

How 2 Change - and lead others 2 change

4

The nuts & bolts of spiritual growth

The purpose of the lesson is to unpack the significance of Galatians 3:1-5: "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: **[Q.1]** Did you receive the Spirit **[a.]** by observing the law, or **[b.]** by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? **[Q.2]** Does God give [Greek: "keep giving"] you his Spirit and work miracles among you because **[a.]** you observe the law, or because **[b.]** you believe what you heard?" [lit. by hearing with faith]

EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS: Is there a sin in your life you can't seem to defeat—something you know is wrong but do all the time—perhaps every day? Do you struggle with relationships? Of course! We may as well ask if grass is green. Let's recap lessons 1 to 3:

In Lesson 1, we asked, "Why did our first parents eat the 'apple'?" and learned that the root of sin is our sinful *self-love*. **In Lesson 2**, we boiled holiness down to its distilled essence: love for God and others. **In Lesson 3**, we learned that faith in Jesus removes our guilt and clothes us in his perfect righteousness.

Brilliant! Now what? We know that God has saved us for a purpose—to make us like himself. But what's the point of setting up a target none of us can hit? Our problem is not so much knowledge (we know quite well what we should and should not do), it's *power*. What can empower us to stop doing the wrong things and start doing the right things? And, how can we help our friends and families and the people in our churches to become Jesus-like lovers of others?

Having seen the target clearly, now the question is, what makes it happen? What sets a person's spiritual growth in motion, and, what can keep it going?

Think of yourself as a spiritual mechanic put in charge of refurbishing the sin-ravaged lives of mankind (including your own). Before you pitch in to help God in this gargantuan task, there are several critical questions that must be answered. It's strange, but whereas most of us aspire to help others change, few of us have dreamt of asking these key questions—four of them.

First, WHY do I want to change people? Is my motive to make *my* life easier, or to gain recognition as an effective discipler or perfect parent? Is it about me, or about God and his glory?

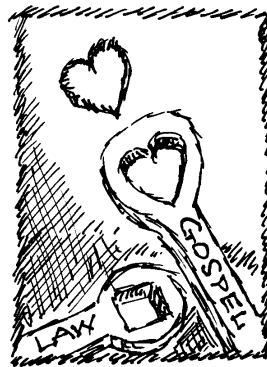
Second, into WHAT do I hope to change them?

In other words, if I succeed in changing everyone, what will my finished product look like? Am I aiming for Christlikeness, or am I out to clone myself?

Third, HOW do I think these changes will take place? That is, what *mechanism* do I plan to use to change all these imperfect people?

Fourth (this one is hard): WHAT ROLE does my being changed have in motivating others to change?

Am I the sort of finished product others will look at and say, "That is what I want to become?" (1Cor:11:1) Thinks about it: Maybe God wants to use my transformation as a catalyst for changing the lives of others. (A non-Christian husband once came along to one of our classes "to learn more about this Jesus who has given me a new wife!")



The Two Spanners

Fact: Deep and lasting change

must come from the *root* (heart) level in order to improve us at the *fruit* (relationship) level. But, what can change a human heart?

Have a look in your spiritual toolbox and you'll find two spanners, one labeled "LAW" and the other "GOSPEL". Problem: The LAW spanner doesn't fit hearts. Oh, it can exert some pressure by banging away on them to stir up fear, guilt, shame, or pride. But the GOSPEL spanner fits like a glove and can exert real leverage. When we use it, people begin genuinely loving God and others. Since the Gospel is the Holy Spirit's tool-of-choice for changing human hearts, it must be ours as well.

In this lesson we will study the "spiritual mechanics" of growth. Then we will do a quick flyover of the New Testament and discover an amazing group of texts that prove "Gospel faith" is God's instrument for motivating us to love and good works.

— JW —

I. What is "spiritual growth"?

A. Sanctification defined. In Lesson 2,

We defined true holiness as loving God with all our heart and loving others as ourselves—and more, loving them as Jesus loves us. Love is our target.

And notice this: Love transcends all our generational *and* cultural differences.

Whether you belong to an older generation known for its concern for "doing the right thing" (rule-oriented), or to the younger generation known for its focus on relationships, when *love* is our target, we both keep the rules *and* build loving relationships. When we grasp this, this "living the Christian life" thing is not such a mystery. It becomes, in fact, quite simple (not easy, simple).

So, here is our situation: We know what we must do: love. The problem is, we must love other sinners, and, by definition, sinners are hard to love! So, our situation is hopeless—*unless* we can discover a source of *supernatural* power for love.

B. Let's clear up some fuzzy thinking.

The Bible speaks of sanctification in three ways.

1. It is a STATE, a condition in which we stand. We have been "set apart" by God, for God (ref. Lev.20:24). In that sense, then, we *are* sanctified. "But you were washed; you were sanctified..." (1Cor.6:11).

2. It is a PROCESS – We have been set apart, but we're an unfinished work. Now it's time for us to "...grow up in all things into him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph.4:15) so that we bear the family likeness "more and more". (1Thess. 3:6ff; 4:1-3; 9,10; 2Thess.1:3,4,11,12; Phil.1:9ff; 2Pet.1:6-8)

Hebrews 10:14 puts these two together wonderfully: "By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." Analysis: "he has made perfect" is the Greek perfect tense signifying a completed action; "those who are being made holy." is the Greek present tense which refers to an ongoing activity.

