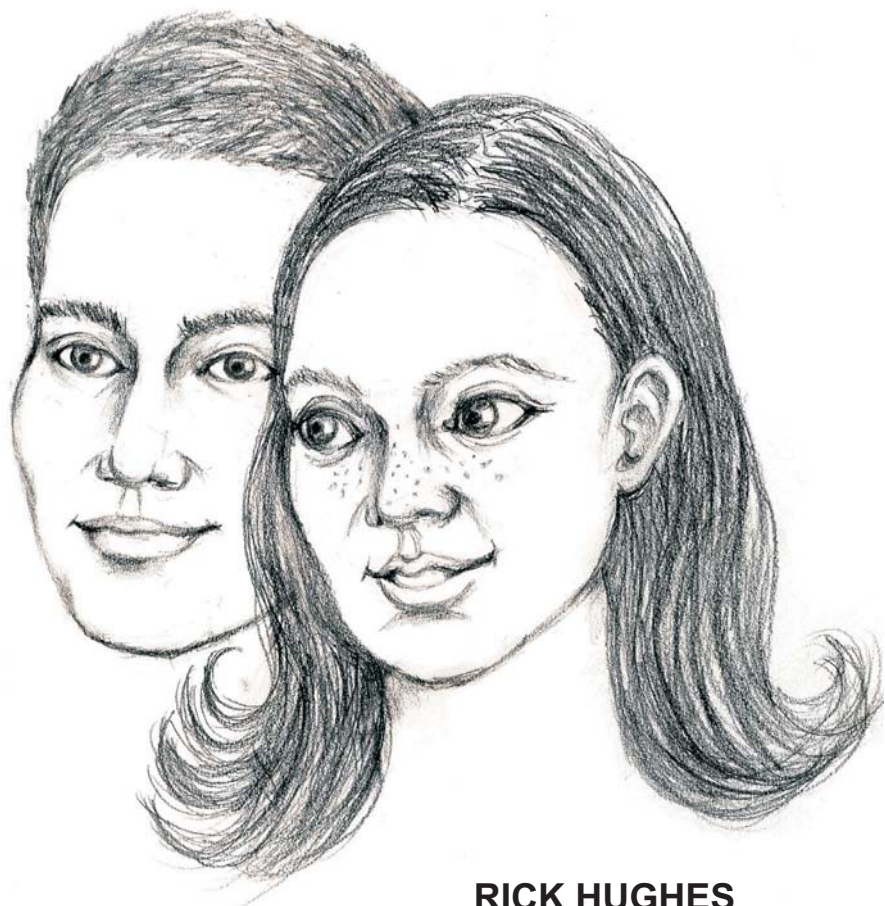


Understanding Your Soul



RICK HUGHES

UNDERSTANDING
YOUR SOUL

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SOUL

BY
RICK HUGHES

*The same as newborn babies,
you [spiritual babies] must desire
the pure milk of the Word
so that you may grow spiritually.*

(I Peter 2:2)

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Contents

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Chapter 1 | The Real You | 1 |
| | Life is in the soul because the soul is the source of thought | 1 |
| | The soul is the immortal, invisible part of man created by God | 2 |
| | Man creates biological life, but only God creates a soul and gives human life | 2 |
| | Every soul will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell | 3 |
| | By believing in Christ, we escape the fiery destiny of the world | 4 |
| | God has infinite power to back his word | 4 |
| Chapter 2 | Your Soul, Body, and Spirit | 7 |
| | God's grace overlooks no one | 7 |
| | You were born with a body, soul, and sin nature | 8 |
| | On the cross, Jesus Christ undid the mess inherited by us from Adam | 10 |
| | Having a human spirit ensures having eternal life with God | 11 |
| Chapter 3 | The Compartments of Your Soul | 13 |
| | Both believers and unbelievers have souls which live forever | 13 |
| | Self-consciousness leads to God-consciousness, which can lead through faith to eternal life | 14 |
| | Volition, not environment, determines your soul's worth | 15 |
| | Your volition determines your soul's master as well as its destination | 15 |
| | Thinking is a choice of the soul | 15 |
| | The soul is the battlefield of rational versus irrational thought | 16 |
| | It is easier to get yourself into trouble than to think yourself out | 16 |
| | God designed the conscience to protect the soul from sin and evil | 16 |
| | A distorted conscience means a distorted viewpoint | 17 |
| | The content of your soul is revealed through your speech and actions | 17 |

Understanding Your Soul

Chapter 4 Your Goal: A Focused Soul 19

- A spiritual birth demands a spiritual life 19
- The spiritual life is lived in the soul but manifested in the body . . . 20
- Control of your soul means control of you 20
- Your responsibility is to place the thinking of Christ in
your soul 21
- Right thinking precedes right actions 22
- God gives you the power necessary to do His will 22
- Jesus Christ never disappoints 22

Chapter 5 Soul Enemy #1: Sin 25

- When you turn your back on God, He shines on your back 26
- Bible doctrine in the soul defeats the ingenuity and stealth
of Satan 27
- Bible doctrine in the soul provides divine solutions, the only
solutions that work 28

Chapter 6 Soul Enemy #2: Arrogance 33

- You have no control over the genetic make up of your body
but total control over the formation of your soul 34
- Fear insults God and His plan 35
- God saves people. You don't 35
- Teens don't recognize the consequences of sins; therefore,
parents must teach them 38
- Arrogance magnifies the unimportant 38
- A sin-free soul allows true happiness 39
- The Bible has one interpretation but many applications. If
you get the interpretation wrong, you get the application
wrong 40
- Humility is the kneeling posture of the soul 42
- Humility takes fear out of the soul 42
- Through humility, grace thinking saturates your soul 45

