we have for our building materials two materials – new timber and old stones. This presents a picture of God’s redemptive plan for the restoration of “broken walls”. The new “structural elements” God provides and the old brokenness we provide. Then when they are conjoined in the re-building process we end up with “whole”, “complete” walls.

Timber speaks of the cross. Through the death of our Lord on the cross and His subsequent resurrection and ascension on high, we have the provision of being born again – made righteous, made holy, made new in spirit.

2 Cor 5:21 ... *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

1 Cor 6:17 ... *“the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit.”*

It is necessary that we become a “new creation” and have the structural framework (Christ in you) in place before we can restore and renew (hold together) the “walls” of the soul. Without Christ in you providing the “stability” and source of righteousness, holiness, life and love to reinforce, hold together and make into an integral whole the broken pieces of the soul, you would not be able to come to wholeness let alone holiness. But with Christ in you, one in spirit, you have the essential structure in place and can commence the re-assembly of the broken pieces of the soul. The Holy Spirit will facilitate the reconstruction work and the end result will be that he will bring us to ... *“a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”* (Eph 3:13).

The mind set on the spirit in which Christ dwells will be brought to life and peace – to integrity and wholeness. But if there is only an unregenerate spirit, in which sin dwells, then the mind set on that unregenerate spirit will be no better off than the mind set on the sinful flesh, and will end up being downcast in brokenness and despair – for ... *“the mind set on the flesh is death”* Rom 8:6.

So the timber, the cross, provides the essential structural framework around which the restoration process can begin. This part is graciously provided by God.

The rubble heaps of broken stones from the original walls of Jerusalem may be likened to the damaged emotions and tainted minds present within us. Although our souls are “in a heap”, broken from the torment and battering of the past, they can be “picked up” and made ready for re-construction to commence.

So assured of authority to confront, resist and overcome any adversary, with an endless supply of divine grace and redeeming power we can press on hand in hand with the Holy Spirit and commence the recovery of the broken pieces and construction of sturdy walls.

Soldiers and Angels

When the king gave Nehemiah the things he had requested and sent him off on his journey, he also sent along an army detachment to escort Nehemiah to his destiny.

Has it ever happened to you or someone you know, that something unexpected and inexplicable has suddenly happened to prevent an imminent disaster from occurring? When this happened didn't you just know that it was the intervention of the Lord on your behalf? An angel possibly?

Heb 1:14 ... *"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"*

In our journey towards wholeness and as we share the life of Christ with others we will face adversity in many shapes and forms. Our progress in Christ will constantly be met with the enemy's opposition and discouragement. The last thing Satan wants is for believers to come to the full knowledge of who they are in Christ, walking in the abundant life of Christ with renewed minds, emotionally whole and submitted fully to His will. Satan knows that when you come to wholeness, and holiness is being expressed in your words your and actions, your life will be such a testimony to others that they will be attracted to Christ. Be assured, he will do all he can to prevent that from happening.

Eph 6:12 ... *"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."*

However, God has assigned angels to come to our assistance as part of our defence.

Now, some people may be sceptical about the existence of angels and the assistance they afford us. But the word is very clear on this subject.

After Satan had tried and failed to tempt Jesus in the wilderness he departed, and angels came to minister to Jesus.

Matt 4:11 ... *"Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."*

At the betrayal of Jesus in the garden when Peter cut the high priest's slave's ear off Jesus told him to put away his sword and reminded Peter that if He needed protection He could have easily called for the assistance of angels.

Matt26:53 ... *"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels."*

These are not fairy tale figures, these are very real angelic beings that Jesus could have summoned to come on the scene and physically overpower the high priest's mob led by Judas.

In fact there are nearly three hundred references to angels spread throughout the Bible. Even though there's much in the Bible concerning angels and their role toward us, there are still some who don't believe in them and choose to ignore the truth concerning them. On the other hand,

there are also some who go to the opposite extreme place way too much emphasis on angels and build whole ministries around angels and see angels everywhere. Paul warns against the latter:

Col 2:18 ... *“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.”*

Ministering Spirits

We are not to become preoccupied with angels but we do need to understand their very real presence and specific function on our behalf. They are ... *“ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation”* (Heb 1:14).

... *“those who will inherit salvation”* is referring to us, the born again.

Let's have a look at some instances in the Word where angels have come to the assistance of believers:

- Acts 8:26 it was an angel that told Phillip he needed to go and help the Ethiopian eunuch to understand the message he was reading in Isaiah concerning the Lamb of God.
- Acts 12:4-10 is the account of an angel loosing the chains and freeing Peter from prison.
- Acts 12:20-23 when Herod blatantly accepted the people's worship of him calling him a god he was struck down by an angel of the Lord and fed to the worms.
- Acts 27:23 when the storm was raging and shipwreck looked imminent an angel told Paul not to be worried and that no loss of life would occur.

You may say this is all well and good but, “I can't see angels so I don't believe in them.” Well, that sounds just like Elisha's servant.

The king of Assyria had sent an army with horses and chariots after Elisha to apprehend him. Elisha's servant saw the approaching army and ran to Elisha to tell him what was happening and to ask what they would do. Elisha answered:

2 Kings 6:16-17 ... *“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

You may say these amazing interventions by angels don't happen today and are not for us. But the word is clear:

Ps 91:11-12 ... *“For He will give His angels charge concerning **you**, to guard **you** in all **your** ways. They will bear **you** up in their hands, lest **you** strike your foot against a stone.”*

This promise from God's Word is for you and me as much as it was for the Psalmist. The arsenal God has provided for us includes angels. He has commissioned angels to minister to us and to act on our behalf.

I would like to share two stories with you. Firstly, a story about my father and angelic protection granted to him when he was under fire from hostile forces, and secondly, instances where I was sustained by ministering spirits.

During the time of the bush war in Zimbabwe my father, who was a missionary in that country, used to travel out to the remote areas to distribute bibles and tracts and to hold services in the local communities. Once, on his way to a remote mine he came under fire from a group of terrorists bearing automatic weapons. They were hiding in the rocks on the side of the road. The car was riddled with bullets. A bullet hit the distributor and put the engine out of action. The car rolled a couple of hundred metres past the attackers and then came to a halt. Dad got out, locked the car and walked briskly up the road in the direction of the mine. He had to walk a few kilometres to reach the mine security gate. He was not pursued and shot as would normally have happened. The Lord protected him and kept him safe. Later the car was taken to the panel and paint folks for repair. They were amazed he had not been killed as there were bullet holes right through the door on the driver's side, yet not a mark on him, no damaged to anything within the car and no trace of the bullet shrapnel in the car.

Dad's explanation of why he was not riddled with bullets is that the angels caught the bullets in their path between the holes in the door and him. He said they caught the bullets and have taken them away and that's why there was no bullet shrapnel in the car! He said that all the time the 91st Psalm was going through his head and that he knew he was safe. His Heavenly Father had given angels charge concerning him to guard him in all his ways and this day was no exception.

Dad did not see angels in the physical but their intervention into the realm of the physical was very evident.

In my own experience, I have found another aspect of the benefit we derive from "ministering spirits". In the past on a number of occasions when I have been clearly called to undertake an extended period (anywhere from 10 days to three weeks) of fasting for the purpose of prayer for a specific matter I did not feel any hunger, and in fact felt "full and nourished" throughout the fast periods. Further, during these, what I would refer to as supernatural fasts, I did not suffer any significant body weight loss. My only explanation is that, while I could not see them with my eyes, ministering spirits were there with me sustaining me with a very physically detectable outcome.

Now this does not happen every time I have fasted. On other occasions when I have decided to fast and pray for some good reason (sometimes to seek direction from God, or as a part of a group fast for something) I have gone through the hunger pang stage and lost body mass. So while I did battle with hunger on these occasions, there is no doubt in my mind that there have been the occasions when I have been sustained by ministering spirits.

The Sword of the Spirit

There is one more personal experience I would like to share.

For reasons possibly only our heavenly Father understands, there are occasions when He holds back the angels and leaves it to us to use the Sword of the Spirit along with the rest of the "full armour of God" in defending ourselves against attacks from spiritual forces of darkness.

In the mid 70's I was working in a small mining town in Zimbabwe. There was no really vibrant fellowship there and so I did what I could to share in teaching, preaching, prayer, leading home group discussions and living in a manner that would encourage others to know and follow the Lord. There were those who respected us (the believers) and those who mocked and hassled us. But the opposition did not only come from people. One night I was awoken from my sleep because I felt something holding me down to the point where I could not move. I was completely pinned down by what I can only describe as a demonic figure that looked in many respects like an enormous cockroach. It was longer than I am tall, a very ugly head, lots of arms and legs that held me down and so heavy that I could not move. As I struggled I saw a proboscis like thing come out of the things upper body and it was pointed at my heart and just about to stab into me. At that point as I wrestled to get loose the Holy Spirit quickened me to speak out the word and as I spoke the word I literally saw a shiny sword like object forming from the words spoken, like instrument coming out of me and it shot into the demonic thing and in an instant the being blew up into smithereens and evaporated before my very eyes. I prayed, thanked the Lord for His protection and the power of His word and went back to sleep.

Now whether the things I saw that night were in the realm of the physical or realm of the spiritual I do not know, but what I do know is I saw what I saw and was physically pinned down (that was very real) and only released from that physical state of being forcibly held down when the evil thing "exploded and evaporated".

Whether the Lord's angels or the Devil's demons are seen in the physical or not is irrelevant; they are real and have a very real impact on the physical realm (as well as the spiritual realm in which they exist) and we should never doubt their existence or impact.

The attack on my life was because of what we were doing in that town to bring people out of darkness into light. Besides the evangelism aspects of our work, much of what I was doing amongst the believers there was to help them rebuild "broken walls" – helping them to come to an understanding of who they were in Christ. One thing is clear, if you're on the pathway to wholeness in your own life or helping others in their path to wholeness, there will be opposition. But, praise God, He has given us the wherewithal to be victorious.

We have our Nehemiah, the Holy Spirit to help us, we have "letters of authority" from on high giving us authority and power over the "rulers and spiritual forces of darkness", we have the troops, the angels, to defend and protect us and to intervene in circumstances where necessary for our benefit, we have the full armour of God for protection and the Sword of the Spirit, a lethal weapon to use against the enemy. So be encouraged – you are on the well resourced winning team!

Know Your Enemy

Just as the pathway of the long journey from Susa to Jerusalem was riddled with outlaws, dangerous beasts and natural hazards, so we will encounter countless numbers of opposing forces and adverse circumstances along our pathway of life. Satan's forces are hell-bent on attempting to prevent or restrict what God wants to accomplish in our lives. The evil one definitely does not want you to come to wholeness and accomplish God's purpose and destiny for your life.

Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:11-19 speak of the fall of Lucifer. He is a sinister, destructive, hateful being that is opposed to everything and everyone who is a part of God's eternal plan and purpose. He is referred to as "Satan" which means "accuser" and "adversary", and the "devil" which means "slanderer".

He is a spirit being who was originally created in beauty and perfection by the hand and breath of God but who rebelled against the Most High. As a created being Satan is not omnipotent (only God has all power) nevertheless he is a formidable adversary. He is not omnipresent (only God can be everywhere) but he operates through his huge army of demons, who carry out his destructive plans.

Satan is not an abstract force; he is a distinct, vile being who rules the forces of darkness and operates systematically in the spiritual realm against everything holy, righteous, pure, noble, good and healthy. While commanding his army of fallen angels he roams to and fro throughout the earth.

1 Pet 5:8 ... *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

Some think that he is just an abstract force to be ignored; others choose to believe if they pay him no attention he will just go away. Well, if you were in the bush or jungle and you were being stalked by a lion, or tiger or other powerful predator do you think you would be safe if you chose to ignore it in the hopes it would just go away? I don't think so!

We need to learn the truth concerning Satan and his forces of evil as well as our identity and authority in Christ so that we can confront him with confidence.

2 Cor 4:4 ... *"the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."*

The devil is god of this world because he received the just right to this rule through man's disobedience to God and his consequent forfeiture of his God-given right to rule. That's why in the temptation narrative of Matt 4:8-9 Satan could offer Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus bowed down and worshipped him. Jesus did not bow to Satan but neither did He challenge his right to make the offer.

However, the earth is the limit of his jurisdiction. He only has power here, unlike God who created and rules the entire universe.

Jesus declared ... *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"* (Matt 28:18). Through His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection Jesus regained the victory making it possible once again for man to rule and live the abundant life here on earth. So as the born again, seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6) that places us outside the realm of Satan's rule, even though we continue to live on this planet where the battle still rages for human souls.

So, does Satan retain any right to operate in our lives? We know that he has sway over unbelievers.

Eph 2:2 ... *"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."*

For this reason, non-believers not only remain in sin because of Adam, but they also are completely vulnerable to the dominion of the adversary because they living in his domain.

This does not mean they're demon possessed, nor does it mean that they are consciously and wilfully serving the devil. But what it does mean is that our thoughts, feelings and conduct are far more influenced and manipulated by the adversary that we think or realise. The word teaches that the whole world, including us, is under the influence and trickery of the adversary.

1 John 5:19 ... *"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."*

Although he has no authority over believers, the Devil is out there trying to trip us up and prevent us from coming to wholeness.

John 10:10 ... *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."*

His activities are in accordance with certain traits, including:

- He is a liar and tells lies to you.
- He imposes fear on you.
- He is an oppressor who likes to depress you.
- He sows doubt in your mind.
- He discourages and brings you down.
- He steals the Word from you where he can.
- He sows sorrow and tries to steal your joy.
- He is a maligner who seeks to you.