3. And, it is also a SERIES OF EVENTS in which the Holy Spirit enables us to make conscious choices to resist doing unloving things and choose instead to do loving things.

C. EXAMPLES: (the "Series of Events")

Think about it: If it is true (and it is) that to be holy is to love God and others well, then sin is about "hurting people"—about failing to love them in normal day-to-day relationships!

Daily-life spiritual growth. Examples:

Ladies: You happen on a delicious gossip session. Your girl friends are slagging off a girl you know. You have a choice: jump in with both feet,

or say something like, "You are right, of course, she is a big mess. But, honestly, I am as well. I need to be changed as much as she does. So when you pray for her, please pray for me!"

That was an Ephesians 4:29 sanctification event! ("Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.")

Men: You get a call from a friend. Two weeks ago, you promised to write a letter of recommendation for him to a potential employer. He wants to know if you have posted it yet, as it's needed urgently. You assure him the letter went out some days ago. He thanks you and rings off. The truth is, you had completely forgotten about it until he called. You put everything on hold, hurriedly compose a letter and rush it to the Post Office. You have protected your reputation and he is none the wiser.

Then, the Holy Spirit whispers, "So, you love your reputation more than your friend? Repent. Ring him up, tell him the truth and ask his forgiveness." And so you pray, "Father, forgive me! Change me! Satisfy me with your righteousness so I'll not have to steal it from other sources. Give me your love for people so I'll not use them to make myself look good." Then, you ring up your friend and tell him the truth. Not only does he forgive you, but he may value you all the more for your honesty.

And that was a Colossians 3:9 sanctification event ("Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its evil practices.") Notice that in both cases, someone was loved.

When Paul tell us to "put to death" the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit, this is the sort of thing he's talking about. When he says we are to "imitate God," and "walk in love as Christ loved us..." this is what it looks like. (Rom.8:13; Eph.5:1,2).

Can you think of an example from your life?

D. SO... BECOME A MURDERER!

Clearly it does no good to bang on about sanctification being a process *unless* we are busy committing those little daily "murders" of our sinful nature that lead to loving words and actions.

Obviously, if no sanctification events are taking place, we're stuck in "no grow" mode. No events, no process!

Wonderfully, even though we've used the somber phrase, "dying to sins," the result is not that we become boring, straight-laced, cold, stuffy, prudish people, but interesting, attractive, dynamic, free-spirited, loving, caring, kind, warm and friendly people!

**“No events,
no process!”**

II. "Gospel faith" is the instrument of spiritual growth.

A. What do we mean by "Gospel faith"?

By "Gospel faith" we mean our *conscious trust* in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient righteousness before God and others.

The same faith that justifies us, sanctifies us!

Dr. Francis Schaeffer put that rather radical sounding idea like this:

I became a Christian once for all upon the basis of the finished work of Christ through faith. That is justification. The Christian life, sanctification, operates on the same basis, but moment by moment. There is the same basis (Christ's work) and the same instrument (faith); the only difference is that one is once-for-all and the other is moment by moment...

If we try to live the Christian life in our own strength we will have sorrow, but if we live in this moment-by-moment way, we will not only serve the Lord, but in place of sorrow, He will be our song. That is the difference. The 'how' of the Christian life is the power of the crucified and risen Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit, by faith moment by moment.

— True Spirituality, 1971

Question: Are we just blowing a lot of doctrinal smoke here, or is this what *the Bible* teaches?

B. Sorting out the causes of spiritual growth.

Warning: If you're not a student of doctrine, the next five minutes may stretch you a bit. But, rather than assuming you're too thick to get hold of it, we believe you're perfectly capable and will be blessed as you do!

Back in 1845, a theologian named Robert Shaw wrote a commentary on the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

As Shaw began commenting on Chapter 13 "Of Sanctification," he noted that although the Confession stated that growth was certain for the Christian, it said nothing about *how* it happens. Concerned that people might assume that an outward performance of Christian duties (church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, the sacraments, etc.) would *guarantee* growth, he purposed to lay this notion to rest. To do so, he engaged in a little creative (and we believe, brilliant) theological hair-splitting. So that we could examine it microscopically, as if using a laboratory microtome (see photo), Shaw "sliced" the cause of sanctification into five distinct parts.

1. The **MOVING** (impulsive) cause of [our] sanctification is the free grace of God. – Tit.3:5

2. The **MERITORIOUS** cause [of our sanctification] is the blood and righteousness of Christ. – Tit.2:14

3. The **EFFICIENT** cause [of our sanctification] is the Holy Spirit. – 1Pet.1:2; 2 Thess.2:13; 1Cor.6:11

4. The **INSTRUMENTAL** cause [of our sanctification] is faith in Christ. – **Acts 15:9, 26:18.**

5. The **EXTERNAL MEANS** [of our sanctification] are, the Word, read and preached, the sacraments, and prayer. - Jn.17:17;1Pet.2:2. Providences [God-ordered events], especially afflictive dispensations [e.g. sickness], are also blessed for promoting the sanctification... – Rom.8:28, 5:3-5 (Shaw, p.145).