Chapter 7 Soul Enemy #3: Evil 47

- Evil, a sneak attacker, doesn't directly assault the fortress
of your soul 47
- Grace is never a reward for performance 47
- Evil appears good for the sole purpose of capturing your
soul 48
- Christ is Lord without anyone making Him Lord 49
- Satan's lies about salvation are heavy and can sink you into
Hell. Belief in Christ is the only way of salvation 49

Contents

Evil will lead you backward in the spiritual life and then
 enslave your soul 51
Guard the word in your soul, and don't forget it 53

Chapter 8 Soul Enemy #4: Emotion 55
 The soul is not the seat of emotion 55
 Carnal believers are at the mercy of the winds of false
 doctrine 56
 Prepare your soul to recognize false doctrine! 56
 Control of the mentality of the soul insures control of the
 emotions of the body 57
 Emotion makes us stupid 58
 We choose to be happy—or unhappy 59
 Emotional sins devastate the soul 59
 The thinking of Christ advances you in the spiritual life.
 Emotion destroys you 60

Chapter 9 Lack of Spiritual Discernment 61
 Learn to discern good, better, best, and then to choose best 62
 To reach your potential, you must think divine viewpoint 63
 Your rate of learning doctrine must exceed your rate of
 forgetting if you desire to execute the spiritual life 63
 You are either filling yourself with divine viewpoint, or
 you are stupid 64
 You are as spiritually intelligent as your positive volition
 wills you to be 65
 All divine solutions function in the soul and have their
 origin in the Bible 65

Chapter 10 The Sick Soul 69
 Salvation is the solution to the eternal problem but doesn't
 automatically bring with it the solution to life. Bible
 doctrine in the soul does 69
 The soul sewage of human viewpoint stinks! 69
 Satan is sweet. He is also a superb liar and brutal murderer 70
 Can you stop adversity from occurring? No. Can you stop
 adversity from causing stress in your soul? Yes 71
 Don't let inevitable outward pressure become soul-sickening
 stress 71
 Nothing hurts the soul more than standing aloof from God 72
 No medicine can heal the soul of a believer negative to

Understanding Your Soul

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Bible doctrine | 73 |
| Dying for the carnal believer is never pleasant | 74 |
| No blindness is blacker than soul blindness | 75 |
| Don't let your negative volition drive you crazy! | 76 |
| We manufacture our own misery | 77 |
| The soul is the staging area for all rational thought. Emotion is the enemy of thought | 79 |
| Believers who die the sin unto death are unhappy in life and unhappy in dying, but they still go to Heaven | 80 |
| God's love for you is documented in scripture and demonstrated in time | 80 |
| Chapter 11 Treatment for a Sick Soul | 81 |
| Rebound is your instant spiritual recovery procedure | 82 |
| If you sin, you have the privacy of your soul in which to rebound | 82 |
| Rebound is the first step in treating a sick soul | 83 |
| If you skip rebound, no other solution remains | 84 |
| Rebound must be used every time you sin | 85 |
| Unconfessed sin puts you in the void | 85 |
| God by grace makes discipline unbearable so that we will rebound | 87 |
| God turns disaster to blessing when you rebound | 88 |
| When you sin, the sin nature controls your soul | 88 |
| No power is greater than the filling of the Holy Spirit | 89 |
| The filling of the Holy Spirit is triumph in the soul | 90 |
| Chapter 12 Guarding Your Soul | 93 |
| The greatest conflicts in life are conflicts in the soul | 93 |
| Your soul must be equipped to sustain the spiritual life | 94 |
| Arming your soul means establishing a Biblical inventory of divine thought in your soul so that you can identify your options and choose wisely | 94 |
| A single success in the spiritual life is not victory. Victory comes from consistent execution of the spiritual life until death | 95 |
| Every word of the Bible is important | 96 |
| The armor of God is a reflector of divine integrity and a deflector of Satanic ingenuity | 97 |
| Jesus Christ gives joy. Satan is a killjoy | 97 |
| Emotion turns you into a coward in a crisis. Bible doctrine in your soul makes you an invisible hero | 99 |
| By arming your soul with Bible doctrine, you understand | |

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| God's will | 100 |
| Never underestimate the power of God | 101 |
| A believer without Bible doctrine has a soul without power | 103 |
| The Christian motto: Through Christ, I conquer | 104 |
| Chapter 13 Divine Soul Testing | 105 |
| Our test is open book | 105 |
| You must build the answers to God's tests into your soul | 106 |
| A believer's integrity is proven when a test is passed by executing the spiritual life | 107 |
| Happiness is in the thinking of the soul | 110 |
| God is true even if every man is a liar | 110 |
| The filling of the Holy Spirit gives you the power of Jesus Christ | 111 |
| Chapter 14 Satanic Soul Temptation | 113 |
| The sin nature is the source of temptation. Volition is the source of sin | 114 |
| Temptation isn't sin. You sin when you embrace the temptation | 114 |
| To believe the lie, you have to reject the truth | 115 |
| Don't succumb to the temptation to think every thought that comes into your mind | 116 |
| Life goes on after every disaster, even the disaster of giving in to temptation | 117 |
| Fear is a terrorizing sin | 118 |
| Emotion can't deliver your soul in testing or temptation | 119 |
| Don't fail the test by giving in to the temptation | 119 |
| God always gives the answers before he gives the test | 121 |
| Confidence in God excludes fear | 122 |
| Too many believers want the power of God without the discipline of learning his word | 123 |
| You can never overdose on doctrine! | 125 |
| In the believer who guards doctrine, the love of God is complete | 126 |
| Only learn and believe Bible doctrine, and your soul will be stabilized | 126 |
| Chapter 15 The Strength of Combined Souls | 129 |
| Whatever you do, do it in your soul as unto the lord | 130 |
| True heroism results from the daily decision to take in Bible doctrine | 131 |
| You can't win when you kick against the superior power | |