But because Christ has paid the price and granted us the victory we do not have to accept or submit to anything the Devil serves up. We can resist and counterattack by holding fast to and declaring the truth according to God's word. That's our "letter of authority" – we must use it! Don't let the thief succeed at stealing, killing, or destroying, but rather walk in the abundant life Christ has paved the way for you to live! Whatever the attack against you, find and speak out the counterattacking Word of God – the truth.

James 4:7 ... *"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

John 8:32 ... *"you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Let the Holy Spirit lead you in accordance with the truth. Be established in the truth and live.

Listen to Your Coach and Beat the Enemy

Neh 2:10 ... *"When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel."*

The "Sanballats and Tobiahs" are against us coming to wholeness. These "governors" have been so used to being in control and keeping everyone subservient to them, exacting taxes from them, and

exploiting their weaknesses, that when a “Nehemiah” comes in to seek the well-being of the people they have their noses put out of joint, and they don’t like that so they put up resistance.

These evil “governors” will muster their forces against the work of “restoring of your soul”. You will be surrounded by hostility in an effort to bring you down. But this is when you need to draw near to your Nehemiah, the Holy Spirit, for encouragement and direction. Just like a sports team playing an “away” game facing the jeers from the opponents supporters and feeling like even the referee is against you, you need to listen to the Coach as He gives you the “game plan” and encouragement that you have everything it takes to “win”, and go out with determination, ignoring the oppositions cries, stick to the plan and win! You may not have home ground advantage in this world, but always remember 1 John 4:4, that ... *you are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*”

Dealing with Condemnation, Delays ...

Nehemiah took a brief tour to assess the extent of the destruction of the walls, to determine where he should focus his initial efforts in the reconstruction program. The original walls of Jerusalem had ten gates in them. Nehemiah mentions three of them in this initial reconnaissance tour: the Valley Gate, the Refuse Gate, and the Fountain Gate (Neh. 2:11-15).

As reported, on his tour Nehemiah finally came to a place where he could go no further. The destruction that had taken place those many years before had been so severe that rubble completely blocked his passage at a particular point. From this point he turned back and re-entered the city via the same “gate” through which he had exited, the place of the original but now ruined Valley Gate. The report from his survey gives us an idea of the degree of devastation and an appreciation of the huge re-construction task he faced.

In His Time

In the Word we will find parallels helpful in breaking free from the adversary’s condemnation.

Neh 2:11-12 ... *“So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. And I arose in the night”...*

In his report Nehemiah tells us three days elapsed before he went on his survey of the ruined walls. Three days of inactivity. With the urgency in getting from Susa to Jerusalem and the overdue job of rebuilding at hand it seems like a long time to do nothing.

How often do we question God’s “waiting periods”? We are part of the “MacDonald’s” clan – everything instant – everything must fit in with out “grab a take-away and go” lifestyle. We always want God to move quickly on our behalf and don’t like delay. But delay is often on God’s agenda.

We pray and pray and it seems like nothing changes. Then we think God has not heard or has abandoned us. We think our faith has failed somehow, or think God is ignoring us, and so we slump into condemnation. But remember one thing: fruit takes time to grow on any fruit tree. The fruit of the spirit is no exception. The gifts and fruit are not grown in an instant. If growth or change in your re-building program is taking time, that’s normal not abnormal.

The simple fact of the matter is that the Lord has quiet times of dealing with our souls. When they come, be of good courage. If you have opened yourself up to the Holy Spirit, be patient.

Nehemiah made his tour at night and only a handful of people with him knew what he was up to. He had not explained his reason for being in Jerusalem nor his survey of the walls to anyone. The people of the city were asleep, unaware that help had arrived and that their extended period of humiliation would shortly be overcome. Yet Nehemiah was quietly going about his reconnaissance work, which would be in their ultimate interest.

Even when we have no idea He is at work, the Holy Spirit is quietly at it, tending to our needs.

Ps 3:5 ... *"I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me."*

Even while you are at rest, our Father's program for your blessing is moving forward. Even in your "darkest hour" he is quietly working on your behalf. So don't fear darkness, don't give in to fear, doubt and discouragement – for God is at work.

Just think about all the things that happened during hours of "darkness":

- Out of the darkest dark Creation's light burst forth (Gen 1:2-3).
- After a night of wrestling Jacob arose the next morning with a new identity (Gen 32:24-28).
- It was during the Passover night that Israel was delivered from Egypt's bondage (Exod. 12).
- In the middle of the night Gideon's army staged a mighty victory (Judg 7:9, 19-22).
- Our redemption was won on the cross on a day when the sky turned black (Luke 23:44).
- When Jesus comes again, it will be as a "thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2)

Right now the Holy Spirit is ministering to your need. Whatever darkness you may be facing, know that God never forsakes the works of His hands. Instead of allowing the darkness of waiting to create doubt in your heart, or clouds questioning deceive you into thinking you've been abandoned because of God's parent inactivity or unconcern, rather recline and rest in the arms of the Lord knowing that times of darkness are intended for your rest. When dark times come rest assured that the Holy Spirit is about His work on your behalf. He will never leave or forsake you, and when "morning" comes, you'll be very surprised at what He has done!

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov 3:5-6).

Lesson 10 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – Out of Darkness into Light

Neh 2:13-15 ... *“So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.”*

Significance of this Route

Like all things ordered by God, the significance of three particular gates and two water sources mentioned in this nocturnal reconnaissance tour which preceded the rebuilding program is not to be missed. Significant also is the commencement and termination point of the survey, and the two valleys through which the tour passes.

The Valley of Death and Destruction

The night time survey of the ruins started off and ended off by passing through the place where Valley Gate had once stood. The Valley Gate was situated at the southwest corner of the city walls, approximately 500 metres from the Refuse Gate, and both gates opened into the Valley of Hinnom. The Valley Gate was so named because it overlooked this valley.

Long before Nehemiah’s time, the Valley of Hinnom was the place where the Canaanite people had worshiped and offered up human sacrifices in their satanic rituals. With the passing of time the Jewish people had been influenced by these Baal worshippers, and then they too involved themselves in these evil rituals. Hebrew prophets confronted the Jewish nation whose worship had degraded to the point of offering their children to Baal, but because they refused to repent and change their ways God’s hand of judgement came down upon the nation and they were exiled.

Jer 32:33-36 ... *“They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction. But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. Now therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.”*

This valley has become a type of sin, punishment, and misery because the bodies of dead animals, criminals and rubbish were burned here in its ever-burning fires. In fact it became known as the Valley of the Flame or Fires. The Hebrew name Ge-Hinnom became corrupted into Gehenna, translated as the word “hell” in English, which in the New Testament is used to designate the place of eternal punishment.

Not far from the Valley Gate Nehemiah came to the Dragon’s Well. Other translations call this the Serpent’s Well (NKJV), the Jackal’s Well (NIV, ASV).

Many geographical sites derive their names by association with people, objects or from specific events related to the site. For example: “Shelly Beach” because shells are found there; or, “Silent Valley” because of the stillness and serenity one experiences there. Similarly, “Dragon’s Well”, “Jackal’s Well” or “Serpent’s Well” was probably so named because a dangerous creature must have lived or been found there at some point in the past – possibly a jackal or snake that troubled the people coming there to draw water.

However, the significance of mention of this particular well may be better appreciated by understanding the derivation of the Hebrew word used here and its symbolism. The Hebrew word used in this passage is “tannîn” (which gets translated in different parts of the Bible where it occurs as “monster”, “serpent”, “dragon”, or “sea monster”). This word “tannîn” is derived from the word “tan” which means “jackal”. Now here’s the significance: In the scriptures “jackal” is used as a symbol of desolation and divine judgement against sinful nations and individuals.

So looking out over this valley, and all it contains and represents, provides us a picture of hell, as it depicts the view onto a life outside Christ, where there is no hope and offering only judgement, desolation and eternal damnation. It also serves as a reminder that wilful rebellion and a life of sin against God will be met with punishment, and it shows how sin has left us with damaged minds, wills and emotions. Nehemiah could see the degree of ruin and destruction that the nations past sin had precipitated, and as we look back we too can see that our former life apart from Christ was one of ruin and shame. But the people were back in Jerusalem, the Temple was rebuilt, their past was forgiven they were reinstated in their relationship with God and now it was time to complete the restorative work of re-building the broken walls. As we look back over our past life in the valley of sin and acknowledge the toll it took on us, we are assured by the Holy Spirit that now we are no longer in exile, Christ paid the price for our redemption, we are redeemed, born again, new in spirit, back in relationship with our heavenly Father and the work of re-building our broken souls can commence – the work can be completed.

Psalm 103:12 ... *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

Heb 10:17 ... *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*

A parallel we can draw from this initial scene is that the Holy Spirit’s starting place in our soul reconstruction program is in getting us to look back on our life of sin and shame and understand that it has been dealt with once and for all. From the Valley Gate one could see the sun setting in the west at the end of the day. So the Holy Spirit is saying to you and to me, “As you look over the “valley” of your sinful past with its destiny of eternal damnation, see yourself forgiven by the One who took on all your sin, shame and due punishment and who was offered up as a sacrifice for your redemption, and see the sunset declaring, ‘It is finished. Calvary’s work is complete’, and stand assured that the old life has gone, concluded forever and your tomorrow holds for you a bright new future.”

Rom 6:6-13 ... *“knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to*

die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 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."

John 8:36 NKJV ... *"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."*

Gal 5:1 ... *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free."*

Rom 8:1 ... *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

For you and for me as we look out over this valley we can stand confident knowing that we never need to account for the past again, and the absolute assurance that because we are born again hell is no longer a threat to us. Yes, Gehenna is real, with the smoke from its fire still rising and the vile stench from its depths ever intensifying, but it no longer threatens you – you've been set free from its grips and you are no longer under the dominion of its master, the Serpent.

This understanding is important because you need to draw a very conclusive line between your old "valley" life and your new life in Christ. The beginning of your restoration work depends on the Holy Spirit helping establish firm boundaries for you. With restored gates and walls the enemy will be shut out and resisted if he tries to re-enter with his mal intent.

Whether we have suffered mental or emotional damage from the days of our life before we were born again, or from destructive forces levelled against us more recently as believers, we need the walls and gates to be put firmly back in place.

The Valley of Life and Construction

After exiting through the place where the Valley Gate once stood and passing the Dragon's pool and remnants of the Refuse Gate, Nehemiah passed out of the Hinnom Valley and came around into the Kidron Valley towards the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool.

The Kidron Valley is host to the Gihon Spring, an abundant and beautiful fresh water supply. During his reign three centuries earlier, King Hezekiah had constructed a conduit to bring the water from the Gihon Spring to the King's Pool inside the city walls. Prior to construction of the conduit attacking enemies could easily block the people of the city from accessing the water supply and hence gain the victory over the city. So this strategy of constructing a secure conduit ensured that Jerusalem would have its vital water supply uninterrupted at all times.

The Fountain Gate overlooks the Kidron and it is widely held that it got its name from the fact that it was closely located to the spring, and was the gate through which the city folks passed each day to obtain fresh water from the fountain.

The water supply from the spring in this valley opposite the Fountain Gate depicts the Word of God. Daily the people needed to obtain fresh, life-sustaining water, and in the same manner for a believer

to survive and flourish we need to be refreshed, washed and our thirst quenched daily through a continuous supply of the Word of God.

Eph 5:25-27 ... *“just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”*

Nehemiah had no doubt come here because he wanted to see if the water supply to the city was still secure, but his passage was blocked with the rubble from the broken walls and he could proceed no further. So he had to turn back, following a path along the ravine to inspect the broken walls and returning to the city via the gate way through which he had exited.

There is no doubt that there was some urgency in his mind now to return and get on with the restoration process. The devastation of the past was more than evident, the walls, the gates and the essential water supply had to be restored for the city to be secure again and function with integrity and dignity.

The Tale of the Tour

The tale of the tour is the tale of the two valleys; that of Hinnom and that of Kidron.

- Yes sin and shame has left its mark on our souls, we're mentally and emotionally damaged and have wills that need to be realigned, but praise God we're forgiven, born again, restored in our relation to God through Jesus Christ, and sin has no more dominion over us. There is no condemnation – we are new creatures, made righteous with His righteousness. We need not look back but just press on – we will be made whole, with the help of the Holy Spirit we will come to maturity in Christ. Let us heed Paul's cry Phil 3: 12-14 ... *“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus ... 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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*
- But for us to come to wholeness the walls and the gates of our souls must re-built and we must be constantly connected to the essential fountain of the Word of life. There can be no rivers of living water flowing out of us if this work has not first been wrought in us. The eternal spring of life in Christ must flow from our spirit to saturate our soul and transform it so that the beauty of Jesus may be seen in us.

Note again, no matter how serious the damage that has resulted, no matter how desperate and hopeless the situation looks, there's not a word of condemnation, and in Nehemiah's words that follow we see his total identification with the people, he feels their pain, and their reproach and is determined to stand alongside of them and help them get on with the arduous task of rebuilding.

Neh 2:16-18 ... *“The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials or the rest who did the work. Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.” I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to*

me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work."

The Holy Spirit has done His reconnaissance work; He knows your situation and your need. He does not mention your guilt or sin, rather than condemn you He simply wants to identify with you in your need and demonstrate His love to you. In Him you will find compassion, gentleness, sensitivity, commitment and companionship. Just as Jesus identified with us to the point of becoming incarnate in the flesh – He became man, lived as man, took on our sin and shame and took our place on the cross and died, so that we could be made new – even so the Holy Spirit identifies with us, encourages us and is devoted fully to our complete recovery so that He may ... *"sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit, and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He will also bring it to pass"* (1 Thess 5:23-24).