Question: Did you notice Shaw's shift from "cause" (1 to 4) to "means" (5)? Can you discern the difference between the **instrumental cause** and the **external means** of growth?



Think: What will happen to your private devotions and your public worship if you leap over the **instrumental cause** (faith in Christ) and move directly to the **external means** (doing all sorts of really good stuff) in the hope that the doing the works themselves will make you better?

But, you may argue, "Can't the Holy Spirit use the external means of grace to break through our spiritual coldness?" Of course he can!

But, the way the Spirit does this is by using the external means of grace as **means to faith**—as instruments to stir up our *faith in Jesus*. ("Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom.10:17)

So, it is our faith in Jesus, our looking to him, our conscious union with and reliance on him that makes us change for the better. Faith in Jesus, "Gospel faith" is the *instrumental cause* of sanctification *because* it unites weak sinners like us to a Mighty Christ. When we abide in Him, Jesus says (John 15), we bear fruit, because without him we can do nothing! Whatever builds our faith, then, is of inestimable value to our growth in grace.

But, if we try to leapfrog over faith and depend on the mechanical use of the "external means" to keep us spiritually healthy, our Bible reading, hymn-singing, sermon-hearing, and sacrament-taking will degenerate into empty forms that will fail to do their intended job—connect our hearts to God's heart by faith.

The consequence of that, as many of us have come to find out, is that we begin to think, talk and act like orphans rather than what we are—the loved sons and daughters of the Father.

Now let's look at a chart that illustrates this principle by examining the process of sanctification... *in reverse!*

III. Study the "How 2 Change" Chart (page 4-7). Then return here to IV.

IV. Scriptures that illustrate the principle that Gospel faith is the instrument of spiritual growth.

First, read: Titus 2:11-14.

What follows is our short list. You will find seven more at the end of the lesson. **(4-13,14)**

The thing that will empower you and me to be more like Jesus in moral purity and zeal for the kingdom, is *not trying hard to act more like Jesus*, but *believing in Jesus*, spending time with Jesus, looking to Jesus, looking at Jesus, drinking of Jesus, and *abiding* in Jesus so that the Holy Spirit works the character of Jesus into our lives.

AN EXERCISE: In each of these four passages, **a.** Locate the POWER SOURCE for the each Christ-like behavior commanded, and, **b.** note that every one of the good fruits mentioned are visible expressions of love and manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit (LJPPKGFSGS).

1. Sexual purity: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? *You are not your own;* ²⁰ *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. [See also Romans 13:12-14* where Paul says the antidote to a whole list of sins is "*clothe yourselves in Christ.*"

2. Stewardship: 2 Corinthians 8:6-9

⁶ So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this *grace* of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

3. Loving personal relationships in which there is no lying, sinful anger, theft, slander or malice.

Ephesians 4:24-32; 5:1,2 - ...²⁴ and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

²⁸ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, *just as in Christ God forgave you.*

5:1 ¹ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, *just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* ³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. [**Note:** In 4:25-31 and 5:3-5, Paul amassed an impressive list of sins. But in 4:32-5:2 he inserts the Gospel right in the middle of them. Why?]

I Corinthians 1:10-17 - Against divisions in the church. Vs. 10. I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. **BUT HOW?**

Vss. 26-31 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

4. Mission: 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 - ¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

[**Note:** It was not Paul's love for Christ, but Christ's love for Paul that propelled him into a whole-hearted ministry of evangelism and church-planting. It is daily "drinking of Christ" and "abiding in him" that will propel us to do the same.]

TWO QUESTIONS:

Did you notice that in every passage, the power to do what was commanded grew out of Gospel faith, and that **love** for God and others (in some form) was the fruit of that faith?

So, if you want to grow to be more like Jesus, and help your family, friends and church grow in the same way, what message will you use to accomplish that? **Can you see** that if you will "abide" in fellowship with Jesus, and disciple others to do the same, the Holy Spirit will use the very nature of that relationship ("Gospel faith") to do the changing?

GETTING IT STRAIGHT

Jesus is not merely our example, he is our righteousness. If we think of Jesus only as our example, we'll run ourselves ragged and surely fail. But, if we look to him daily as our righteousness, the Holy Spirit will begin changing us to be like him!

Are you getting this? The question has never been "Should I love like Jesus?" but rather "Where can I get the power to love like Jesus; what can change me?"

Dave McCarty writes: *Some years ago, a new Christian in our Wednesday night home group, after reading her Bible all week said, "This is impossible." I replied, "Good, now you are beginning to understand. Those who think that obeying God in their own strength is possible just don't get it."*

Yes, Jesus told us, "Love one another as I have loved you," but he never expected us to do it in our own strength.

He sent us the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to love other sinners—as we keep trusting in him, looking to him, abiding in him!

Think about it: the disciples were such a sorry lot, Jesus told them clearly that, after he was raised from the dead, they should not try to do anything! They should putter around Jerusalem, put another coat of paint on upper room—whatever—until the Holy Spirit came!