Understanding Your Soul

| | |
|--|-----|
| of God | 134 |
| Chapter 16 Your Soul in Eternity | 135 |
| The body is a temporary home for the soul | 135 |
| The body of corruption is destroyed at death. God gives us a new body to house our souls for eternity | 135 |
| Live your life in the light of eternity | 138 |
| Chapter 17 Final Thoughts | 139 |
| Being saved involves one decision. Becoming a mature Christian involves many | 139 |
| The thorns of our testing became a crown for Christ | 140 |
| Thought determines action. Action determines habits. Habits determine lifestyle. Lifestyle determines capacity for rewards in eternity | 142 |

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This book is dedicated to the faithfulness of God the Father and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ my savior who paid the penalty for my sins on the cross of judgment. I must also salute the Holy Spirit who has filled me and empowered me for the task during the last thirty-four years. He is always faithful to supply all my needs.

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Preparation For Study

Begin your Bible study with a time of silent prayer during which, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can acknowledge any sins to God the Father (rebound) and, thereby, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing. (1 John 1:9)

With the filling of the Spirit, you can be confident that God the Holy Spirit will guide you in your quest for the truth.

Now, make sure that you have no unconfessed sin in your life. Ask God to help you concentrate and be free of distractions as you begin your study. Then under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, you are ready to learn God's glorious plan for your life.

CHAPTER ONE

THE REAL YOU

No doubt, you have looked in a mirror recently, probably this morning. Was the person staring back at you “the real you?” If your face were smashed in an accident, would “the real you” change? If you lost a leg or a hand, would you become an inferior “real you?” Of course not! “The real you” is not visible.

Then is “the real you” inside you, perhaps in your heart? We know that can’t be true because some people have heart transplants and remain alive, retaining the same personality as before. Others have mechanical hearts implanted, and they, too, live and remain themselves. Every day, someone is resuscitated after his heart stops beating. Medics place paddles on his chest, and—ZAP—he is “brought back to life.” Actually, life never left him because life is in the soul, not the heart.

Your soul, the residence of life and the source of “the real you,” is in your thinking, not in your body. Until an EEG declares you brain dead, you are alive. You continue to be “the real you.”

For as a person thinks in his soul, so he is.
(Proverbs 23:7a) ¹

LIFE IS IN THE SOUL BECAUSE THE SOUL IS THE SOURCE OF THOUGHT.

If you have ever seen a dead body, possibly in a funeral home, you remember recognizing the person because he had the same freckled nose, full lips, arthritic hands, or scar on his cheek. You recognized him,

¹The translations in this book are not from any English translation with which you are familiar. They are taken directly from the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, the original languages of the original manuscripts, so that they are as close to God's intent as possible. English is an inaccurate and easily misunderstood language. Hebrew and Greek on the other hand were created by God to express His thinking as clearly and dogmatically as possible with a human language. The Bible in its original languages is divinely inspired. Other translations are not.

but he seemed strangely changed. Why? Because at death his soul exited his body. That is what death is—the soul leaving the body. In death, he became an empty shell, outwardly the same but without a soul to impart life, personality, and individuality. He didn't seem the same because “the real you,” found in his soul, had left his body.

The converse is true. Life begins when God breathes life into a body. Think of a movie in which a baby is born. That tiny body is motionless, then inhales a breath—the breath of God—and exhales life, a lusty cry that convinces everyone that he is, indeed, alive. God has given his frail body a soul, and in that soul resides human life.

THE SOUL IS THE IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE PART OF MAN CREATED BY GOD.

And then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Only then did man become a living soul.

(Genesis 2:7)

In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. (Job 12:10)

The Lord is the One who stretches out the Heavens and who lays the foundation of the earth and who forms the soul of man within him. (Zechariah 12:1b)

MAN CREATES BIOLOGICAL LIFE, BUT ONLY GOD CREATES A SOUL AND GIVES HUMAN LIFE.

Everyone has a soul created by God Himself. That soul never dies because every soul has life forevermore. Our bodies age and die, but our souls live forever.

God never lies, and He declares that your soul, once freed from your body through death, instantaneously reaches one of two destinations: Heaven with Him or the Lake of Fire with Satan and the fallen angels.

That truth bears repeating: The soul of everyone, without exception, will spend eternity either in Heaven or the Lake of Fire. Those are the only options, perfect happiness with God in a dwelling place pre-

pared specifically for the pleasure of those who believe in Him or unrelenting pain and misery baking in a fiery lake with no hope of escape.

Don't let your soul be troubled. You believe in God. Now believe also in Me [Jesus Christ]. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place especially for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself in order that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Look in the mirror again. The eyes staring back at you will someday be empty because your soul will have left your body in death. We know the destination of your body. It will eventually decompose into the dust from which it came. But your soul? Where will your soul be? (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

EVERY SOUL WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN EITHER HEAVEN OR HELL.

Your ticket to Heaven is as simple as believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (John 3:18; 8:24; I John 5:13) When you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, God gives you a one-way, irrevocable ticket to Heaven.

For, you see, God the Father loved the world so much He gave His Son, the uniquely born One, so that anyone who believes in Him shall never perish but have eternal life; for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but, on the contrary, that the world should be saved through Him. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ is not judged, but anyone who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the uniquely born Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

Salvation by faith is too simple, you say. Not so, God says. Why? Because Jesus Christ did all the work on the Cross.

For He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ in His humanity on the Cross] who knew no sin to become sin as a substitute for us for the purpose that we might become once and for all the righteousness which belongs to God the Father through Him [Jesus Christ].
(II Corinthians 5:21)

Jesus Christ set aside the perfection of His deity to become Man. He went to the Cross as our Substitute, willing to endure God the Father's judgment and punishment for all of the sins of the whole world. He took our place. He suffered the punishment for our sins so that we could have His righteousness in us. He did all this so that our souls could spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Because Jesus Christ did everything, all we have to do is believe. He willingly suffered on the Cross so that we wouldn't suffer the eternal judgment of the damned—if we accept His gift of salvation.