His call is not forceful and dominating – He is not standing aloof ordering you around and telling you what you have to do – He is the gentle dove who is humbly inviting you to participate with Him as He helps you come to maturity in Christ in all areas of your life.

The people were drawn to this gentleness, understanding and commitment together with the assurance of the backing of a higher authority, and so they said, *"Let us arise and build" ... and so ... they put their hands to the good work."*

The Walls – Built to Keep Out the Enemy

Neh 2:19-20 ... *"But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" So I answered them and said to them, "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

One thing we can stand assured of is that the enemy will be unhappy when we make a firm decision to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He rebuilds the broken places of our soul. There is no way Satan wants us to have renewed minds, and so he will try to oppose us.

But look at Nehemiah's immediate response to the opposition; ... *"The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

As you build, when the enemy (in whatever form he adopts) tries to distract you and condemn you just remind him he has been defeated, he has no part in your life and by God's grace and power you will come to completion. So don't be distracted or disillusioned – be determined! Build!

We will further address the matter of attacks against us and strategies for success later, but for now there's something else upon which we must focus – the walls and what they represent.

Sanballat is a Horonite, a native of Horonaim, a city of Moab. Tobiah is an Ammonite. The Moabites and Ammonites represent the hostile races of whom it is written in Deut 23:3 ... *"no Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord"*. They represent the evil that God does not want infiltrating and defiling His people.

The defilement of Baal worship and other odious sin practiced by foreign nations that had crept into the Jewish nation had brought about the destruction of Jerusalem and the nations exile to Babylon. So now that they were back in Jerusalem it was very important that the walls be rebuilt to keep out the enemy and its evil influence. The walls separated the pure from the impure. That's why Nehemiah, speaking to Samballat, Tobiah and Geshem, said, *"but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem."*

For us, the rebuilding of the walls of our soul speaks of holiness that must shut out evil. These are the "walls" that are necessary for us to destroy ... *"speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God ... and ... take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor 10:5). When our "walls" are made whole, holiness will be established in our souls and there will be no place for the enemy to enter or prevail in our lives. Walls of wholeness and holiness will keep out all evil forces and influences that seek our defilement and destruction.

The Gates and Towers between the Walls.

We now consider the gates and towers between the walls and the sequence in which they were reconstructed, as set out in Nehemiah chapter three.

1. The Sheep Gate

Neh 3:1-2, 32 ... *"Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built" ... "Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs."*

This was the gate through which animals were brought into the city, and most importantly the animals for temple sacrifices. Note also that it was the high priest and his brothers that were involved in building this gate. That is logical as the Sheep Gate was situated near the temple where the sheep were sacrificed by the priests.

This gate reminds us of our Lord Jesus Christ who is ... *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). Not only is He the Lamb but He is also the "door" or "gate" of the sheep ... *"Jesus said ... "I am the door of the sheep" ... "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:7, 9-10).

Note also that there is no mention of "bolts, locks and bars" – we have constant access to our Lord!

Jesus is also our High Priest.

Heb 7:24-27 ... *"Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to*

offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

Heb 13:20-21 ... *"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, 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."*

Heb 4:14-16 ... *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Heb 13:11-15 ... *"For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. 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."*

In times when we are hurting and suffering the pain of destructive forces it's not always easy to offer up praise. But in these times we are not alone, Christ our high Priest ever lives to intercede for us and the Holy Spirit our constant companion is there to give us strength to offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. Praise and thanksgiving releases the answer from on high.

Rom 12:1-2 ... *"Therefore I urge you, 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. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

The Sheep Gate speaks of a place of sacrificial worship.

From John 5:1-9 we find out that this is the gate near the Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the man who had been sick for 38 years, so it is also a place closely associated with healing.

Nehemiah could have started with any of the gates but he chose this one to be the first and the last that he referred to in his report given in chapter three. Jesus is ... *"the Alpha and Omega"* (Rev 1:8), the beginning and the end. All rebuilding of our souls must start and end in Christ, for Jesus said, ...*"Apart from Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). The whole point of rebuilding of our souls is the "outworking" of our salvation (Phil 2:12) – taking that which is within and bringing it out. Allowing the Holy Spirit to take the riches of the life of Christ that is within our spirit and letting it spill out and flood our soul – so that we can be renewed in our mind, will and emotion area. This is the "putting on" of the mind of Christ. So for us to succeed in our building program we must start, continue and end in Christ.

The Sheep Gate was the only one of all the gates mentioned in Nehemiah that was consecrated. This speaks of worship – something sanctified and separated unto the Lord. It encourages us that the successful way to build is to start, continue and end in worship.

They consecrated it to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. These towers were part of the city's defence system. From here the soldiers guarded the Temple and the northern approach to the city.

Tower is from the Hebrew word migdal. This word comes from the root word gadal which means "grow up", "become great". Combined with the "Hundred" speaks of "growing to hundredfold greatness".

Hananel is a combination of the word chanan which means "to show favour or grace", and El which means "God". So the Tower of Hananel speaks of "Greatness in God's grace".

So when our re-building program starts, continues and ends with Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world, the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls, the great High Priest of our confession, He who ever intercedes for us, the Healer of souls, and we bow in reverential worship and offer up a sacrifice of praise to Him then we will experience the greatness of God's grace as He restores us to hundredfold greatness and wholeness and protects this state of wellbeing in us!

Rom 11:36 ... *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."*

From where else would you want to start and complete your reconstruction program!

2. The Fish Gate

Neh 3:3 ... *Now the sons of Haseanaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars."*

This gate stood a little west of the Sheep gate and the two towers. It was the gate used by merchants to bring in fish caught from the Mediterranean Sea.

Fish and fishermen remind us of Jesus' words to Simon and Andrew:

Matt 4:18-20 ... *"Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."*

The reason we are built up in Christ is that we may be his ambassadors that go about sharing His life and love with others that they too may come to salvation.

2 Cor 5:20 ... *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."*

Eph 2:10 ... *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."*

We are the salt and light that are to ... *“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”* (Matt 5:16).

The Hebrew word *dāg* is translated “Fish”. This comes from the word *dāgā* which means “multiply or increase”. The Fish Gate speaks of a place of multiplication and growth.

When we start our journey to wholeness and a walk in holiness it is for the prime purpose of expressing the holy, loving and pure life of Christ to the lost and dying world around us. Through the light and salt we deliver the lost will be able to come to salvation.

We’re here not just to become whole for the sake of being whole, but for the sake of bringing in the lost to holiness and wholeness. This must be first and foremost in our minds at all times. We have a God ordained purpose for being built up in Christ.

We’re built up to be fishers of men and women, boys and girls.

3. The Old Gate

Neh 3:6-12 ... *“Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor of the province beyond the River. Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of Furnaces. Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.”*

This gate is found in the northwest corner of the city. Some students refer to this gate as the “Mishneh gate”. This word in Hebrew means “new quarter”. In Nehemiah’s time the northwest part of the city was the Mishneh or “new quarter” of the city. The Old gate led into the new quarter.

God’s ways, His plans and purpose for us are not new – they were established before the foundation of the world. He wants us to return to His original (old) ways so that we may experience a newness – Living fulfilled lives in accordance with His original plans and purpose for our lives.

Jer 6:16 ... *“Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.”*

The Hebrew word *yāshān* means “old”. It comes from the root word *yāshēn* which means “sleep”. “Old” plus “sleep” has two connotations:

- i. Asleep to the Spirit leads to the “oldness” of being depleted or worn out.
- ii. Sleep is the place of rest and refreshment.

So repairing the “old” speaks of bringing the old worn out and depleted ones to a place of “rest” and refreshment in God. Taking that which is old and making it new again. Have a look again at the words of Jer 6:17 ... *“Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls”*.

At this gate we hear the Ancient of Days saying to us, ... *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS”* (MATT 11:28-29).

At this Gate we are called to return to the “old” ways established in God’s word.

1 John 2:7 ... *“Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.”*

God’s plan and purpose for our lives, the abundant Christ-life we are to live, is all laid out in His Word. It’s all there, and all we need do is embrace His word. The answers to our needs all lay within God’s word. His provision for us to live by His life was made before the foundations of the world, for Christ is ... *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Rev 13:8). His word declares that ... *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him”* (Eph 1:3-4). Dig into His Word, find your answers, and walk in wholeness in Christ.

The “Old Gate” is a place where we are to return to the Word that has been ... *“forever ... settled in heaven”* (Ps 119:89). It is through the established Word that we will renew our minds, for ... *“you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:32).

The Broad Wall

The Hebrew word (רחב) rāḥāb means “broad”, “wide”. In its root form this word means “to be or grow wide or large” – hence the name “broad” wall. This “broadness” speaks to us of the breadth and width of the riches we have in Christ, and of being restored to walk in the fullness of these riches. This is the place we must desire to come to, and that is why we should daily pray:

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

Tower of Furnaces

KJV, NJKV, NIV etc translates this as “Tower of Ovens”. The Hebrew word used here in conjunction with “tower” is tannûr which means “oven” or “furnace”. This word denotes a relatively small and often portable stove or oven rather than a large furnace. It was typically made of clay, nearly 1m in diameter and sunk into the ground and used mainly for baking bread. There was a special area in the

northwest of ancient Jerusalem reserved for bakers to bake bread for the city. The “bakery” was defended by soldiers who watched over the “ovens” from the “Tower of Ovens”.

Bread was an essential part of the peoples’ daily sustenance, and hence the need to protect the bakery.

This speaks to us of Jesus, the bread of life, from whom we obtain our daily sustenance.

John 6:33, 35 ... *“For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world ... Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”*

Just as the soldiers stood on Tower of Ovens to watch over Jerusalem’s bakery, so our God says to us ... *“I am watching over My word to perform it”* (Jer 1:12).

Also, we find this same word *tannûr* in Genesis chapter 15, an account of where God cut covenant with Abram. Abram was childless and looking to God to bless him with an heir. When God promised Abram he would have a son and that his offspring would multiply and be a mighty nation, and that He was going to give the Promised Land to Abram to possess it, Abram’s response was to ask God how this would happen and how he would know that this was true. God’s response is found in verses 9- 18:

Gen 15:9-19 ... *“So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared **a smoking oven and a flaming torch** which passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.”*

The cylindrical smoking oven or fire-pot and fiery torch combine to symbolize and express the Divine presence. This is a picture of God passing between the halves of the animals involved in the covenant ritual.

The covenant ritual included a number of steps, of which the “cutting” of covenant was one. I quote Richard Booker on this point:

“In the Bible, an animal is only cut down the middle and split in two in a covenant ceremony.

After we split the animal, we lay each half to the side of us and stand in between the two bloody halves of flesh, with our backs to each other. Then we walk right through the bloody halves, making a figure eight, and come back to a stop facing each other.

In doing so we are saying two things. First, we are saying that we are dying to ourselves, giving up the rights to our own life and beginning a new walk with our covenant partner unto death. You see, in this covenant, each half of the dead animal represents us. And second, since the blood covenant is the most solemn pact, we each point down to the bloody animal split in two and say, "God do so to me and more if I ever try to break this covenant. Just split me right down the middle and feed me to the vultures because I tried to break the most sacred of all compacts."

What God did was He "cut covenant" with Abram, thereby assuring Abram that God would keep His Word and there was no going back on it.

So the significance of the "Tower of Furnaces" to us is that Jesus is not only the "bread of life", but He also is the "smoking oven and flaming torch" that came down from heaven, put on flesh and as a man in our place "cut covenant" with God. Right now God is enthroned on high watching over His covenant with us, assuring us that He is watching over His word to perform it on our behalf.

What our covenant God says about you in His word, all that you are and all that is yours in Christ, is true, eternal, and cannot change, and as you embrace Him who is the bread of life you will be sustained and brought to the ... *"knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (Eph 4:13).

Lesson 11 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – From Valleys to Heights

4. The Valley Gate

Neh 3:13 ... *“Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the Refuse Gate.”*

We are now in the southwest corner of the city. We discussed earlier how this gate overlooked the Hinnom valley, a place associated with sin and shame.

The root of sin is pride. It was pride, the desire to self-elevate, that caused Lucifer to be cast out of heaven.

Isa 14:12-15 ... *“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! 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. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.”*

I will ... I will... I will... Lucifer’s whole outlook is that “it’s all about me”. He is the father of pride.

Proverbs has something definite to say about how God views pride, and speaks of the evil and destructiveness of pride.

Prov 8:13 ... *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.”*

Prov 16:18 ... *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”*

The valley is a low lying place. This gate speaks to us of the necessity to be willing to adopt a lowly or humble attitude. When we have been offended and hurt by someone else it is so easy to see them as “wrong” and us as “right” – Us as “up here on the hill of righteousness” and them as “down there in the valley of sin”. This insistence on being “right” is pride.

Oh you may say, “How can you say that. I’ve really been offended. That person was so wrong in what they did”. And, yes, I’m not denying that you have been the subject of some bad treatment. I’m not denying that someone has dealt wrongly with you.

But you see, what I’m saying is that it’s easy to relate everything to ourselves and consider ourselves as the point of reference. “Oh how I have been hurt”... “Oh how mean they have been to **me**” ... “Oh I don’t deserve to be treated like this” ... “How dare they talk to **me** like that” ... “Oh what injustice they’ve thrown at **me**” ...

The truth is, as believers, Christ and Christ alone should be our point of reference in all things – good or bad. If we want renewed minds and stable emotions – to be whole – we will have to lay down our will in submission to Christ and pray, have **Your** way in me O Lord, conform me to **Your** will, **Your** will be done in my life. Let him be the focus, the point of reference, not you. That takes humility.