This is why "The Holy Spirit in Me" is the subject of our next Lesson.

SUMMING UP

What is the ONE THING we must do more of to grow to be like Jesus?

B _ L _ E _ E t _ _ G _ _ P _ L !

It's true. As we put our weak, tiny mustard-seed faith in him, as we keep our eyes fixed on him, as we "consider him," *then* the Holy Spirit changes us to think, talk, act, and love like Him. And, wonder of wonders, the Spirit supplies the power so that we don't have to rely on human effort like "foolish Galatians" (Gal.3:1-5). The Spirit changes us (sometimes two steps forward and one step back) from the self-centered, self-absorbed people we were by nature, into the others-centred, self-forgetful lovers of God and others that Jesus died to make us.

DISCUSS: What does it mean - *for you personally* - to "**fix your eyes on Jesus**"?



GRACE ASSIGNMENTS

1. BEGIN memorising Romans 8:15 (The NIV text can be found on your manual cover.)

2. TAKE the Sanctification by Faith Quiz on page 4-11. This will help you gauge how well you understood this lesson.

3. READ "Law & Letter Vs. Gospel & Spirit" on page 4-9. This is a compilation from the writings of Martin Luther. As you read, analyse the way you relate to those you are responsible to encourage spiritually. It may be your children, a Sunday School or Bible class, or a whole congregation.

On what do you depend to help them change for the better?

Do you continually press their duties and obligations on their consciences (law), or do you point them to love, "the law beneath the law" and lead them into a deeper relationship with Jesus and dependence on his Spirit so that they will be *enabled* to keep his law (viz. love God and others more) out of love for him?

Mastering the doctrinal concepts in this lesson is well and good, but that will not be of much use (except perhaps to puff us up) unless we see our relationships transformed by them. As Francis Schaeffer put it,

"In the last analysis it is never doctrine alone that is important. It is always doctrine appropriated that counts." (page 1-6)

The Context of Holiness

is Justification through Jesus Christ

- by J. I. Packer

God's free gift of justification (the pardon and acceptance here and now through Christ's perfect obedience culminating in his substitutionary sin-bearing for us on the cross) *is the basis on which the entire sanctifying process rests*. It is our union by the Spirit, through faith, with the Christ who died for us and whom first we trust for justification,^a that our subsequent life of holiness is lived.^b Holy people glory, not in their holiness, but in Christ's cross: for the holiest saint is never more than a justified sinner and never sees himself in any other way. [^aRom. 3-5; ^bRom. 6-8]

John Bradford, considered by those who knew him as the saintliest of the English Reformers, constantly described himself when signing his letters as a hard-hearted sinner. One Puritan in his last illness testified: "*Never did I so feel my need of the blood of Christ—and never was I enabled to make such good use of it.*" John Wesley on his deathbed was heard to whisper: "*No way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.*" It looks as if Paul himself as he advanced in years, and presumably in holiness too, *grew downward* into an increasingly vivid and humbling sense of his own unworthiness: for whereas in 1 Corinthians, (c. 54 A.D.) he called himself the least of the apostles and in Ephesians (c. 61 A.D.) the very least of all the saints, in 1 Timothy (c. 65 A.D.) he describes himself as the foremost of sinners (see 1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15). This may, of course, be reading too much into three isolated phrases; yet... it is the most natural thing

in the world for a Christian at any time to see himself as the foremost of sinners, so the apostle's phrase should cause us no surprise. Why is this a natural judgment for any Christian to pass on himself? Just because he knows the inside story of his own life—the moral defeats, hypocrisies, lapses into meanness, pride, dishonesty, envy, lust, exploitative thinking, and cowardice at motivational levels, and all the rest of his private shame—in a way that he does not know the inside story of anyone else. Increase in holiness means, among other things, an increased sensitivity to what God is, and hence a clearer estimate of one's own sinfulness and particular shortcomings, and hence an intensified realization of one's constant need of God's pardoning and cleansing mercy. All growth in grace is *growth downward* in this respect.

We need, then, to remember that any ideas of self-satisfied or self-righteous holiness or of a divinely imparted righteousness that in any way reduces our need for Christ's imputed righteousness are delusive and ungodly will-o'-the-wisps. † They are, indeed, contradictions in terms. The correct name for them is Pharisaism; they are not in any sense Christian holiness.