**BY BELIEVING IN CHRIST,
WE ESCAPE THE FIERY DESTINY OF THE WORLD.**

The Lord redeems the soul of His servants [believers],
and none of them who trust in Him shall be desolate.
(Psalm 34:22)

Suppose you decide that you want to take charge of your soul's destiny. You don't want to depend on Christ's work on the Cross. You want to work your way into Heaven. Or maybe you don't believe God when He says that without the Son you can't have eternal life. Maybe you don't even believe in Hell.

Wake up! You should and your soul in a special body will burn there in agony forever if you don't believe in Christ as your Savior.

Just as with any trip, once your soul reaches its final destination, you can't pretend you didn't arrive. You can't say, "But I didn't really mean to end up here! I don't even like fire! Give me another chance." The decision about Jesus Christ that you make on earth determines the final destination of your soul for eternity. Choose wisely. Choose Christ's work on the Cross.

GOD HAS INFINITE POWER TO BACK HIS WORD.

The Real You

Let's spend the next few minutes examining your soul so that you can make an informed decision about its eternal destination. Will "the real you" spend eternity with God or become trash in an everlasting, blistering, terror-filled fire?

He who believes in the Son, Jesus Christ, has eternal life. He who does not obey the command to believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER TWO

YOUR SOUL, BODY, AND SPIRIT

Adam and Eve were the first members of the human race and the only ones created by God. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and Eve from Adam's rib. He created them with bodies, souls, and spirits. They needed their spirits to have fellowship face to face with Jesus Christ in the Garden of Eden and learn His will for their lives. When they sinned by eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they still had a body. They still had a soul, but they no longer had a human spirit. They were spiritually dead.

But from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you shall not eat because the day you eat from it, dying [immediate spiritual death²] you will die [eventual physical death]. (Genesis 2:17)

When they lost their spirits, they lost their ticket to Heaven. Had they died then, their souls would have tumbled into Sheol, the place of torments. Instead, their souls are in Heaven, not because of anything they did, but because God is merciful. God gives every human being the opportunity to believe in Christ as Savior. Adam and Eve took that opportunity and believed.

GOD'S GRACE OVERLOOKS NO ONE.

The Lord is not slow toward us about His promise [to judge unbelievers], as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing for any to be utterly destroyed [in the Lake of Fire] but for all to come to repentance.³ (II Peter 3:9)

²Because the Sin Nature is in the body, every human being is spiritually dead the moment he receives physical life. We become spiritually alive the moment we believe in Christ as our Savior.

³Repentance is a change of thinking, in this case about salvation through faith alone in

Because Adam and Eve believed in Christ as their Savior, God again gave them human spirits. Those spirits attached themselves permanently to their souls. When Adam and Eve died, their souls and spirits went to Heaven. They will always be in Heaven. If you believe in Christ as your Savior, you will spend eternity with Adam and Eve in Heaven.

**YOU WERE BORN WITH A BODY,
SOUL, AND SIN NATURE.**

When Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the fruit, they acquired something new and dangerous, the Sin Nature.⁴ Likewise, at your birth, God imputed Adam's original sin to your genetically formed Sin Nature, the same Sin Nature that Adam and Eve acquired because of their individual sin. You are not alone. Every human being except Christ, who didn't have a human father, is born without a spirit and with the Sin Nature.

We've already established that your body dies and eventually decomposes. Your soul, however, lives on and can reach Heaven only by having a human spirit attached to it. You get a human spirit by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. See how simple God makes salvation? Your soul never dies. Your soul's ticket to Heaven is your human spirit. Jesus Christ paid for your ticket on the Cross. When you believe in His substitutionary work on the Cross, your spirit, your ticket to Heaven, is yours! Free! No strings attached! Irrevocable! Nonrefundable! Just as easily as that, your eternal destination to the "good place" is assured.

The God, who made the universe and everything in it because He is Lord of the earth, doesn't live in temples constructed by human hands. Neither is He tended by

Christ alone. You weren't interested before, but now you have changed your mind and believed.

⁴The Sin Nature, an integral part of every human being that resides in the cell structure of the human body and stays with the body in death, takes control of the soul when a person decides through volition to sin. The Sin Nature, the source of human sin and human good, is perpetuated, not created. It was acquired originally by Adam at his Fall and is subsequently passed down genetically to all mankind by the male in procreation. The result is both spiritual death and total depravity.

human hands [human power] as though He needed anything because He Himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. (Acts 17:24–25)

Most High God, who made everything, doesn't need man to make temples to Him because God the Holy Spirit controls every believer's soul through the filling of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Furthermore, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit indwell every believer forever.

What? Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who indwells you and whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought at a price [salvation through the blood of Christ]; therefore, go on to glorify God with your body. (I Corinthians 6:19–20)⁶

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying we shouldn't build churches. Of course, we should, but churches are as fragile and vulnerable as bodies. When you believe in Christ as your Savior, your spirit attaches itself to your soul and remains with it forever, an everlasting testimony to God's grace. When your soul is filled with God's Word, that doctrine remains in your soul forever, a permanent temple to God in you.

The soul of every person, believer or unbeliever, and the human spirit of every believer will never be destroyed! Never! (Acts 13:48)

I hope you understood while reading this chapter that you were born disastrously different from Adam and Eve as created by God. You were born not only without a human spirit, but also with a Sin Nature. Your Sin Nature causes your body to decompose even as you live in it. If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned, they wouldn't have received the Sin Nature, their bodies would never have deteriorated, and their souls would have remained in their earthly bodies forever. But they did sin, and now we receive the imputation of Adam's sin, the Sin Nature, in our bodies at birth.