Phil 2:3-11 ... *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

If anyone ever was offended to the absolute maximum it was Christ. Rejected by man, blasphemed, spat upon, lied about, beaten, and put to death by man. Yet through it all His focus was not upon Himself and what He suffered, not one little iota on Himself, it was all upon doing the will of His Father for our benefit – yes, that we, the offenders, may be forgiven and come to holiness and wholeness.

Heb 12:2-4 ... *“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 will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.”*

The attitude of humility is a Christ focused attitude. Humility seeks God’s will for the offender as much as God’s will for you. His will for your offender is that he or she may come to repentance and be made whole. His will for you is that through the trials you face you may be brought to maturity in Christ the ... *“to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).*

Listen to the words Paul wrote to the Roman church, and let God’s Word minister to you.

Rom 8:28-39 ... *“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 those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, 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 over 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 will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Prov 11:2 ... *"When pride comes, then comes dishonour, but with the humble is wisdom."*

Prov 29:23 ... *"A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor."*

Jas 4:10 ... *"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

The Valley gate is a place of humility – where an attitude of humility brings us wisdom from on high and a place where God will honour us and restore us to a place of honour.

"They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars" – if we are to be fully restored, this is a "Gate" we are shut and lock out against pride, and open only to humility.

5. The Refuse Gate

Neh 3:14 ... *"Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars."*

The Refuse Gate was located to the south of the city, approximately 500m from the Valley Gate, and was the main exit from the city to the valley of Hinnom. It was in this valley that the city refuse was dumped and burned, and it was through this gate that the refuse was transported to the dumping ground.

So this gate had a very important function – the sanitary disposal of the city waste matter outside the city walls was essential to the ongoing health of the people within the city.

Now, before we look at the significance of this gate to us in our re-building program, there's something else we first need to look at.

There is only mention of one man involved in the reconstruction of this gate, and where he came from – ... *"Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate."*

First of all let's look at the district over which he officiated – Beth-haccherem.

Beth-haccherem consists of two words – bayit which means "a house", and kerem which means a vineyard. Together they mean "a vineyard place". This word "vineyard" is first used in Genesis 9, where Noah is said to have planted a vineyard. The place of first mention of any word is very important in the scriptures as it gives us the prime meaning or underlying significance of the word through the context in which it is used.

Gen 9:20-25 ... *"Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent.²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he*

knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ So he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers'."

Ham sexually abused his father and went and bragged about it to his brothers. This wicked act brought judgment on him and his descendants.

Gen 10:6-20 goes on to give us a record of Ham and his descendants. They became all the peoples and nations associated with evil. Babylon, Philistines, Nineveh, Canaanites, Amorites, Jebusites, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. – are all to do with or come from Ham.

So the association of Beth-haccherem with the Refuse gate serves to reinforce the fact that this gate has to do with sin, the refuse of evil, and judgment upon sin.

Then let's look at the name Malchijah – the only one mentioned in relation to the reconstruction of this gate.

This name is made up using two words Melek which means "king", and yah which means "God". Together this name means "my King is God".

Throw it out and keep it out

Now if we put all of this together we see the significance of this gate in our lives.

Firstly, **one** man speaks of **individuality**. The work of this gate is something we each as individuals must do. This is not something you can get some else to do for you. You and you alone must do this work.

What is this work that we must do? Like the city that needed to dispose of its refuse to remain clean and healthy, we each individually must get rid of whatever defiles us so that it does not remain in us to pollute us. We are called, not to uncleanness, but to be holy and pure. Whether it is our own sin or that of our offender/s, bring it to God, confess it and ask for forgiveness.

Isa 52:11 ... *"Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord."*

2 Cor 7:1 ... *"beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*

James 4:8 ... *"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."*

1 John 1:9 ... *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Remember there is no "little" sin. All sin is sin in God's eyes as it all has the effect of defiling us.

1 Cor 5:6-8 ... *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not*

with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Any sin we entertain and do not deal with, a bad thought, and bad attitude, unforgiveness, a wrong we have committed but not asked forgiveness for, no matter how "little" we may think it is, will in time infect, pollute and spread and defile us. It will also be a block between us and God.

Ps 66:18 NJKV ... *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear."*

The Hebrew word for refuse (ash heap, refuse heap, dung hill) is ashpoth. It comes from a root word shapat, to set on fire. As we grow in Christ every bit of sin must be purged from our lives – we must submit ourselves to the "Refiners fire" and let Him remove every bit of dross from us, so that we come forth as pure, refined gold.

2 Tim 2:21 ... *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."*

If we are to be a Malchijah, one who can truly say, "My King is God", He reigns over every aspect of my life, we need to walk in humility, submission and openness before our God, confessing and getting rid of every bit of sin from our lives. If we let Him examine our hearts and reign over every thought and emotion, He will restore you to wholeness.

The Greek word for "confession" is *homologeō* and it means, "to speak the same thing." So when you confess, you're saying about your sin the same thing that God is saying about it to you. You're in agreement with Him. Confession involves being open and honest, and not trying to come up with excuses about yourself or to God or to your own conscience. When you see and surrender to the light of the Word and you confess (say the same thing as He says) your sin, the word and blood of Christ will cleanse away your sin and purify you.

There is nothing more fundamental to a healthy walk in Christ than this daily process of identifying and clearing out any sin. It should be like breathing. As we inhale, oxygen is carried into our bloodstream and distributed throughout our body. Also, as it circulates through our body the blood picks up the impurities and refuse from our cells and then when we breathe out we expel this waste matter. Similarly, "breathing" in the Spirit quickened Word of God each day, you are fed and nourished and at the same time the Holy Spirit uses the Word to highlight and collect the impurities of your sin, and the "exhaling" of confession along with the power of the blood of Jesus cleanses and purifies your soul.

This daily process of cleansing is essential in your forward march in holiness and being brought to wholeness. If we have learned the lesson of humility and submission from the Valley Gate then the Refuse Gate should present no problem to us.

This gate had bolts and bars. Sin must be thrown out and shut out forever.

6. The Fountain Gate

Neh 3:15-25 ... *"Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He built it, covered it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden as far as the steps that*

descend from the city of David. ¹⁶ After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as a point opposite the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men. ¹⁷ After him the Levites carried out repairs under Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. ¹⁸ After him their brothers carried out repairs under Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of the other half of the district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the Angle. ²⁰ After him Baruch the son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹ After him Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the doorway of Eliashib's house even as far as the end of his house. ²² After him the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs. ²³ After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house. ²⁴ After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah as far as the Angle and as far as the corner. ²⁵ Palal the son of Uzai made repairs in front of the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs."

In our journey we have thus far come around the southeastern corner and are beginning to head north along the east side of the city boundary. We are now at the Fountain Gate opposite the Kidron valley and are near the King's Pool, here referred to as the pool of Shelah (also known to us as the pool of Siloam), and close to the Gihon spring.

Strategic Gate

As we learned in an earlier lesson, the Fountain Gate and its associated pool of Shelah is strategically located near the Gihon spring – the main water source for the city. The security of the conduit from the spring to the city was vital to the well being of the city folks especially in times of attack from enemies.

In [John 4:14](#) Jesus said, "whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." In [John 7:38](#) He said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Jesus is the water of life. He is the source of eternal life in us. But not only is He life in us, He also desired to flow out of us to touch others so that they might have life. The "facilitator" is the Holy Spirit. He births in us the life of Christ, and He is the one who brings our soul and spirit into alignment so that the rivers of life can flow out of us.

The alignment of soul and spirit is what is referred to as "abiding" – the Holy Spirit helps us to "abide" in Christ so that His life sap flows through us and produces fruit and releases gifts. The Holy Spirit is the facilitator of the release of the supernatural gifts of the spirit.

It's when we "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19) or "grieve the Spirit" (Eph 4:30) we put "rubble" in the "conduit" and block the flow of life. Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). So if we are to come to wholeness and be productive, with rivers of living water issuing from our innermost being, we need to submit to the Holy Spirit as He brings us into abiding union with Christ.

The significance of names and places

Now we often gloss over names, places and other things we regard as insignificant when we read the Bible. But God inspired the writers to include these details for a very good reason. So let's take a moment and look at the significance of the names and places in the verse we have read ... *"Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate.... the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden."*

Let's start with the pool of Shelah. The Hebrew word Shelach is from root word Shalach which means "to send".

Shallum, the name of the man who rebuilt the gate, is from the root word shallam which means "to be complete or sound".

Col-hozeh is from two words: col which means "the whole", "all" and this comes from the primary root kalal which means "to complete", "perfect", and the word hozeh means "see that which is not normally visible". So putting them together they render "to completely or perfectly see that which is not normally visible".

Mizpah from the root word tsaphah which means "look out", "keep watch", "watch expectantly".

Now here's the significance of these names in relation to this place we are at. It was to the pool of Siloam that Jesus **sent** the blind man to wash the clay out of his eyes.

John 9:7 ... *"Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing."*

He obeyed, he went and washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam and a miracle occurred and he was healed, he was given perfect sight. Eyes that had never had sight before were given complete and perfect vision.

Jesus, the Master Builder, whose desire was for the blind man be complete and sound sent the man to the pool of Siloam so that he could gain sight and his eyes could perfectly see what had not normally been visible so that from that day on he could see perfectly and be able to "look out" and "watch expectantly" with his new vision.

Also "pool" is from the word berekah. This is from the root word barak which means to "kneel", "bless". As the blind man, in obedience to Jesus, knelt to wash his eyes, he was blessed.

What does all of this say to us today?

It says that this is the place where if we kneel with hearts bowed before our Lord, expectantly watching and waiting, the Holy Spirit who has been sent to open the eyes and understanding of our hearts will bring us to completely see that which is not normally visible so that we can know Christ,

know His will and purposes and be restored to wholeness and be able to walk in this new revelation. With this revelation knowledge and insight we can go out and walk in His will and His ways in the strength of His might. So this is the “gate” at which we should be kneeling and watching, waiting and praying:

Eph 1:17-19 ... *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”*

Allow the “fountain” of the Holy Spirit to open the “gates” of your understanding that the revelation knowledge of Christ might flood your soul. Then as we hear Him and obey Him we will walk in wholeness, and be able to bring that same life and wholeness to others. *“For the mind set on the spirit is life and peace”* (Rom 8:6).

This is a place of blessing and sending. As we are blessed and made whole, we can expect to be sent out in Jesus name to help others come to wholeness.

Near their House

In this passage we read that some repaired the wall near, in front of, and beside their houses. Our wholeness is vitally important to those of our household. Especially if we are fathers and mothers – we have to be a good example to our children and those of our household – our family. If we are not walking in Christ, whole and strong, what hope do they have?

Also, Baruch the son of Zabbabai (v 20) gives us a good example to follow – to be zealous about our work. Phil 2:12 says, *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”*

7. The Water Gate

Neh 3:26-27 ... *“The temple servants living in Ophel made repairs as far as the front of the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.”*

The water Gate is the gate through which the people accessed the Gihon spring and its clear water, as this gate was situated on the east side of the city opposite the spring.

The Ophel in Jerusalem is the spur on the eastern hill, running due south, just to the west of the temple area, joining the Kidron valley on the east. This was the Jebusite stronghold taken by king David (called “Zion” in 2 Sam 5:7) and is possibly what we know as Mount Zion. There was a tower there from which the gate could be guarded. Micah (Mic 4:8) prophesied and visualised the Messianic era as one in which God’s kingdom would be established on the Ophel or hill of Zion. Zechariah also prophesied (Zech 8:3) and said, ... *“Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.’”*

Now from this there are some things we need to consider.

Firstly, water is often a type of the Word of God. It is logical therefore that it should be the temple servants that are given charge of Water (Word) Gate.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that there is no mention here of actual repairs to the Water Gate itself, just repairs of the wall up to the front of the gate. Possibly there was no need for repairs to be carried out, but of that we are not certain. However, as it is symbolic of the Word of God, we know that the Word does not need to be repaired for it is ... *“the imperishable ... living and enduring word of God”* (1 Pet 1:23).

All attempts to destroy the Word of God over the centuries have failed and it continues, unchanged and eternal. All we are called to do is to defend the Word – we are to ... *“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints”* (Jude 1:3), and to ... *“guard what has been entrusted to you”* (1 Tim 6:20), and ... *“Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you”* (2 Tim 1:13-14).

Jesus spoke of the word that washes you clean (John 15:3) and Paul also wrote that ... *“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word”* (Eph 5:25-26).

The water gate speaks to us of the necessity to guard the word as it is the word that cleanses, refreshes, guides, instructs and strengthens us.

At the Fountain Gate we are encouraged to be filled with the Spirit and be led by the Spirit so we may enjoy life and peace. At the Water Gate we are encouraged to attend to, and guard, the Word as it cleanses, refreshes, guides, instructs and strengthens us.

Eph 5:18-20 ... *“be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”*

Col 3:16 ... *“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.”*

In Nehemiah chapter 8 we see how the people gathered as on to hear and be encouraged the word of God.

Neh 8:1-3 ... *“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.”*

And it was a few verses later that Nehemiah declared the encouraging, eternally settled words:

Neh 8:10 ... *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

With minds set on the Spirit and attentively guarding the Word of God, we will be renewed and strengthened.

Isa 54 :17 ... *“No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their vindication is from Me,” declares the LORD.”*

Be assured, when God says it, it is so.

Ps 119:89 ... *“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.”*

Matt 24:35 ... *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”*

Lesson 12 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – Completing the Task

8. The Horse Gate

Neh 3:28 ... *“Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house.”*

The Horse Gate was situated on the eastern side of the city, north of the Water Gate, and opposite the temple area.