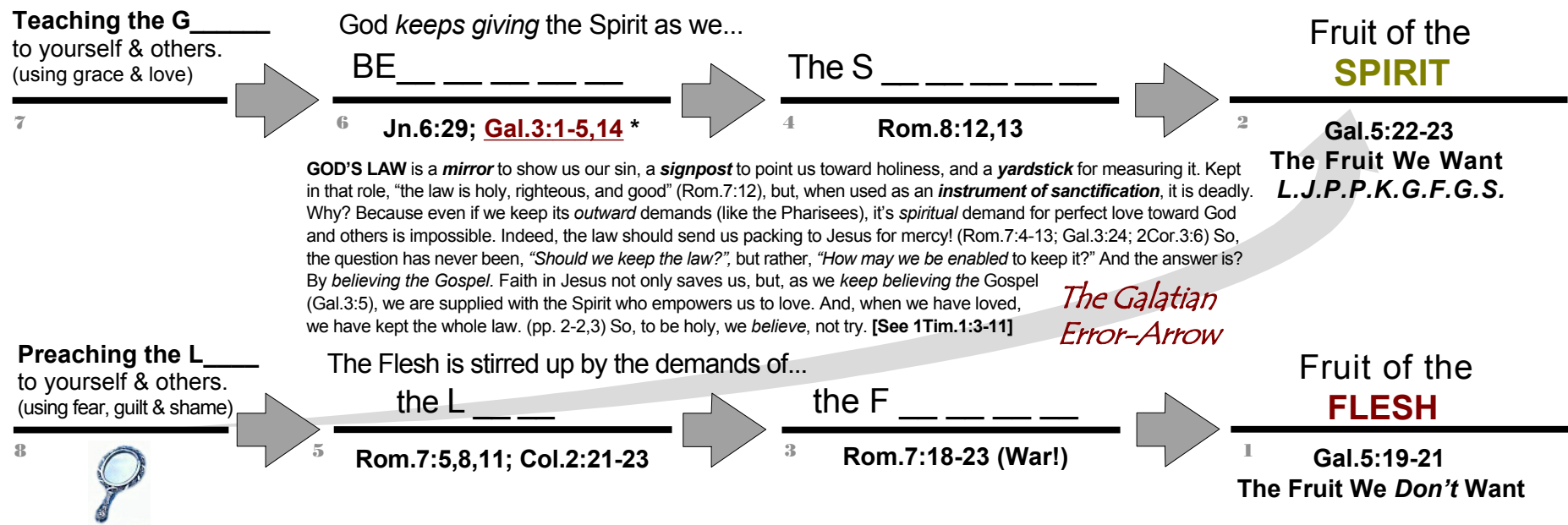


† will-o-the-wisps — definition: foolish, unrealistic goals.

J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step With The Spirit*, 1984, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan, NJ, pp. 105-106 (italics mine).

HOW TO CHANGE & LEAD OTHERS TO CHANGE

OUR GOAL: To glorify God by becoming more like Jesus. But, where can we get the power to change?



GOD'S LAW is a *mirror* to show us our sin, a *signpost* to point us toward holiness, and a *yardstick* for measuring it. Kept in that role, "the law is holy, righteous, and good" (Rom.7:12), but, when used as an *instrument of sanctification*, it is deadly. Why? Because even if we keep its *outward* demands (like the Pharisees), it's *spiritual* demand for perfect love toward God and others is impossible. Indeed, the law should send us packing to Jesus for mercy! (Rom.7:4-13; Gal.3:24; 2Cor.3:6) So, the question has never been, "Should we keep the law?", but rather, "How may we be enabled to keep it?" And the answer is? By *believing the Gospel*. Faith in Jesus not only saves us, but, as we *keep believing the Gospel* (Gal.3:5), we are supplied with the Spirit who empowers us to love. And, when we have loved, we have kept the whole law. (pp. 2-2,3) So, to be holy, we *believe*, not try. [See 1Tim.1:3-11]



WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU SHOULD DO MORE OF - TO GROW IN HOLINESS?

Oddly enough, we will find the answer by analysing sanctification *in reverse* - fruit to root. LETS:

1. Learn the spiritual root of the two kinds of fruit contrasted in Galatians 5:19a and 5:22a.
2. Discover two ways of living the Christian life that Paul contrasts in Galatians 3:1-5.
3. Learn what Paul means by the phrase "the obedience that comes from faith" in Romans 1:5.

**WET PAINT
DO NOT
TOUCH!**

* **FAITH in Christ empowers obedience!** Examples: Gal.2:11-21; 1Cor.6:20; 2Cor.8:9; Eph.4:31 ff; 2Thess.1:11; Tit.2:1-15, etc. (List on pp. 4-4,5,13,14)

© John Wade Long, Jr. - 02/10
Grace4Life - 2010 - London UK
www.grace4life.com
Concept by Paul Miller

QUOTATIONS FOR THE "HOW TO CHANGE" CHART

Richard Lovelace — P.T. Forsyth — G. C. Berkouwer

LOVELACE is Professor Emeritus of Church History at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary USA, and a leading authority on the history of personal and corporate revival. In his *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (IVP, 1979), he combines solid scholarship with a devotional style as he identifies and traces the essential elements of church renewal from Apostolic times to the present. Here is a taste:

"In its biblical definition, sin cannot be limited to isolated incidents or patterns of wrongdoing; it is something much more akin to the psychological term 'complex:' an organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God. Sin originated in the darkening of the human mind and heart as man turned from the truth about God to embrace a lie about Him and consequently a whole universe of lies about his creation. Sinful thoughts, words and deeds flow forth from this darkened heart automatically and compulsively as water from a polluted fountain." (Gen. 6:5) — *Dynamics*, p. 88

"Although the attempt to claim justification without (visible, ongoing) sanctification outrages our consciences, we usually repress this from conscious awareness, and the resulting anxiety and insecurity create compulsive egocentric drives which aggravate the flesh instead of mortifying it. Thus the Protestant disease of cheap grace can produce some of the most selfish and contentious leaders and lay people on earth, more difficult to bear in a state of grace than they would be in a state of nature." — *Dynamics*, pp. 104, 105