⁵The filling of the Holy Spirit is explained in more detail in Chapter 11.

⁶Most passages in the New Testament epistles refer to Church Age believers, who live now, and not to Old Testament believers, who were not privileged to have most of the blessings of our age, such as the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, just as through one man [Adam] the sin [the Sin Nature] entered into the world and so spiritual death through the sin, consequently spiritual death spread to all mankind because all mankind sinned [when Adam sinned]. (Romans 5:12)

Eve sinned in ignorance, having been tricked by Satan. She received the consequences of that sin, including spiritual death. She turned from God; and, because He loved her, He punished her as the only means of encouraging her to return to Him. God doesn't want anyone's soul to burn in the Lake of Fire, and He doesn't want any believer to fail to execute the spiritual life⁷ to the fullest.

As we have noted, God is always merciful. (Luke 6:36) Just as He imputes the Sin Nature to everyone at birth and through it spiritual death, so also He gives everyone equal opportunity to believe in Christ as Savior and through Him acquire a spiritual life. (Isaiah 45:22) God desires every soul to spend eternity in Heaven with Him. He doesn't want them to bake in the Lake of Fire forever. But the choice is always ours. We choose the eternal destination for our souls when we choose to accept or reject Christ's work on the Cross.

ON THE CROSS, JESUS CHRIST UNDOED THE MESS INHERITED BY US FROM ADAM.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the solemn truth that unless one is born of water [physical birth] and the Spirit [Spirit baptism—by the Holy Spirit—which occurs at the moment of salvation: the second birth], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh [with a body, soul, and Sin Nature]; and that which is born of the Holy Spirit is spirit [human spirit—spiritually alive]. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must all be born again.' The wind blows where it wants, and you hear the sound it

⁷The spiritual life is obtained at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Believers execute the spiritual life when they are filled with the Holy Spirit and taking in Bible doctrine on a consistent basis. Expressed simply, the spiritual life is harmonious rapport with God.

makes, but you can't tell where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5–8)

The wind can't be seen, but its results can. Think of a tornado or a hurricane, and you can readily recognize the power of the wind. Spiritual birth⁸ can't be seen but is as real as the wind. The believer's second birth, at which time God imputes a human spirit to him, is just as real as the most powerful tornado, and the results are much longer lasting—forever. (Job 32:8)

HAVING A HUMAN SPIRIT ENSURES HAVING ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD.

Your soul doesn't have to have a human spirit attached to it. It doesn't have to harness the super power of the human spirit. Your soul doesn't even have to go to Heaven when you die. You can choose to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. That's right—you can choose to go to Hell! You make the decision. God never forces anyone, including you, to believe in His Son.

Christ did all the work for your ticket to Heaven. All you do is believe in His work. That's all. But if you fail to believe, your soul will bake forever in the Lake of Fire.

Your ticket can be purchased only during a short span of time because your life on earth is as ephemeral as a vapor—even if you live to be one hundred!

You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow because you are just a vapor, a puff of smoke, which appears for a little time and then vanishes. (James 4:14)

Don't put off receiving your ticket to Heaven. You have no guarantee that your soul will remain in your body for another hour, much less another day. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior now! Your ticket to Heaven awaits you, but you can only receive it through believing that Jesus Christ died for you. You wouldn't fail to pick up a gift from a

⁸Spiritual birth, also known as the second birth, occurs at the moment of believing in Christ as your Savior.

Understanding Your Soul

friend. Don't fail to pick up this greatest of all gifts, eternity in Heaven with God, bought for you by Jesus Christ.

The Son of man [Jesus Christ] did not come to be served but to serve and to give His soul a ransom for many [all mankind]. (Matthew 20:28)

CHAPTER THREE

THE COMPARTMENTS OF YOUR SOUL

What exactly is your soul? You know it gives your body personality and life, is invisible, never dies, and spends eternity in either Heaven or Hell, depending on whether you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior or not. But what is your soul really? The Bible, which is the thinking of Christ, calls your soul the heart or inner man. When the word “heart” is used in the Bible, only rarely and then obviously, does it refer to the body’s physiological pump, that intricate organ which circulates blood, nutrients, and oxygen throughout the body. As we have learned, the physical heart is necessary for body maintenance but not essential for life. In the Bible, then, “heart” usually refers to that invisible part of us without which there is no life—the soul.

BOTH BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS HAVE SOULS WHICH LIVE FOREVER.

Just as the physiological heart is divided into four compartments, so is the soul of both believer and unbeliever: Self-consciousness, volition, mentality, and conscience. These four components comprise human soul life.

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: Self-consciousness is an awareness of surroundings. Pinch yourself. Hold your hand in front of your eyes. Blow on your palms. You know without doubt that you are alive. Look around, and you see that you aren’t the only living person. At some point, your self-consciousness also makes you aware that there might possibly be a God, the Creator of all you see, touch, and experience. (Job 37) How else could the stars and planets stay in orbit?

The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky displays the work of His hands. Day after day and night

after night, they utter a sermon to the greatness of God.

(Psalm 19:1–2)

How else could the myriad parts of the body be assembled so perfectly? (Psalm 139:14) How else could there be any hope for an afterlife? At this point of God consciousness (which everyone who has ever lived—not just you—experiences), you had the opportunity to decide if you wanted to learn more about God or not. (Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 19:1–6; 53:2; Isaiah 55:6; Romans 1:19–20) Because you *did* desire to know more, God insured that the Gospel was revealed to you in your own language. In other words, God is faithful to make sure anyone can receive his ticket to Heaven if he wants it.⁹

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS LEADS TO GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS, WHICH CAN LEAD THROUGH FAITH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

VOLITION: The second component of the soul is volition, the decision maker of the soul and guardian of its gate. (Joshua 24:15; Job 7:15) Through volition, also known as free will, God makes you responsible for deciding your own destiny. (John 3:18) He never forces you or anyone else to do His will. You decide the little things, such as whether you will have a chocolate or vanilla ice cream cone and whether you will buy a new green or plaid sweater. You also make the pivotal decisions, such as whom you will marry and where you will go to church.