In the Word the horse speaks of two things:

1. Doing things in our own strength – the strength of the flesh – self-sufficiency and self-help programs
2. It's association with war – which speaks of spiritual warfare against us

Both speak of things which are opposed to God, and to which God is opposed.

The Folly of Self-sufficiency

We're well on our way with the reconstruction of the walls and gates, and we've attended to seven of the ten gates of our lives. Our brokenness is rapidly disappearing and we're becoming stronger. We've been serious about establishing a life of worship, knowing from whom we derive our strength, we've begun to master humility, dealing with pride and have made every effort to cleanse ourselves from any defilement, we've begun to experience the opening of the eyes of our understanding to know Christ and walk in union with Him, and we've been attending to the Word. We're becoming stronger and stronger and maturing in Christ. We've been doing exploits in Jesus name – through our testimony and shining forth the light of the love of Christ we've begun to see sinners come to salvation, sick people healed and we've begun to experience blessing and fulfilment in our lives.

And then, when everything looks like it's just fine and going well in our lives, as often happens if we're not careful and on the look-out, the enemy subtly attacks. We entertain thoughts of how great we are or have become. We begin to steal some of God's glory taking praise for the positive changes that have taken place in us, or things that have been achieved in and through us. We don't spend so much time in worship, prayer, the Word and listening intently to the Holy Spirit and we move in a direction of self-help programs, working out things on our own and not in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Or we “formularise” the things we have done in the past to obtain success as we move on. And before long we may find ourselves amongst those of whom Jesus spoke in Matt 7:22-23 ... *“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”*

So at this gate we are warned:

1Cor 10:12 ... *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

Ps 147:10-11 ... *“He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD favours those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.”*

So this gate serves to remind us to continually fix our eyes on Christ, in whom we live and move and have our being, and not to fall back into ways of self-sufficiency, being like the horse with its characteristics of stubbornness and insubmissiveness, which will eventually pull us back into other sinful and lustful ways.

Jer 8:6 ... *"I have listened and heard, they have spoken what is not right; No man repented of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his course, like a horse charging into the battle."*

Ps 32:9 ... *"Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you."*

Prov 26:3 ... *"A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools."*

Jer 5:8 ... *"They were well-fed lusty horses, each one neighing after his neighbour's wife."*

As we progress along the path of being made whole we are to constantly remember that Christ is our sufficiency and to keep our eyes on Him and Him alone, for ... *"the joy of the Lord that is our strength"* (Neh 8:10).

Ps 20:7 ... *"Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God."*

Just as it was the priests that repaired this gate, so we are reminded that we are:

1 Pet 2:9 ... *"A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."*

The War Horse

The second matter concerning horses is their association with war and warfare.

The place of first mention of horses in the Bible refers to them as livestock and is general. However, the next mention of horses has to do with war and battle.

Ex 14:9, 23 ... *"Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon" ... "Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea."*

But the Word is clear concerning the futility of the horses and chariots that are raised up in battle against God, His purposes and His people.

Ex 15:1 ... *"Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and said, 'I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.'"*

Ps 33:16-22 ... *"The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Your lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in You."*

Prov 21:31 ... *"The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD."*

Queen Athaliah's evil reign and opposition to God and ultimate execution at the Horse Gate also shows that this is a place where those forces of evil which oppose God and His people are to be silenced.

2 Chr 22:2-3, 10-12 ... *"Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly" ... ¹⁰ "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath the king's daughter took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah so that she would not put him to death. He was hidden with them in the house of God six years while Athaliah reigned over the land."*

2 Chr 23:3, 9-17 ... *"Then all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada said to them, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord has spoken concerning the sons of David" ... ⁹ "Then Jehoiada the priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and the large and small shields which had been King David's, which were in the house of God. ¹⁰ He stationed all the people, each man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, by the altar and by the house, around the king. ¹¹ Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him, and gave him the testimony and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him and said, "Long live the king!" ¹² When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came into the house of the Lord to the people. ¹³ She looked, and behold, the king was standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters were beside the king. And all the people of the land rejoiced and blew trumpets, the singers with their musical instruments leading the praise. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and said, "Treason! Treason!" ¹⁴ Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army and said to them, "Bring her out between the ranks; and whoever follows her, put to death with the sword." For the priest said, "Let her not be put to death in the house of the Lord." ¹⁵ So they seized her, and when she arrived at the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king's house, they put her to death there. ¹⁶ Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king,*

that they would be the Lord's people.¹⁷ And all the people went to the house of Baal and tore it down, and they broke in pieces his altars and his images, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars."

Athaliah opposed God, His people and His plans so she was put to death. But not only that, the images and altars of Baal were torn down.

At this gate we have come to the place in our lives where we have to self-examine, and all things in our lives that oppose God must be torn down and destroyed for once and for all.

Spiritual warfare

So the Horse Gate represents a place where we will face enemy attacks and need to engage in spiritual warfare.

Eph 6:9-10 ... *"Put on the full armour of God, so that you will 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."*

The attacks may be ones that cause us to rely on the flesh (self-sufficiency) or attacks that condemn, causing us to doubt, or attacks that try to undermine what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives to bring us to maturity in Christ. In fact, all sorts of attacks that attempt to bring us trouble in one form or another.

But it is a place where we will find that the "Captain of the Lord's host" is on our side and ... *"in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" ... also we come to understand 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, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:37-39).*

2 Cor 2:14 ... *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."*

There is a definite and vital place for powerful Spirit led prayer in warfare against the enemy's tactics, and we should engage in this type of warfare. Be alert; be ready to engage in battle.

Jas 4:7 ... *"Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

1 Pet 5:8-10 ... *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."*

But there is also a complimentary and equally powerful means of defeating the enemy through the release of the fruit of the Spirit. When we abide in Christ and ... *"the sweet aroma of the knowledge*

of Him is manifest in our lives in every place”, that totally frustrates the enemy because he has no counter measure.

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

1 Cor 13:8 ... “love **never** fails.”

The enemy has no counter “law” that can stop the effects of the fruit of the spirit from prevailing and winning! In this battle abiding in Christ, remaining in moment by moment union with Christ, will ensure the flow of His life sap into us, the branches, and the fruit of the spirit will be produced. This is powerful battle winning ammunition! Stay close to the “Battle Commander” – the Lord of hosts and win!

You in and of yourself cannot produce this fruit. Self-help – horses – won’t produce anything that will prevail over the enemy. It’s by abiding in Christ, the Vine, that His life flows into you, the branch, and fruit is produced. In the midst of battle, abide in Him – and win!

We are to put on the “full armour”, stand firm, rooted and grounded in Christ, and you will see the victory. This command to put on the full armour is to put on Christ. Christ in you is the victorious One. Allow the Holy Spirit to “clothe” your mind, will and emotions with Christ – He is the “armour”.

Just look at what the Psalmist says about being in Christ, adorned with Christ in every aspect of our lives, and abiding, resting, in Him in the face of attack from the enemy:

Ps 91:1-16 ... “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!” ³ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. ⁵ You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; ⁶ Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you. ⁸ You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. ⁹ For you have made the Lord, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. ¹⁰ No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent. ¹¹ For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. ¹² They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down. ¹⁴ “Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. ¹⁵ “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. ¹⁶ “With a long life I will satisfy him and let him behold My salvation.”

So our strategy at this gate is to “put on Christ”. Have the mind of Christ.

Rom 13:14 ... “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.”

No horses of the flesh!

2 Tim 2:1, 4 ... *"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ... 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."*

John 15:7 ... *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."*

Abiding in Him – fruit is produced; His Words abiding in us – the Sword, we speak in powerful prayer; the outcome – *"it shall be done for you"*.

Isa 54:17 ... *"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me," declares the Lord."*

At this gate we battle clothed in Christ our impenetrable armour; led by the Spirit we boldly speak forth the Word, the sword of the Spirit, in powerful declarations of prayer; and in the strength of the might of the Lord of hosts we push back the enemy and close the gate of his unlawful intrusion into our lives.

9. The East Gate

Neh 3:29 ... *"After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. And after him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, carried out repairs."*

The East Gate led directly into the Temple area. It is what we also know as the Golden Gate, and is the gate through which tradition says Jesus entered the temple area on Palm Sunday.

In the sixteenth century the Turkish sultan Suleyman the Magnificent sealed off this gate, but it will be opened once again when, in accordance with both Jewish and Christian traditions, the long awaited Messiah will make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. That return cannot be too far away.

So this gate serves to reminds us that the ... *"The night is almost gone, and the day is near"* (Rom 13:12) it's time to arise from lethargy and indifference and make ourselves ready for the imminent return of the Lord ... *"But at midnight there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him"* (Matt 25:6). So the question comes to us: Are we ready? Are we living according to the hour?

1 John 2:28 ... *"abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."*

This gate also reminds us that our current temporary afflictions will soon be over and we will be taken up to be with the Lord where there are no more tears, pain or suffering.

1 Thess 4:16-18 ... *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to*

meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."

As the born again we can draw comfort from the fact that

2 Cor 4:16-18 ... *"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."*

But for many it will be the beginning of the darkest night they have ever known. So at this gate we are reminded not to be focusing on ourselves but on the lost. We are ambassadors for Christ and have the great responsibility of shining out the light of Christ in the dark places so that whosoever will may come to the Lord and be saved. As we saw at the Fish Gate, we are reminded once again that we are here to be fishers of men. The only thing we will be able to take with us from this earth will be those people who have come to salvation through our witness of Christ.

When the Lord looks at you on that day what will be your response when He says, "Who have you brought with you?"

Before we move on to the next gate there's someone else we need to look at. As we go from the East Gate there is a little piece of wall between this one and the next gate that is being rebuilt that has something to say to us.

Neh 3:30 ... *After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters."*

The word "quarters", or "dwelling" (NKJV), or "chamber" (ESV) is from the Hebrew word nishkâ which means "a chamber". It comes from the root word nashak which means "to bite". We talk about a "bite sized" portion as a small portion or piece. So nishkâ was a "small little chamber". Also another derivative of the root is nashak which means "lend for interest", or, "paying usury". So this little chamber was rented, as it was a little room being "lent out for usury or return". So it was a very small rented room that Meshullam lived in.

So here we have a man, probably of very humble means with very little in the way of earthly goods, who had no home of his own and lodged in a tiny chamber. But despite this fact, Meshullam was faithful to God who appointed him to glorify God in the very humble estate of life to which God had appointed him. He went about his work with great energy and repaired over against his tiny little room. And not only there, for we find him in Nehemiah 3:4 also diligently at work repairing the Fish Gate and its surrounding walls. He is a beautiful example of the person of Luke 16:10 ... *"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much."*

His focus was not on his lack but on God and His interests and particularly on the interests of others, for he was a "fisher of men".

Unfortunately, unlike Meshullam there are many in this life that complain about their situation and look enviously at others that are more blessed in their lot in life. Some let this envy and jealousy drive them to bitterness. Some sit around licking their wounds asking God “why me?”, “Why am I like this instead of like that?” Oh that we may have the spirit of Meshullam and keep our Lord as the point of reference of our life and focus on His interests and not ourselves and our situation. Like Paul our attitude should be ... *“I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am”* (Phil 4:11).

There’s more we can learn from Meshullam. The name Meshullam comes from the root word shalem = “to be complete or sound”. He was the son of Berechiah which means “God blesses”, who was the son of Meshezabel which means “God delivers”. Now turn that around and flow down the generations and we see that when “God delivers” we move into “God’s blessings” which brings us “completeness and soundness”. If our hearts are set on God and not ourselves and our situations and we get on with His work, and attend to His interests, He will deliver us from self centredness and its perils, and from our pains and will bless us and bring us to wholeness and completeness.

The East Gate was the gate upon which the rising sun shone.

Mal 4:2 ... *“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”*

Finally, Ezekiel speaks of the glory of the Lord entering through this gate.

Ezek 43:1-2, 4-5 ... *“Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; ²and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory ... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. ⁵And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.”*

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of our Lord, and it is the Father’s desire, plan and purpose that we be filled with the glory of the Lord. That He may be seen in us and flow out of us to a world in need.

To the extent that we are watching, waiting and living with expectant hearts for the return of our Lord, enthusiastically attending to Him and His interests, particularly to the lost, we will find the glory of the Lord will filling us and shining out of us in glorious radiance – Christ in us in all His glory seen in us and flowing like a mighty river out of our innermost being touching others, bringing healing, deliverance and salvation those in need.

This is a glorious gate!

10. The Inspection Gate

Heb 3:31 ... *“After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner.”*

Some translations call this the Muster Gate, or Miphkad Gate. It is that last of the 10 gates that were rebuilt.

The Hebrew name for this gate is Miphqad which comes from a root word paqad which means to attend to, visit, muster, appoint or inspect. So the Miphqad Gate is the place of inspection or appointment (for judgement). It's the gate where controversies were tried, judgements given and penalties applied.

Standing Before The Judge

For all believers there will be the day when ... *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10).

But well before that day, right now, and in the days as we approach that final day we stand accountable before God for our every thought, word and action. This gate reminds us that the rebuilding of our souls (the renewing of our mind, will and emotions), all the pains, trials, tribulations and everything we have come through to this point in coming to wholeness, is really about coming to holiness as a way of life. It is an aligning of our souls with the holy and pure life of Christ who resides within our spirit. This is where we are reminded that we are to constantly examine ourselves in the light of the Word and align every thought, attitude and action with the Word.