"The anesthetic of grace is constantly needed in the healing process of sanctification along with the surgical ministry of the law. For this reason, many areas of the church which contain a great deal of [legal] thunder and lightening [Sinai], exposing at least the surfaces of sin, are full of desperately anxious and bitterly contentious people. Law without grace provokes sin—and exposes and aggravates it into some of its ugliest expressions. The counselor [or pastor] who is attempting to move people further in sanctification should therefore begin with a strong emphasis on justification and reiterate this often in the course of his work. Psychoanalysts speak of the 'resistance' patients have toward the discovery of traumatic material hidden in the unconscious. The same automatic fear will grip and bind Christian believers unless they are very deeply assured that they are 'accepted in the beloved,' received by God as if they were perfectly righteous because their guilt is canceled by the righteousness of Christ laid to their account. The human conscience is very deeply disoriented in its conviction that we must have works and sanctification to recommend ourselves to God. We must carry out a very deliberate replacement of this misunderstanding with the awareness that God simply wants honesty, openness and a trusting reliance on Christ our Savior. We cannot *bear the light* [shining] on our needs unless we are also *in the light* concerning God's grace to meet those needs." — *Dynamics*, p. 113 (emphasis mine)

FORSYTH writes in *Christian Perfection*:
"It is a fatal mistake to think of holiness as a possession which we have distinct from our faith... Faith is the very highest form of our dependence on God. We never outgrow it... Whatever other fruits of the Spirit we show, they grow upon faith—faith which is in its nature, repentance... Every Christian experience is an experience of what we have not... We are not saved by the love we exercise, but by the love we trust"
 (P.T. Forsyth, Dodd, Mead & Company, NY, 1899).

LOVELACE, commenting on Forsyth says:

"The faith that surmounts this 'evidence' and is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love instead of having to steal love and acceptance from other sources, is actually the root of holiness."
 — *Dynamics*, p. 213

BERKOUWER in his *Faith and Sanctification* comments on the impossibility of sanctification by law: *"Far too often men have talked about the command to be holy in such a way as to mutilate the biblical message. It is certainly not enough for a man to say that he honors the law of God and for that reason strives toward holiness. The people of Israel offer proof that one may live in the climate of absolute imperatives and still perish."* (G.C. Berkouwer, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952, pp. 19, 20)



LAW & LETTER VS. GOSPEL & SPIRIT

Sound Advice for Gospel Teachers

"But now we are delivered from the law, so that being dead to that which held us, we should henceforth serve in the newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."
– Romans 7:6

With these two words, "letter" and "spirit," Paul wants to contrast the two kinds of preaching and still more to magnify his office and its benefits against all others who boast of being excellent teachers and mighty in the Spirit. He intentionally speaks like this, not calling these two doctrines by their real names [law and gospel] but giving each a name derived from the kind of work it does. To the Gospel he gives a very glorious name, calling it the ministration of the Spirit. Then, he gives an almost disgraceful name to the Law, as though he would not do it the honor of calling it as "God's Law and commandment"—which it actually is. Later on, in fact, he confesses that the Law was given to Moses and enjoined on the Children of Israel "in great glory."

WHY does Paul speak of the Law in such low terms? Does he call us to despise and refuse to keep the Law of God? Aren't chastity and honesty something admirable, beautiful and holy? Indeed they are. God, in fact, has planted the appreciation of these virtues deep in human reason; they are praised in all the books man writes, and to avoid chaos, the world must be governed by them. St. Paul's one objective here is to beat down the boasting and pretense of the false preachers and teach them to properly understand and view

by Martin Luther

the power of his preaching of the Gospel. What Paul is saying is this: If the Jews boast greatly in the Law of Moses—that they have received this law from God written on two tables of stone—and if, similarly, all these [present day] learned and holy preachers of the Law, these judges who boast that they have done and performed so much, what is all of it worth in comparison with the preaching of the Gospel?



To be sure, it may be fine preaching and good instruction, but it is still nothing more than this. It is merely words—words taught, words spoken, or words written, but it is on these words that the true case will continue to rest:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart," and again, "Love thy neighbour as thyself."
– Luke 10:27

There is no getting around this. Despite all their talk of "keeping the law," after much time and after much doing and living, nothing worthwhile has been achieved. There is nothing but empty hulls without the peas, and nutshells without the kernels for it is impossible to keep the Law without Christ. Oh, a man may be forced to put on a pious face for the sake of his reputation or gain or from fear of punishment, but it is only a face.

For, if God's grace in Christ is not grasped, the heart cannot turn to God, cannot trust Him or have love and delight in His Commandments, but can only resist them. Human nature does not like to be compelled, and no one likes to be a captive in chains. If a man has to bow and submit to the executioner's sword, or to the rod and punishment, his will objects, and he only becomes more angered against the Law. He may obey, but his heart's desire is, "If only I might freely steal, rob, be greedy and follow my lust!"