Some of your choices are right, some are wrong, and some are of no consequence. For instance, whether you eat a cheeseburger or a salad is strictly a matter of your volition, if you don't have a weight problem. Choosing a green rather than plaid sweater is neither right nor wrong, but stealing the sweater means your volition has chosen to act against God's commandments. (Exodus 20:15; Matthew 19:18) Choosing your spouse and your church are decisions with lasting repercussions. Wouldn't you prefer knowing God's viewpoint on these subjects? This book gives you the foundation of basic Biblical principles so that you can use your volition to make intelligent, God-driven decisions.

⁹For more information on this subject, refer to the book, *Heathenism* by Colonel R. B. Thieme, Jr., P.O. Box 460829, Houston, TX 77056-8829, (713) 621-3740.

VOLITION, NOT ENVIRONMENT, DETERMINES YOUR SOUL'S WORTH.

Sometimes, you choose as God would have you choose, called positive volition (+V.) Sometimes, you choose against God's will, called negative volition (-V) or sin. The choice with the really big consequence for both time and eternity is the one concerning Christ's work on the Cross. Negative volition toward salvation gets you a one-way ticket to the Lake of Fire. Positive volition makes you a citizen of Heaven and God's ambassador on earth. (John 8:40)

Volition is a powerful determinant for both punishment and blessing from God, making you a slave either to the Sin Nature or to Jesus Christ. Through your volition, you choose the master of your soul.

Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth that everyone who commits sin is a slave of the Sin Nature. The slave [unbeliever] is not a permanent member of the household. The Son is. So if the Son liberates you [from the penalty of sins and control of the Sin Nature], you will be free men in reality." (John 8:34-36)

YOUR VOLITION DETERMINES YOUR SOUL'S MASTER AS WELL AS ITS DESTINATION.

Ninety percent of suffering is self-induced misery because we make wrong decisions. Either we haven't chosen to learn enough doctrinal information or we have chosen to ignore the doctrine we have learned. We must use our volition to choose to learn and then execute God's plan for our lives. Only then can we glorify Him to the maximum.

MENTALITY: The third component of the soul is mentality or thought.

THINKING IS A CHOICE OF THE SOUL.

The French philosopher Descartes said, "I think; therefore, I am." He was right in the sense that we are alive as long as the mentality in our souls exists. We think; therefore, we live. Thoughts form motives, which in turn direct volition. A believer can choose to allow divine viewpoint¹⁰ thinking into his soul (Philippians 4:8) or to fill his soul with the garbage of human viewpoint¹¹ thinking.

¹⁰Divine viewpoint is God's thinking on everything in life and death as found in His

THE SOUL IS THE BATTLEFIELD OF RATIONAL VERSUS IRRATIONAL THOUGHT.

You are the sum of your thinking:

- Your thoughts are formed by information processed in your soul.
- Your motivation is either love for God because you have His viewpoint in your soul or the desires and lusts of the Sin Nature because you have human viewpoint.
- Your intentions are your agenda in life.
- Your actions are the choices you make in your soul through volition.

IT IS EASIER TO GET YOURSELF INTO TROUBLE THAN TO THINK YOURSELF OUT.

- If you think as you ought to think, the consequences of your ideas will be beneficial.
- To think as you ought to think is to be motivated, not by personal desire, but by the divine standard of Bible doctrine in your soul.
- Grace and truth are God's standard of thinking for you. (John 1:17)
- Only by thinking with faith, which means having an understanding of Bible doctrine in your soul, do you think in grace. God desires our souls to be filled with His grace thinking because they are filled with His Bible doctrine.

CONSCIENCE: Conscience, the fourth compartment of the soul, is the soul's protector and houses the norms and standards upon which your thoughts and actions are based. The conscience filters out bad thoughts and decisions and is the reason unbelievers can be upstanding people. They obey their consciences. The conscience of the believer can fully function only if correct Biblical information has been placed in his soul as a rigid standard of truth.

GOD DESIGNED THE CONSCIENCE TO PROTECT THE SOUL FROM SIN AND EVIL.

Word, the Bible. The more Bible doctrine you have in your soul, the better you are able to think as God thinks.

¹¹Human viewpoint is anything contrary to God's viewpoint.

The Compartments of Your Soul

Indeed, this is my boast, the testimony of my conscience: I have conducted myself in the world in simplicity [through Bible doctrine in the soul] and purity of motive [without sin or evil], not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. (II Corinthians 1:12)

Anyone who allows too many bad decisions to invade his soul clogs his conscience and disables it. (Ephesians 4:18–19) Sin breeds more sin which breeds ever more sin until the conscience can no longer protect your soul. (Acts 24:16)

A DISTORTED CONSCIENCE MEANS A DISTORTED VIEWPOINT.

You can think of the four compartments of the soul in a slightly different way. Self-consciousness is “I am.” Volition is “I will.” Mentality is “I think.” Conscience is “I ought.”¹² These four parts combine to form “the real you.”

The compartments of your soul work as a unit. Your self-consciousness makes you realize that you must make choices. Your thinking gives you the information necessary to make right choices. Your volition decides whether to accept or reject this information. Your conscience affirms the correctness of your choice or clangs warning bells if your choice violates divine viewpoint. When any compartment of your soul breaks down, for instance, your thinking becomes godless because you refuse to take in accurate Biblical teaching daily, then your soul fails to function as God intends.