2 Cor 13:5 ... *"examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you."*

2 Cor 10:5 ... *"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."*

Gal 6:3-4 ... *"For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But each one must examine his own work."*

1 Thess 5:21-22 ... *"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil."*

2 Tim 2:21 ... *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."*

1 Pet 4:1-2, 7-19 ... *"Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God ⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. ⁸ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaint. ¹⁰ As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving 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. 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 on you. ¹⁵ Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 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, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

So this gate is a call to walk before our Lord, the Judge of all, in all things in a manner that does not condemn us and in which we have confidence before Him.

We are reminded by the Word that there is nothing we can hide from God; He sees everything in our lives and particularly in our hearts; our attitudes, motives, desires, intentions and thoughts.

1 Sam 16:7 ... “God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

The Word also tells us of a day in which all our secrets will be revealed.

Rom 2:16 ... “the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

The Word also brings us encouragement.

1 Jn 3:21 ... “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”

Your Own Individual Responsibility

Then let’s look at the name Malchijah and the fact that he was the only person mentioned in relation to the reconstruction of this gate.

Again, as we found at the Refuse Gate (Neh 3:14) there was only one man mentioned, also named Malchijah, who individually built the gate.

As we saw at the Refuse Gate **one** man speaks of **individuality**. That was the gate through which the refuse was taken out of the city, and we saw that it is our **individual responsibility** to deal with sin in our lives. Similarly, at the Inspection Gate, it is our **individual responsibility** to examine ourselves and see that every thought, attitude, intention, word and action is holy and pure and something we will be proud of and concerning which we can stand with confidence before our Lord.

The Name

We met up with the name Malchijah in Neh 3:11 at the Tower of Furnaces and in Neh 3:14 at the Refuse Gate, and again this name pops up here at the Inspection Gate.

As we learned at the Refuse gate this name means “my King is God”.

If we are to be a Malchijah, one who can truly say, “My King is God”, all I think, say and do I do in Honour of Him, we need to walk in humility, submission and openness before our God, allowing the Holy Spirit to help us examine our hearts daily so that we align our lives with Christ and pursue that which is pure, holy and brings glory to God. With His help let us build in our lives that which is lasting and that which brings glory to our Lord.

Goldsmiths

The fact that Malchijah was a goldsmith is also significant, as gold is symbolic of that which is indestructible or lasting.

1 Cor 3:12 ... *“Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.”*

1 Pet 1:6-7 ... *“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,⁷ so 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

As we examine ourselves daily let us ask – Are we building with gold, silver and precious stones, or with wood hay and stubble? That is your individual responsibility and no one else, except God, can make that judgment and decide on the way forward.

At the Refuse Gate we deal with sin, whereas at the Inspection Gate we examine ourselves to see that we are building on that which is pure, holy and pleasing to God, and that we are not allowing any return of sin to our lives.

A Complete Circuit

Neh 3:32 ... *“Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.”*

In our soul rebuilding program we started at the Sheep Gate and we end at the Sheep Gate.

Everything whole, pure, holy and lasting in our lives begins and ends at the cross. It’s the **work of the cross** that brings us to Christ, without whom we cannot have holiness or wholeness. It’s the **way of the cross** that perfects us and brings us to wholeness and maturity in Christ.

We come to Salvation by the **work of the cross**; we work out our salvation by the **way of the cross**.

Phil 2:12 ... *“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.”*

Phil 3:12 ... *“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”*

Lesson 13 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – United We Stand

He Knows You by Name

In chapter 3 of Nehemiah, in considering the rebuilding of the walls and gates around Jerusalem, we met up with a whole lot of individuals from a number of different walks in life. All these people were identified by name and occupation and some by their lineage.

We could simply pass over these details and view them as insignificant, but God put them there for an important reason. As we have seen in previous lessons, the meaning of the names can have great significance with respect to the particular gate or piece of wall being repaired. But there are other reasons why names, occupations and lineages are stated in God's Word. Some of the reasons include:

1. As **loving** God He knows and cares about each and every individual and their function in His eternal plan and purpose, and so He likes to name them and their station in life. So in passages like this He gives us a record of the people by name and by function.
2. As **covenant** God He keeps the promises He has made to His people. So He gives us a written record of His specific promises and the actual people with whom He has made the promises.
3. As **sovereign** God He has chosen to carry out His plans through people and not just by His own independent acts. He operates through His people collectively, so He names the people and their relationships to one another and to His purposes. We are the "body of Christ" and as a "body" we act as a whole and not as individual isolated members.

This is not just a "story" with good moral values for us; it's about real people like you and me. God's entire dealings with mankind revolve around His plans and purposes for individuals, specific people who He loves and for whom He has a unique plan. So in Nehemiah's record of the rebuilding program we have real people named, dealing with a real situation in their homeland.

Our heavenly Father looks at you and me personally and individually and has a plan for each one of us to come to wholeness. He cares for you and singles you out. God is a personal and loving Father and He considers each of us as precious and valuable to Him. He cares for you.

Ezek 34:11-16 ... *"For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick."*

1 Pet 5:7 ... *"casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for **you**."*

Team Effort

Neh 2:17 ... *“Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let **us** rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”*

The task Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem undertook was massive. To many it had for all those years looked impossible. Starting with rubble and rebuilding the walls and gates around the entire city limits was a complex and enormous task requiring lots of people with a range of different skills.

Each section of the wall, the towers and each specific gate was assigned to families or groups of people from Jerusalem and the surrounding country towns. Nehemiah established and directed these teams so that the work would be carried out in a systematic and controlled manner, little by little until it was eventually completed. The only way this enormous task could be completed was by **team effort**. ... *“Let **US** rebuild”* ... People working together – complimentary skills and abilities operating together in a coordinated manner, orchestrated by Nehemiah.

This was not a task one individual could even begin to attempt.

For many of us today, the “rubble” of our brokenness may look too daunting and we may think it can never be resolved. But it can – with the help of the team around you under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So from this we learn a very important lesson; **we need one another**, under the orchestration of the Holy Spirit, in order to face and succeed in our soul rebuilding task. This is not a task we can do alone, but it is a task that can be done, **together**. The Holy Spirit is our primary helper, but He has chosen to use each of us as instruments in one another’s lives.

Sadly it is so often our tendency to be “closed”, not wanting others to know we have problems. More especially if the situation we face is considered by ourselves to be embarrassing. We like to present ourselves as being “together” and “just fine”. Especially as Christians, we want to be seen as overcomers, strong, secure, full of faith, and dare not let anyone know we have problems. Is it not the case so often when someone asks, “How are you going?” that we reply with an air of piety, “Oh I’m just fine thanks” when in reality we’re hurting, bent out of shape and really anything but “just fine”? That unfortunately is a fruit of our pride. We go along with the attitude I’ll work it out with God, I don’t need help. We do that because, in the eyes of some, getting help is a sign of weakness and failure, and it’s something we wrongly fear and resist. But we must remember that hiding the truth about ourselves before others around us – pretending to be better than we really are – is the supreme sin for which Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, the sin of hypocrisy. Openness before one another is the genuine proof of sincerity before God.

Just as it was for Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem, where there were a lot of people with a major problem of insecurity, inability to function properly and vulnerable to enemy attack, so it is for you and me. Every one of us without exception has issues of one form or another that need to be fixed. We all need attention in the area of the renewing of our minds, wills and emotions. If we think otherwise then we need to have a close look at pride and deal with it. Like Nehemiah we need to assess the situation and be honest about that which we see ... *“You see the bad situation we are in,*

that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach."

The rebuilding of our lives cannot be completed by ourselves alone.

The answer in coming to wholeness is to be open and honest, state what needs fixing and then with the help of the Holy Spirit led team around you, get stuck in and start the renewing process, step at a time.

Look Upward and Look Outward

When we look at the cross we see that it has a vertical component and a horizontal component. As believers we relate vertically to God and horizontally to our brothers and sisters in Christ. There is no cross that is only vertical or only horizontal – it has both components. The principle of the cross is the principle that functions in our rebuilding – so our progress toward the upward call is proportionate to our openness outward to receive help from others: our vertical growth in Christ is directly related to our horizontally applied steadying and encouragement from the people around us.

But we must also remember that the rebuilding process is not just about ourselves. We can get so caught up in our own afflictions and pains that we forget the need of others. We each need to remember that we are not the only one in need of rebuilding. Just as it was in Jerusalem where a wall and gates enclosing the entire city were being rebuilt at one time, so today the Lord has a massive soul rebuilding campaign going on throughout the church. The church is you and all the others who are born again, no matter where they are in this world and irrespective of the "label" under which they fellowship. We all need one another and should be mutually concerned about each other's growth in Christ.

Now it's not practical for any one individual to be everywhere at once and helping everyone. Just as Nehemiah had families and small groups of closely associated people working together on their part of the wall or gates, so we need to be formed into "working groups" by family and closely associated people, helping each other come to maturity and wholeness in Christ. So although there is a massive program of rebuilding going on in lives throughout the entire body of Christ, we need to learn to relate to one another and help one another in our local part of the body and particularly in our families and smaller home fellowship groups, and in our prayer and study groups. Public exhortation by a preacher is good and necessary, but mutual exhortation, prayer and encouragement between members of our smaller more intimate fellowship groups is vital, essential and indispensable if we are to turn the "rubble" of our brokenness, into strong walls of wholeness.

Look at what God says to us through some of the "one another" scriptures:

Rom 12:10 ... *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."*

Rom 14:19 ... *"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."*

Rom 15:7 ... *"accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."*

- Rom 15:14 ... *“admonish one another.”*
- Gal 5:13 ... *“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.”*
- Eph 4:2 ... *“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.”*
- Eph 4:25 ... *“laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR, for we are members of one another.”*
- Eph 4:32 ... *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*
- Heb 3:13 ... *“But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*
- Jas 4:11 ... *“Do not speak against one another, brethren.”*
- Jas 5:16 ... *“confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”*
- 1 Pet 1:22 ... *“fervently love one another from the heart.”*
- 1 Pet 4:8 ... *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”*

We need one another in order to come to wholeness. This interdependence process is not always easy. It involves being vulnerable and trusting; trusting of not only the people around us but also of God. But we need to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us to be open and trusting about our difficulties, trusting our brothers and sisters in Christ to do the right thing by us. Similarly, when others open to us, we need to be sensitive and caring about their issues and keep confidential that which has been disclosed. They have come to us for help, not for exposure and condemnation.

Trusting God through it All

We have many relationships in life – family, business, social, community, as well as spiritual – with many people touching our lives in very many different ways. They don’t all contribute in the same way, but they all contribute. Some may provide us positive contribution while others only that which is negative. However, whether our experiences are positive or negative we need to remember that God is in control of our lives. So we need to continually remember that we are His and we need to go to the Holy Spirit to gain understanding at each encounter. That way we will see how all these things work together for our good as He perfectly and appropriately directs our rebuilding. All of the people in your life, even those who appear to be ones you’d rather not have in your life (and I’m not including the “Sanballats” here, as we are to opposed the forces of darkness), are contributing something towards the “mortar” that will bring you to wholeness. There would be no need for faith if there were no trials; no need for hope if there were no hopeless situations; no need for love if there was no unkindness – and so wholeness would be incomplete without faith, hope and love.

Rom 14:7 ... *“For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself.”*

It is clear from God’s Word that we are irrevocably integrated in the lives and affairs of others. Any attempt to push certain people away and avoid learning what God wants to do through them will be to our detriment. God’s plan for our rebuilding involves us accepting and learning interdependency with all those He has placed around us, and particularly between us and our close brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is made a whole lot easier when we view things through the one and only point of reference we as believers have, and that is Christ. He has a plan for our lives; look to Him as He orchestrates those around you.

Completeness Requires Commitment

There are some questions we need to face and answer before God:

- Do I find it difficult to relate to others?
- Am I hesitant to open up and to reach out when I need help?
- Am I hesitant to reach out when I see others in need of help?
- Have issues in my life hindered me from being transparent and vulnerable with others?
- Am I committed to close and meaningful fellowship with other believers?

Sometimes we may be resistant and reluctant to engage in close relationships or to become too trusting and dependent on others because we have suffered disappointment and failure in past relationships. Don’t allow the past failures of others to stop you from coming to wholeness. You see, if we are committed to coming to wholeness we need to trust the Holy Spirit to take even these painful pieces of the “rubble” of past failures and out of them bring us to healing and wholeness in Christ. He will.

The commitment to rebuild the walls and gates was also the commitment to maintain them on an ongoing basis. The people of Jerusalem were committed to their relationships with one another beyond the rebuilding project itself as this was essential for the ongoing security of them as a nation. Similarly, we have to remain committed to one another once we have come to wholeness in Christ so that we may maintain this wholeness and walk in holiness. As members of the body of Christ, we need each other as much beyond the rebuilding project as we do during it.

Mutual Submission

Mutual submission is the basis for advancement and growth in healthy, fulfilling relationships.

Eph 5:21 (NKJV) ... *“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”*

1 Pet 5:5 ... *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility.”*

These verses are a call to believers to submit to one another. It is through this mutual submission out of an attitude of trust, dependence and humility that we will grow in Christ, maintain our wholeness in Him and be able to walk in His full purpose for our lives.

But what is submission? Understanding what submission really means will help us to see that it is not a matter of becoming a “doormat” for others or depersonalised in any way.

The Greek word for submission is *hupotasso* which means “to bring under the influence of”. It is from two words: *hupo* which means “under” and *tasso* which means “to arrange”, “to set”.

But we get a clearer picture from the Latin. It gives us the best definition. Our English word submission comes from the Latin words *sub mitto*. *Sub* means “under” and *mitto* means “send”. Our English word *missive* means letter, which is a written communication that we “send”. *Missionary* is a “sent” one. Sent for a specific purpose.