And if a man is kept in check by force, he still wishes that there was no Law and no God. So, St. Paul calls the Gospel "the administration of the Spirit" in order to show its power—inasmuch as it effects something very different in the hearts of men than the Law brings about. The Gospel brings with it the Holy Spirit and transforms the heart. For if a man who has been driven to terror and anguish by the preaching of the Law hears this preaching, he finds that it does not oppress him with what God requires of him, but of what God has done for him. It points, not to his own works but to Christ's, and invites him to believe and be certain that for the sake of His Son, God will forgive him his sins and will receive him as His child.

IF a man receives and believes this message, it will at once revive his heart and give him comfort. Then he no longer runs from God, but turns to Him. And, because he finds and feels this grace and mercy of God, he becomes positively drawn toward Him. He now begins to sincerely call upon Him, relate to Him and honor Him as his beloved

God. And wonderfully, the more this faith and comfort in Christ are strengthened the more his love for and longing to keep God's Commandments increases. For this reason, God always wants the Word of the Gospel to be preached so that the heart is awakened and he is reminded of God's great grace and goodness. When this happens, the Holy Spirit becomes stronger and stronger in him. **Observe** that all of this is not the result of the power of the Law or of the operation of the Law, or of the will of men. It is the effect of a new and heavenly power exerted by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts Christ and His works into the heart and makes "a real book" of it—not a book of ink and letters, but of real life and activity... (2 Cor. 3:2).

Can you see now what the difference is between the two kinds of preaching, and why St. Paul praises the preaching of the Gospel and calls it "the administration of the Spirit," but calls the Law nothing but a mere letter? He does this in order to lay low the boasting of the false apostles and preachers who based their boasting on their Judaism and on their "obedience" to the Law of Moses. With their tall talk they told the people,

"Friends, let this Paul preach whatever he pleases. He will, after all, not be able to overthrow Moses, who on Mount Sinai received from God the Law, which is assuredly God's irrevocable commandment and must be kept if anyone is to be saved."

In the same way the papists ... and sects are crying out against us in our time,

"What do you mean by preaching so much about faith and Christ? How does this make people any better? Good works must be done!"

It must be granted that such a presentation has the appearance of truth, but, when you look at it in the light of a closer investigation, it is found to be mere empty words and idle talk. For, if you want to talk about deeds and works—we already have the Ten Commandments.

And, these Ten (as it is well known) we are teaching and instilling in men no less than they are. Moreover, this is all that would be necessary if the commandments could be preached in such a way that they would insure their prompt performance.

But the hard question is: Is all this preaching turned



into practise—so that it does not remain mere words—or as Paul calls them, "letters?" Is it converted from letters into life and spirit? As to preaching, we are agreed, and no one doubts that the Ten Commandments must be preached—and more, be kept.

But they are not kept! This is our complaint. Therefore something more than merely preaching the Law is required so that a man may also know how he may be enabled to keep it.

Otherwise what good does it do to preach that Moses and the Law say: This thou shalt do; this God requires of thee. (Deut.21:1, etc.)

"Yes, my dear Moses, I hear what you say; and it is no doubt right and true. But do tell me where am I to get the ability to do what I have unfortunately have not done and cannot do. It is not easy to count money from an

empty purse or to drink from an empty cup. Therefore if I am to pay my debts and to quench my thirst, advise me, sir, how to have a full purse and a full cup!"

About this these idle talkers can give us no information. On the contrary, they merely continue to urge and torment people with the Law. They lead them to their ruin, leave them in their sins and make a mockery of them.

Nonetheless, the preaching of the Law is not only necessary, it is the first thing a man must hear.

A GOSPEL THOUGHT

May it never be said of us as God's parents, pastors and teachers, that we "*urge and torment people with the Law—lead them to their ruin, leave them in their sins and make a mockery of them.*"

May we rather become such able heralds of *the Gospel* that men and women and children are drawn to saving faith in Christ and we see "*the Spirit put Christ and His works into their hearts and make 'a real book of it'—not a book of ink and letters, but of real life and activity!*"

— JWL —

NOTE: We trust this article will be a much-needed corrective to the popular notion that Luther was an antinomian, overly-enamoured with faith for justification, but with little concern for sanctification. As G. C. Berkouwer quips: "*To anyone who has had a whiff of Luther's writing, this conception is incredible.*" (Faith and Sanctification, 1952, p. 29)

SOURCE MATERIAL

This article is a compendium of excerpts from sections 2285 and 2286 of *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*, Edited by Ewald M. Plass, Concordia, St. Louis, Missouri, 1959.

Grace4Life © 2010 by John W. Long, Jr. London, UK - <http://www.grace4life.com>

SANCTIFICATION by Faith Quiz

a brain-teasing mini-workshop

OUR THESIS: "Justification is 100% God's work and involves no human effort, but sanctification involves our 100% cooperation with God by faith."

STEP 1: Testing your S.Q. Write J (for justification) or S (for sanctification)

1. _____ by faith apart from works (Eph 2:8-9)
2. _____ a declarative act of God as Judge **If *Justification* is God opening up his**
3. _____ a once-for-all action at conversion **"Brolly of Grace" OVER us...**
4. _____ an ongoing process of growth
5. _____ the maturing of sons and daughters
6. _____ legally counted as righteous
7. _____ a series of events
8. _____ involves no cooperation from us
9. _____ requires constant cooperation by faith
10. _____ inward cleansing and power over sin
11. _____ the acquittal and acceptance of an enemy (Eph. 2:1-5)
12. _____ gradual transformation into the image of Christ



Sanctification is what he does
IN us UNDER the brolly.