THE CONTENT OF YOUR SOUL IS REVEALED THROUGH YOUR SPEECH AND ACTIONS.

This book concentrates only on the believer’s soul. The dysfunctional state of the unbeliever’s soul on earth isn’t worth studying because the state of his soul in the Lake of Fire is so horrific. The grief, pain, confusion, and dread he endures on earth are like the brush of

¹²These four terms are discussed in detail in R. B. Thieme, Jr., audio series, *Spiritual Dynamics*. R. B. Thieme, Jr. Bible Ministries, P. O. Box 460829, Houston, Texas 77056-8829, (713) 621-3740.

Understanding Your Soul

plush velvet compared to the unspeakable horror that awaits his soul after death. If you are an unbeliever, having never believed in Christ as your Savior, stop whatever you are thinking right now and believe. Don't wait until you are dead to wish that you had believed in Christ because then it will be too late, dreadfully too late, forever too late.

CHAPTER FOUR

YOUR GOAL: A FOCUSED SOUL

You know with certainty that anyone who fogs a dental mirror is alive and, therefore, has a soul. Now you need to understand that all souls are not the same. They all have the same compartments—self-consciousness, volition, mentality, and conscience, but the thoughts that fill the soul make all the difference. The souls of unbelievers are filled with the Sin Nature while those of believers can be filled with either the Holy Spirit or the Sin Nature, depending on their volition. No soul can be partially filled with one and partially filled with the other. You are either executing God’s plan or wallowing in sin and evil. You are either in fellowship with God or in fellowship with Satan and man. (1 John 1:5–10)

A SPIRITUAL BIRTH DEMANDS A SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Because you underwent a spiritual birth through faith alone in Christ alone, you now have a spiritual life. God wants you to live that spiritual life to the point that every thought focuses on Him. He wants your volition to confidently make decisions based on Biblical knowledge in your soul and your conscience to filter out any decisions that contradict His will.¹³ He wants you to learn more and more Bible doctrine under a qualified pastor-teacher¹⁴ so that the worldly garbage in your soul will slowly but surely be replaced by God’s Word,

so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God, even though you live in the midst of a crooked and perverse society, among whom you shine as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:15)

¹³Read *Divine Guidance* by R. B. Thieme for more information about God’s plan for your life.

¹⁴A qualified pastor-teacher is a man who has the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, given to him at salvation by the Holy Spirit, and who, through diligent study of the original languages of the Bible, continually prepares himself to minister to the souls of his congregation.

**THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS LIVED IN THE SOUL
BUT MANIFESTED IN THE BODY.**

God only approves the soul that is ruled by the Holy Spirit, focused on Bible doctrine, and occupied with Christ because His thinking fills it to the exclusion of the human viewpoint garbage of the world. (Romans 5:3–4) These successful souls are focused on one thought: Their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are occupied with Christ because their souls are focused on Him. In order to live God’s plan for your life, you must have a focused soul.

Finally, my brethren, keep on rejoicing in your occupation with the Lord. (Philippians 3:1a)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

Think of your soul as a sponge, soaking up everything in its environment, every thought, sound, smell, action, word, melody, emotion—everything. If you choose to associate with mature believers, especially a pastor-teacher who rightly divides the Word of Truth, your soul soaks up divine viewpoint. If you hang out with unbelievers or carnal believers or attend a church that doesn’t teach God’s Word accurately, your soul soaks up human viewpoint garbage. As a spiritual baby who has just begun to learn the Word of God, you may find human viewpoint ideas sweet on your tongue, but God views them as bitter and debilitating garbage. Through the intake of Bible doctrine into your soul, you must develop a discriminating soul palate.

CONTROL OF YOUR SOUL MEANS CONTROL OF YOU.

Now I command you, brethren [fellow believers], be alert for those who cause dissensions and obstacles contrary to the doctrine you have learned. Avoid them because these believers do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but obey their own emotions, serving themselves. By smooth talk and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the naïve [those ignorant of doctrine]. (Romans 16:17–18)

The inevitable adversities and pressures of life squeeze your soul. Squeeze out human viewpoint garbage, and, boy, are you in big trouble! Garbage never triumphed over anything! Garbage makes you an immediate loser without the tiniest chance of glorifying God.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36–37)

Until your soul is at least half full of doctrine, you will probably squeeze out human viewpoint during times of crisis. You will retreat in the face of adversity and, therefore, fail God. When you spend more time thinking about Bible doctrine than about the things of the world, you will know that you are advancing upward toward the goal God has set before you, a soul focused on Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:22b; II Peter 3:18)

Those who love your doctrine have great peace and security, and nothing offends them. (Psalm 119:165)

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PLACE THE THINKING OF CHRIST IN YOUR SOUL.

Exercise and develop your spiritual faculties so that your forward progress [advance in the spiritual life] may be evident to everyone. Immerse yourself in them [Bible doctrines] . . . (I Timothy 4:15)

A focused soul is surrounded by the human viewpoint garbage of the world, bombarded by it, just as is all mankind, but the focused soul allows no human viewpoint to seep inside. Bible doctrine in his soul forms an invisible shield, impermeable to even the most enticing garbage of the world. That's saying something because Satan is the master deceiver, able to disguise even the most repugnant worldly thoughts in bright and appealing garb. (II Corinthians 11:14–15) Only when it reaches the soul is its true filth revealed by the conscience. Listen to your conscience so that any wavering of your focus is immediately recognized and acknowledged to God.

Understanding Your Soul

Don't love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him because all that is in the world (the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father but is from the world. The world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of God remains forever. (I John 2:15-17)

RIGHT THINKING PRECEDES RIGHT ACTIONS.