So *sub misso* from which we get our word “submission” really means “to undergird and send off”. Think of it as a rocket engine beneath the space capsule. The rocket engine undergirds the space capsule and sends it off into orbit with a mighty thrust. Without that undergirding and powerful propulsion of the engine the space capsule would never make it into orbit alone, and therefore not able to carry out its intended function in space.

So as we submit to one another we undergird and launch one another into wholeness and victory. Without that undergirding and supportive role there would be no high flying in wholeness and accomplishing our intended purpose in life. There’s nothing “doormattish” about that!

So this is a call to open up to real mutual dependence upon one another. This is best achieved through the holy dynamic of small-group fellowship. This is the God ordained setting in which the healing love of Christ is released by the Holy Spirit into our souls.

Rom 5:5 (KJV) ... *“because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”*

Mutual submission is a dynamic that enables the successful completion of the rebuilding of the walls.

Those who stand together in Christ are instruments in God’s hand to get the rebuilding job done. We need one another to get the job done.

Some have resisted this dynamic of growth through relationships because of having been hurt by people in the church. But it wasn’t the “relationship” that didn’t work; it was people who didn’t function in the spirit of Christ. So don’t miss the blessing of this commitment to relationships because of past hurts and don’t let others miss the blessing of your input into their lives.

Just remember what someone once said, “There are no Lone Rangers in the kingdom of God. Even the Lone Ranger needed Tonto.”

Eph 4:15-16 ... *“speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

Fruitfulness and fulfilment can only happen in the context of relationships with other members of the body. The branch that is cut off will wither and die. United we stand, divided we fall.

It's when we are "boots 'n all" stuck in and involved in rebuilding and helping others – giving, assisting, carrying, and encouraging – that we will find that we are transformed, strengthened and made whole ourselves in the process.

Opposition Guaranteed

Neh 4:1-8 ... *"Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. ² He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" ³ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, "Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!" ⁴ Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵ Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders. ⁶ So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. ⁷ Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. ⁸ All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it."*

Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and Jerusalem, and he reminds us of the god of this world, Satan, and his tactics to bring disruption to our rebuilding program.

Sanballat knew that Nehemiah had letters of authority from the king of Persia. He knew that Nehemiah's authority to rebuild of the walls of Jerusalem had been granted by a power higher than himself, and there was nothing he could do about this to reverse this situation. Sanballat knew he had to respect this decree from the king as much as he did not like being sidelined as a result of it. He was angry and determined to undermine the work through a barrage of lies and evil attacks.

Satan knows that at the cross Christ broke Satan's power and authority over us, and that there is nothing he can do to reverse this situation. Nevertheless, his attacks against us are relentless. Satan will try every tactic to hinder God's program for us. He will try to do things to get you to hand "power" to him. Fear gives him power over you. Hatred gives him power over you. Doubt gives him power over you. Those attacks will focus wherever we have physical, mental, emotional, or any other personal weakness or needs. His tactics are to undermine your hope and weaken your confidence. His relentless attacks will try to wear you out.

Dan 7:25 ... *"he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law."*

Satan knows he can't get us to an eternity in hell so he focuses on attempts to prevent us from living an abundant and whole life in Christ. He knows that as whole and mature Christ persons we will live in victory and plunder his domain to populate heaven. As the god of this earth sees more and more

people abandoning him and turning to Christ through our witness as whole and strong members of the kingdom of God, he gets very upset. More particularly as he knows his time is running out.

Rev 12:12 ... *“Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”*

But we must take hope and stand firm. It does not matter how “dark” the circumstances may seem, or how “clouded” things may appear as a result of the enemy’s bitter attacks and devious tactics, for in Christ we have power over all of the forces and attacks of darkness. We must stand firm girded up with the truth.

Eph 1:3 ... *“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.”*

2 Cor 2:14 ... *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”*

John 10:10 ... *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*

The Lord Jesus has not called us to a life of futility but to a victorious one. We have been given the Holy Spirit to help us to live by the life of Christ and realise the victory that is ours. We can learn how to walk in Christ in dominion over the devil. We can experience full deliverance and joy in the strength of His might.

Dark Tactics and Responses That Resist

Sanballat provides us with a picture of Satan’s dark tactics against us. Nehemiah shows us the response we are to have to resist these evil attacks, while at the same time continuing with the work of rebuilding.

At the commencement of the re-building efforts Sanballat had laughed at God’s people in open contempt and scorn, seeking to discourage them and undermine their morale. But the more the wall building progressed despite his attacks ... *“he became furious and very angry”* (Neh 4:1). He was angered because he saw the influence of his opposition and efforts against the people weakening.

So he goes and speaks to ... *“his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria”* (Neh 4:2). We can draw a parallel between the men of Samaria and the demons in Satan’s army. Satan has an army that he directs against us.

Eph 6:12 ... *“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.”*

Now have a look at the statements Samballat makes to his army where he accuses the Jews of:

1. Being feeble – ... *“What are these feeble Jews doing?”*
2. Being rebellious – ... *“Are they going to restore it for themselves?”*
3. Not being suitable to sacrifice (worship) – ... *“Can they offer sacrifices?”*

4. Not having enough patience or time – ... *“Can they finish in a day?”*
5. Lacking resources – ... *“Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?”*

Let's look at these statements and see what Satan's tactics really are:

1. *“What are these feeble Jews doing?”* This belittling statement was two pronged;
 - a. it was a pep talk to his army trying to assure them that he was still in command and control when really he knew he was losing grip;
 - b. it was a word of discouragement to the Jews who had, up until the appearance of Nehemiah on the scene, been too feeble in the past to rebuild the walls and here they are being reminded of their past failure.

From this we learn that:

- I. Satan no longer has dominion over us. Don't let him deceive you into fearing him, but rather let him know he is the one who is defeated. 1 Jn 4:4 ... *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”*
 - II. We should not listen to the condemnation from Satan and his hosts. Declare boldly the truth: 2 Cor 12:9-10 ... *“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, so 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.”*
2. *“Are they going to restore it for themselves?”* This is linked to Sanballat's false accusations in Neh 6:5-7 where he questions Nehemiah's motivation for the rebuilding program suggesting he is building himself an empire and conspiring against the Persian king. In reality Sanballat couldn't care less about the king, and he is just making these statements to make the people think he was devoted to the king and a good governor for the king.

From this we learn that:

- I. Satan will try and come over as super spiritual to make you think you're doing something out of selfishness and independence and in doing so going against God. Well, in reality he doesn't care anything for you or for God. He is just trying to intimidate you and exploit your weaknesses. Just ignore his ranting. You know in your heart that you are building in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit and that God wants to fully restore you for His glory.
- II. Sanballat's question simply reveals his real concern is for his lost control and dominion over you. Don't let him sow doubt in your mind concerning God's will to restore you, and for His plan for you to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in this process.

Satan knows your past failings, your hurts, your weaknesses. He will bombard you with old doubts, he'll aggravate unhealed mental and emotional wounds, and he will stir up all sorts of old bad habits. He will go on doing this relentlessly unless you quench his “fiery darts”

with the shield of faith. Use the Word, the Sword of the Spirit, and declare the truth each time an attack is levelled against you.

2 Cor 10:4 ... *“for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”*

Stand firm in faith knowing the Greater One is in you.

Phil 2:13 ... *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”*

3. *“Can they offer sacrifices?”* Sanballat is questioning whether they qualify to offer acceptable worship to God. Samballat has just accused them of being feeble and rebellious and immediately follows this with more sowing of doubt and condemnation by saying, “if you’ve failed so miserably in the past and are rebellious against God how can you possibly offer acceptable sacrifice and worship to God? He’s not going to accept worship from someone so sinful. Who do you think you are? How can you think you are a believer acceptable to God? How can you possibly openly, confidently, and publicly worship your God when your life has all the odours of past sin still hanging around you? God won’t receive your worship. You don’t qualify as a true worshiper.”

From this we learn that:

- I. Satan will go to great lengths to bring condemnation and make you doubt Gods’ acceptance of you and the worship you offer Him. He will focus on and make the most he can of your weaknesses and shame. So we must immediately respond with statements of the truth: “I have been redeemed from my sin through His blood” (Eph 1:7). “As far as the east is from the west so far has He removed my sin” Ps 103:12). “I am the righteousness of God in Christ” (2 Cor 5:21). “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ” (Rom 8:1). “I am accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6 KJV).’ We must boldly declare, “So I can and I will worship my Redeemer! My love and praise is acceptable to him. He loves me and loves it when I worship Him.”
4. *“Can they finish in a day?”* Now Sanballat is trying to sow doubt and despair into their minds. The task is enormous; they have been looking at the ruins for decades; the work has recently commenced and there are already signs of weariness (Neh 4:10). So he capitalizes on this and tries to make them see the task as impossible in the hopes that they will give up in despair.

From this we learn that:

- I. When we have “big issues” in our lives to deal with and the road looks so long and almost impossible and we’re trying, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to rebuild our lives you can be certain that Satan will come along and implant thoughts of despair. He will try to get you to focus on the enormity of the problem and try to make you give up. When that happens we need to immediately remember Rom 8:6 and keep our eyes on Christ and not on the problem. We need to encourage ourselves with the truth. Gal 6:9 ... *“Let us not lose heart in*

doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” Phil 1:6 ... “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.” This promise from God is certain. The completion of His work in us may not occur today, but the promise is His guarantee that it will get done in due time. Be steadfast and declare boldly, “it may not happen immediately or even in a short period of time, but God is my help and my strength and He will help me pick up all the pieces of rubble and reassemble a complete and whole wall.”

5. *“Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?”* Sanballat is again focusing on the negative. “Look at that rubble. You can’t do anything with that, so what are you going to use for building the walls”, he says. “Oh you’ve been given some timber by approval of the king. But that’s not enough. What are you going to do? Can’t you see the situation is hopeless?”

From this we learn that:

- I. We will be attacked with thoughts of hopelessness, like: “How can God possibly fix this mess I am in?” Well the amazing this is God can and will complete the rebuilding of the walls of your soul by reclaiming, reshaping, and restoring very rubble stones that comprise the current mess in your life! What an amazing message of hope that picture contains! Only God could so completely redeem and restore your life out of the broken rubble of shame and failure, and in doing so bring glory to Himself. He is longing to remove the humiliation and pain of the past and to put those broken pieces back together. Healing the broken hearted (Luke 4:18) is the very business He is in!

Phil 4:6-7 ... *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Be Assured and Be Restored

Take hope, be assured, no matter what your past has been, the Holy Spirit will help you to recover, reclaim, restore, renew, and rebuild whatever has been broken. He will fully restore your soul – whatever part of you has been crushed, bruised, broken, stained, tarnished, or ruined – even if some or all of this is due to your own errors or miscalculations. Ps 23:3 ... *“He restores my soul”*.

Don’t be afraid to be open and honest about your brokenness, no matter what accusations “Sanballat” has levelled against you. Learn to recognize the adversary’s tactics. That’s all he is – an adversary to God’s ongoing work in you. He can try to interfere, but he doesn’t have the final word. Someone of much higher authority is now the Lord and “governor” of your life. Submit to His instructions and He, along with the team He has placed around you, will help you rebuild a whole soul from the broken rubble of the past.

Lesson 14 The Holy Spirit at Work in Us – Remaining Focused

Work and War

Neh 4:9-23 ... “But **we prayed** to our God, and because of them we **set up a guard** against them **day and night**.¹⁰ Thus in Judah it was said, “The strength of the burden bearers is failing, yet there is much rubbish; and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall.”¹¹ Our enemies said, “They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”¹² When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, “They will come up against us from every place where you may turn,”¹³ then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows.¹⁴ When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “**Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome**, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.”¹⁵ When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work.¹⁶ From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.¹⁷ Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.¹⁸ **As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built**, while the trumpeter stood near me.¹⁹ I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.²⁰ At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”²¹ So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.²² At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.”²³ So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, **each took his weapon even to the water.**”

Despite the enemy’s attempts to intimidate and demoralize, the people were not defeated. This was a result of the powerful counter strategies that Nehemiah established. Strategies we do well to follow:

- He prayed, ... “But **we prayed** to our God” (v9).
 - Heb 4:16 ... “let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
- He inspired their faith, ... “**Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome**, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses” (v14)
 - Rom 8:31 ... “if God is for us, who is against us?”
 - 1 Sam 17:45-47 ... “Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the LORD will deliver you up

into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands."

- If you look at the problem that confronts you through the greatness of God, you will have confidence and succeed!
- He equipped and positioned them against the attacks, ... *"then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I **stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows** (13).*
 - Matt 18:20 ... *"where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst".*
 - Eph 6:13 ... *"take up the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."*
- He placed members of the contingent that had come with him from the king, the ... *"officers of the army and horsemen" (Neh 2:9), in ... "the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places" (v13). ... "From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah" (v16).*
 - Ps 91:11-12 Says, *"For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone."*
 - In the places where we are most vulnerable, our Nehemiah, the Holy Spirit, has placed His angles to take guard over us!
- He ensured the work was pressing on steadfastly ... *"So **we carried on the work**" (21)*
 - Phil 1:6 ... *"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

In our war against the enemy of our souls the Lord assures us of His protection and that of His angels in the "low places" of our vulnerability, while He has equipped us with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word, so that we can resist the devil in the "high places". We are in a real battle, we can't run away from it, but we are assured of victory if we heed the instructions of our Commander, take up the armour and weapons of our warfare and stand firm against the enemy's attacks – and carry on our building program regardless!