STEP 2: WRITE a short paragraph to explain how sanctification works.

Can you explain how "believing the Gospel" produces more LJPPKGFSGS? Be clear about the role **faith** plays in the process of spiritual growth.

STEP 3: Now EVALUATE your paragraph by asking yourself three questions about your answer:

A. Does your definition include these five elements: 1] the Holy Spirit, 2] Faith, 3] the Flesh (pride, self), 4] the Gospel (Christ), and 5] Love (holiness)? If one or more is missing, then your definition needs improvement. Below, list any of these that are missing:

Missing: _____

B. Did you use any language that may be biblical, but is vague or confusing because you have not worked it out in your own life? For example, did you use a phrase like, "walk in the Spirit" or "be filled with the Spirit" without explaining it in simple language.

Be tough on yourself. Is there anything you wrote that you don't fully understand? Go back to your definition and **circle any word or phrase** you couldn't explain to the whole class.

C. Are each of the steps of sanctification in your definition related in a way that makes sense? The questions below will help you refine your understanding.

1. What is the connection between the Holy Spirit and love? (Gal. 5:22)

2. What is the connection between faith (believing the gospel) and "living in" (or "walking by") the Holy Spirit? (Gal. 3:1-5)

3. What method do churches usually teach these days as to how you should grow in holiness? (Gal. 3:1-5)

4. Can prayer, Bible study & Quiet Times ("Spiritual Disciplines") produce holiness? Yes or No? Defend your answer. Explain what value the "spiritual disciplines" can have.

5. Now, let's put it all together. What is the "**petrol**" that causes change in our lives? Or, to rephrase that: *How does believing in your free justification enable you to love others?*

D. Do you see a difference between the inward process of sanctification and its visible results? Careful! It is easy to confuse these. While we are changing on the inside and becoming more like Christ, we often *feel less holy*. We will be studying this phenomenon in a later lesson using "The Cross Chart".

STEP 4: REWRITE your definition of Sanctification by Faith. Use your notes from STEP THREE to help you write this "New and Improved" version.



S by F: SEVEN ADDITIONAL PASSAGES

Putting our faith in Jesus, not merely trying to copy his example, fuels obedience.

Italics highlight the specialised Gospel content in each passage.

1. Negative example: Galatians 2:11-21
"The day Peter forgot the Gospel" - a passage worthy of its own lesson.

As you read it, ask yourself three questions:

a. Why did Paul accuse Peter and his cohorts of "not walking in line with the truth of the gospel"? (vs. 14 - Greek: *ouk orthopodeo*)

b. What had Peter lost sight of when he was overcome by the fear of man and separated himself from his Gentile brothers and sisters?

c. What did Paul say to Peter ("in front of them all") to set him straight? **Hint:** Paul "preached" a message to Peter. What was it? See. vs. 15, 16, 21.

¹¹When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹²Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

¹⁵"We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶know that *a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

¹⁷"If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for *if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!*" [!]

2. Be Holy! 1 Peter 1:13-25 Be Holy! -

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,* ¹⁹ *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

²⁰ *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.* ²¹ *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.* ²⁴ For,

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever."
And this is the word that was preached to you.

[**Note** that, having commanded them to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, he reminds them of the Gospel.]

3. Christian duties Timothy must teach:

Titus 2:1-15 - First, Paul gives very specific directions for proper Christian behaviour to five groups within the church: older men, older women, younger women, young men and slaves (approx. half the one million inhabitants of Rome were slaves). Then he reveals where they can get the **power** to obey his instructions.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this

present age,¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

4. Living a new life: 2 Thessalonians

1:3-6; 9; 11-12 - ³ We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because *your faith is growing more and more*, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

[**Note:** Faith is not a limited quantity. It can increase, and as it does, so does the fruit of the Spirit—love—and love is a visible, audible and quantifiable commodity!]

⁴ Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and *faith* in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring...

⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you....

⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power....

¹¹ With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and *every act prompted by your faith*.¹² We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Run the race! Hebrews 12:1-4

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

[But where can we get the power to throw off sin and run the race?]

² Let us *fix our eyes on Jesus*, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ *Consider him* who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood...

6. Helping the weak, unity - Romans 15:1-7

[Notice how way Paul takes pains to point these believers to the Gospel after each admonition.]

¹ We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.² Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.³ *For even Christ did not please himself* but, as it is written:

“The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”

⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves *as you follow Christ Jesus*,⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Accept one another, then, *just as Christ accepted you*, in order to bring praise to God.

7. Joy, peace and hope overflowing:

Romans 15:13 - Note the inseparable connection between faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that produces the fruit of the Spirit [LJPPKGFSG], joy and peace being the focus here.]

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *as you trust in him*, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Grace4Life © 2010 by John Wade Long, Jr. London, UK

www.grace4life.org