The people were victorious because they had:

- a mind to work (v6, 15)
- a heart to pray (v9)
- an eye to watch (v 9)
- a will to fight (v 18,23)
- an ear to hear (v 20)

In Christ, in the power of His might, you can launch a victorious counter attack! You can stand and build! You can win!

Eyes on Christ

Nehemiah chapter 5 serves as a warning for us as we are built up and grow up in Christ, to keep our eyes fixed on the Master Builder.

The people were ripping each other off in an attempt to make a livelihood for themselves. They were considering only themselves and not the wellbeing of others. Through strife and exploitation they reduced one another to poverty and misery.

If we are not careful the same thing can happen in our lives. We can end up “taxing” others through our unforgiveness, criticism, judgementalism, bitterness, ungraciousness, lack of love, and lack of sensitivity to their needs.

How we relate to one another is a catalyst to the healthy functioning of the body of Christ.

Our goal should be to live to bless, applying the Word that says, *“It is more blessed to give than receive”* (Acts 20:35).

You see, if the enemy cannot succeed with outward attacks against us he will turn to attacking from within. For this purpose his favourite weapon is selfishness and self-centredness. He will try to get us back to licking our wounds and focusing on ourselves. He will try to get us to be so caught up in ourselves and our needs, and doing things to try and satisfy our needs, that our eyes go away from Christ and onto ourselves, to where everything revolves about “me”.

The sad thing is – the moment we displace Christ as our point of reference and replace him with self and self-interest, our demise, and the demise of those around us, will surely begin and escalate.

We are His workmanship (Eph 2:10). He knows what He is doing as He restores us and brings wholeness out of the “rubble” of our past brokenness. All He asks of us is that we trust Him, and keep our eyes fixed on Him. He will see to our needs. That’s His job, not ours.

Phil 2:12-16 ... *“work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. ¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵so that you will 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, ¹⁶holding forth the word of life.”*

Rom 8:6 ... *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

The events of chapter 5 had to be dealt with before the hanging of the gates in chapter 6 could take place. The problem of selfishness and exploitation of others needs to be eradicated if we are to be trusted with managing control of our “access and egress” through our “gates”. As we come to wholeness it is God’s desire for responsible self-rule to be exercised under the guidance of His Spirit. The work He has started He will complete and if we deviate in selfishness we can expect His loving discipline to bring us back “on track”. Prov 3:12 ... *“For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”*

Gates – Authority Centres

The walls were reconstructed but the protection and proper function of the city would only complete once the new gates were hung.

Gates were installed to keep the enemy out and the people safe within the city. But this was not the only function of the gates. Gates were the place where business was conducted. Announcements were made there; trading took place there; court was held there; it was the seat of city governance where important decisions were made. The gates were the city's authority centres.

The gates could be opened and closed, and locked when necessary.

Matt 16:18 -19 Jesus said, ... *"I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."*

He has built us up as His city, and given us the authority to govern our lives in accordance with His will and His ways.

In lesson 8 we learned that the number 12 represents "governmental perfection" or "perfect administration". In the New Jerusalem there will be 12 gates, as it will be under "governmental perfection" or, in other words, "divine government".

In Nehemiah's time there were 10 gates. The number 10 represents "human government". Just as these gates controlled the entry to and exit from Jerusalem, so they depict the self-control in our lives that the Holy Spirit desires to reconstruct and establish. Through His enablement the "gates" in our lives are renewed allowing us to exercise a new dimension of dominion in our mind, will and emotions.

Changing Tactics

However, one thing is for certain, our "Sanballat" does not want these gates to be in place. He does not want us to be established in the true self-control and wholeness that is necessary to govern our lives. So he changes tactic to try and bring about the demise of the reconstruction plan.

Neh 6:1-4 ... *"Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates,² then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were planning to harm me.³ So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"⁴ They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way."*

Now he tries to put on the "nice guy" airs and graces. Be alert, the devil will try every tactic in the book.

2 Cor 11:14, 15 ... *“even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”*

He’s not at all interested in your well being so don’t be deceived when he comes along in his “nice guy” disguise with seemingly conciliatory talk. Never ever will he have your interest at heart. Be discerning, as Nehemiah was and simply ignore him.

Don’t give him the time of day. Don’t consider, debate or negotiate with the options of the flesh that he will use to subtly lure you into compromise.

Chephirim comes from the Hebrew root word *kephir* which means “young lion”. *Ono* is from the root word *on* which means “vigour” or “wealth”. So the pious invitation comes to join the “young lion” in the place of “vigour” and “wealth”. But this is where discernment is needed as this is not the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” inviting you to come to a place of renewed health, wealth and strength of soul, as the liar in his disguise would have you believe – this is the one who goes about as a “roaring lion” seeking whom he may devour! The wolf dressed in sheep’s clothing.

Then, when he tries over and over and fails because you, like Nehemiah, know the truth and choose to just ignore him, what does he do? – yes, he changes tactics once more.

Neh 6:5-7 ... *“Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, “It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports. You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, ‘A king is in Judah!’ And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together.”*

He sends out lies about you – then piously says, “So now you’d better come and have a chat with me. We need to work out how we can save you some face.” If he can’t get you with the nice guy tactics he will go to his threatening tactics. He will use slander and lies against you.

Note it’s an “open” letter – so that everyone can get in on the slander about you.

It may even come via a prayer uttered by some very “dear” but “blinded” individual, “*Oh Lord I have heard this or that about brother so and so, or Lord it’s been reported that sister so and so has done this or that ... won’t you help him or her Lord...*” Yes, sadly, Satan uses the tool of gossip and slander through the lips of anyone who will give him their tongues as his devious tools in any place or on any occasion.

When you are walking in innocence and purity, to have evil spoken of you – unfounded lies and slander levelled against you – it is painful indeed to anyone. But our best and only course of action, as demonstrated by Nehemiah, is to offer no retaliation or explanation to man, only a rebuke to the devil himself, and to immediately pass the matter on to God and leave the results to Him. With a free conscience you can, like Nehemiah, lift your head up and call out to the One who knows the truth, “*but now, oh God, strengthen my hands*” (Neh 6:9) – and He will do just that! If you walk in integrity and are sound in character, God will take care of your reputation. That’s His job, not yours.

Then, when the tactic of slander and lies did not work, yes, the enemy comes out with yet another one. He sent another of his “wolves in sheep’s clothing”, Shemaiah (which means “God hears”), to try and trick Nehemiah into thinking he has his interest at heart (Neh 6:10-14). So very piously Mr “God hears you” comes and tells Nehemiah that some “badies” are coming to kill him and that they had better go and hide in the temple where no one will find them and where God will be with them. But sadly Mr “God hears you” is obviously not well versed in theology as it was forbidden for anyone to go beyond the altar of burnt offering in the temple – and to violate this law meant immediate death.

Nehemiah knew the Word, the truth, and immediately discerned the intruder’s lies. Again his immediate response it to hand the matter to God in prayer and to ignore Sanballat’s hireling, and simply get on with the rebuilding work.

John 8:32 ... *“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

Walls and Gates Completed

Neh 6:15-16 ... *“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.”*

Despite the incessant attacks from Sanballat and his mob, Nehemiah and his people got on with the rebuilding work and at last the walls and gates were all in place once again. Job complete!

If we will stick with the Holy Spirit through thick and thin, through every type of attack levelled against us, as he brings us to wholeness of soul, we will be made whole! And we will know that God has done this! Christ will be seen in us!

But that is when we need to be even more vigilant, because even if the devil has “lost confidence” he will not stop trying to attack us. His attacking will be relentless. Be alert.

Neh 6:17-19 ... *“Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.”*

So the attacks continue, this time at the hand of Tobiah.

Meshallum was one of the wall builders – who had allowed his daughter to marry an “outsider”. This compromise was the reason the “many” in Judah were bound by an oath to Tobiah. Meshallum was a worker on the wall but his family was undermining the very work he was doing. It’s when we compromise that we open ourselves and others to enemy attack and bring harm upon ourselves.

So be on the alert, know the truth and don’t allow even the smallest compromise room in your life.

In the last chapter of Nehemiah we read that, while Nehemiah was temporarily back serving the king, some serious compromise took place. Eliashib the priest let Tobiah lodge in a room in the temple. Talk about giving the devil, a foothold in your life! Well, when Nehemiah found out on his return he was very angry and threw Tobiah and his stuff out and ordered an immediate cleansing of the rooms.

You see, if we do compromise, if we give way to any evil, no matter how big or small, it will corrupt us and bring us down. But we have this hope – our heavenly Father loves us so much He will lovingly discipline us and bring us back on line. He won't leave us to our wrong devices. He may be unhappy with us for a season, but in love He will discipline us and clean us up so that we walk in His ways. If this happens we need to co-operate with Him as He brings us back to His paths of truth and security.

Prov 3:11-12 ... *“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”*

Heb 12:5-13 ... *“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 reproveth by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” 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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 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? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 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. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.”*

Control of the City

Neh 7:1-3 ... *“Now when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed, then I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. Then I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his post, and each in front of his own house.”*

With the city secured, walls and gates in place once more, Nehemiah's concern now is for the gates to be controlled from within the city. If they were not controlled from within they would be controlled by outsiders and that would mean trouble. Whoever controls the gates controls the city.

Although the Holy Spirit will not leave us, as Nehemiah did when he left Jerusalem to go back for a time to serve the king in Persia, He does want us to assume responsibility for our lives. So while

standing with us to help us at all times, He hands responsibility over to us to stand firm and challenges us to ... *“guard that which has been entrusted to you”* (1 Tim 6:20, 2 Tim 1:14).

1. He set watchmen in place.

Neh 7:3 ... *“appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his post, and each in front of his own house.”*

2 John 8 ... *“Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”*

Matt 26:41 ... *“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

2. He appointed singers.

The spirit of praise is the spirit of power. Those who ... *“rejoice in the Lord always”* (Phil 4:4) and ... *“in everything give thanks”* (1 Thess 5:18) are those in whom the Spirit is free to ... *“cause all things to work together for good”* (Rom 8:28) and to ... *“keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy”* (Jude 24).

1 Pet 1:6-9 ... *“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so 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 honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 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, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”*

Eph 5:18-20 ... *“be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”*

Col 3:16 ... *“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.”*

3. He appointed Levites.

The Levites represent the bearers of the Word.

Ps 119:11 (KJV) ... *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.”*

Ps119:105 (KJV) ... *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

These three things are essential in our lives if we are to stand strong and secure – ever alert, ever watchful for the tactics of the devil so you can resist him firm in your faith; always operating with an attitude of praise, worship and thanks to the Lord; meditating in the word of God, which feeds,

protects, warns, guides and encourages us. With these three things set in place we will be able to guard and keep our “gates” secure against attack and will be able to live secure and fruitful lives.

Neh 7:3 ... *“Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they are standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors.”*

This tells us three things:

- Entrance to the city was to be granted only during daylight. In our lives nothing underhanded, “dark” or hidden should be tolerated. Eph 5:8-11 ... *“now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them.”*
- Even in broad daylight we are to be on the alert and guarding the gates of our souls. We’re never to be off-guard.
- Shut and bolt out all sin. Eph 4:27 ... *“do not give the devil an opportunity.”* Let not even the slightest compromise any foothold in your life.

Time to Rejoice

Neh 8:1-3 ... *“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.”*

The occasion: 1st Day of the 7th month was the day the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) was celebrated. This feast signified the beginning of spiritual New Year. So after the long and arduous task of reconstructing the walls and gates in the midst of much opposition it was now time to celebrate.

The place: in front of the Water Gate. From our earlier lesson we learned that water often typifies the Word and that this gate was under the care of the temple servants. We also found out that there was no mention of repairs being carried out to this gate, for we know that the Word does not need to be repaired for it is ... *“the imperishable ... living and enduring word of God”* (1 Pet 1:23). So in reminding us of the Word, the Water Gate is a place of refreshing, guidance, instruction and strengthening.

The event: the reading and explanation of the Word so that with insight and understanding the people may be encouraged in God’s ways for living and maintaining successful and fulfilled lives. Throughout this chapter words like “understanding”, “explained”, “taught” and “insight” occur repeatedly. God’s Word must be known and hidden deeply within our hearts if it is to release in and through us it’s life-changing power.

The three feasts, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles, respectively, represented times of conviction, cleansing and celebration – which is the work of the Word in us.

The Word is the solution to the restoration and ongoing maintenance of a wholesome soul:

v.1-8 deals with understanding of the Word – its work in our MIND

v.9-12 deals with rejoicing in the Word – its work in our EMOTIONS

v.13-18 deals with obeying the Word – its work in our WILL

The Word is the answer for a healthy and wholesome soul.

The joy if the Lord is your strength

In this passage when we, like the Israelites, look back at the wearisome and toilsome time we have come through and reflect on what has been versus what could have been and sorrow begins to flood our hearts, we find that the Word bring us a very important statement of encouragement:

Neh 8:10 ... *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength”*

A very important principle is given in this statement.

God does not give us joy instead of sorrow, or joy in spite of sorrow, but joy in the midst of sorrow. His aim is not substitution but transformation. The difficult circumstances of our lives are pregnant with joy, and by faith we must give that joy time to be born. When a mother gives birth to a child her pain is not replaced by joy, but transformed into joy.

With the Word to direct you through the trials of life and the joy of the Lord to encourage you on your way, you can walk in obedience to His will. You don't need to wait until everything is perfect, for His received Word will work progressively and powerfully in you to accomplish that which pleases the Father. And that is something you can rejoice in right now!

The Holy Spirit is ready right now to open the Word to you to take you on from strength to strength to bring you to the realisation of the Father's plans, purposes and promises for your life.

My Final Prayer for You

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

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” (Eph 3:16-21)

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