A new believer or one newly focused on Jesus Christ will fail often because the human viewpoint garbage in his soul has yet to be replaced by accurate Bible teaching. If he keeps his soul focused on the goal of glorifying God to the maximum and continues taking in doctrine every day, he will advance in God's plan for his life.

O Lord, teach me how You want me to live! Then I will obey your commands. Make me wholeheartedly committed to you. (Psalm 86:11)

GOD GIVES YOU THE POWER NECESSARY TO DO HIS WILL.

Even if you are a mature believer, human viewpoint garbage will periodically cast its spell on you, enticing you to listen to it instead of time-consuming, boring, old Bible doctrine. Ignore it. Kick it out of your thoughts. Keep your eyes glued on the goal: A focused soul. As long as you remain in fellowship, learning God's Word from a qualified pastor-teacher, that garbage will be hauled off little by little as the Truth of His Word replaces it.

That is the reason we labor hard and persevere because we have focused our confidence on the living God, who is the Savior of all mankind, especially of believers. (I Timothy 4:10)

JESUS CHRIST NEVER DISAPPOINTS.

Change the focus of your soul from today to eternity, from you to Christ. Become occupied with Christ, and you will make strides toward soul health and true happiness.

But the very things which were an advantage, an asset to me before I was saved, I consider them liabilities because of Christ. More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the superior knowledge of which Christ Jesus, my Lord, is the source and object, because of whom, Christ Jesus, I wrote off everything as loss and—indeed—I consider them excrement!—in order to gain Christ and be found in occupation with Him, not because of having my own righteousness acquired by adherence to the law but because of having that divine righteousness which is acquired from God based on the faithfulness of Christ. My goal is to come to know Him, to experience the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings, and to become like Him in His substitutionary spiritual death. (Philippians 3:7–10)

Keep your eyes on the goal—a soul focused on the Lord Jesus Christ to the exclusion of all else.

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER FIVE

SOUL ENEMY #1: SIN

Few souls remain focused on Jesus Christ because the soul's enemies are clever, seemingly innocuous, and unremitting. In this study, we will concentrate on four major soul enemies: Sin, arrogance, evil, and emotion, all of which make their home in the Sin Nature.

The attacks of these enemies initially zoom in on the soul of the unbeliever, using every trick in their vast repertoire to persuade him to ignore or reject God's message of salvation.

Even if our Gospel [the Word of God] is veiled at all, it is veiled only to those [unbelievers] who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of those who don't believe to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (II Corinthians 4:3-4)

Many unbelievers bow in defeat before these Satanic attacks and never believe in Christ's work on the Cross. Their souls will bake in the Lake of Fire. The moment they die, they will plummet straight into Hell because they never had a spiritual birth.¹⁵ They have no ticket to Heaven.

That's not to say that these soul enemies cease-fire when you believed in Christ as Savior. Far from it! Their attacks merely change from salvation to the spiritual life.

Enticement to sin is a major attack on the believer. Sin means to miss the mark of God's plan for your life.¹⁶ Sin is deliberately doing that which is wrong or not doing that which is right. It is any thought, word, or action that violates the character and standards of God, anything that doesn't hit the bullseye of God's plan.

God first warns about sin in Genesis 4:7, saying,

¹⁵Born again is a synonym for spiritual birth.

¹⁶To miss the mark is the accurate translation of the Greek word for sin.

Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must suppress it. (Genesis 4:7)

God is perfect justice; therefore, He holds you accountable for your sins, both those embraced deliberately and those committed through ignorance. All sin is a matter of volition, even unknown sins. You decided to do it, and you did. If you did wrong with a gun at your head, you still chose to do it. Difficult as that is to accept, you understand it must be true because your soul has volition; therefore, no one, not even Satan, can force you to sin. God knows the Devil didn't make you do it; your volition did. Likewise, God never accepts your pleas of ignorance or insanity.

Only lack of Bible knowledge in your soul prevents you from recognizing sin. Actually, refusing to learn Bible doctrine is a super sin because it allows human viewpoint garbage to shut down your soul.

Whatever is not of faith [Bible doctrine believed and stored in the soul] is sin. (Romans 14:23b)

Even though we are spiritually alive when we are born again at salvation, we still sin because we still have the Sin Nature bequeathed to us from Adam. Sin is our enemy because when the Sin Nature controls our souls, we can't be filled with the Holy Spirit; therefore, we can't live the spiritual life and glorify God.

Sin doesn't begin with the sin itself but with the lust to commit it. That goes back to the most basic principle about sin: You want to do it, so you choose to do it; therefore, all sin originates in thought. When you use negative volition to turn a tempting thought into sinful action or prolonged thought, you choose to turn your back on God.

WHEN YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON GOD, HE SHINES ON YOUR BACK.

Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and strangers [not citizens of earth but of Heaven] to keep away from fleshly desires, which wage war against the soul [assaults on the soul by the Sin Nature]. (1 Peter 2:11)

Just because Satan, his demons, or your Sin Nature zing an unacceptable thought into your mind doesn't mean you have to retain it and turn it into sin. Every tempting thought causes your conscience to tingle and then ring wildly; you know the thought is wrong because it clashes with the doctrine in your soul; you use your positive volition to stop thinking it. Simple as that. When you use positive volition to immediately kick any wrong thought out of your soul, reminding yourself that you don't have to think it, you have defeated sin. (I Timothy 6:11; James 4:7-8)

I am concerned that just as the serpent completely deceived Eve by his cunning craftiness, misrepresentation, and skill of deceit just so perhaps your thinking may be corrupted from that noble fidelity and virtue which is in Christ [in His humanity]. (II Corinthians 11:3)

BIBLE DOCTRINE IN THE SOUL DEFEATS THE INGENUITY AND STEALTH OF SATAN.

Through the consistent intake of Bible doctrine into your soul, you train yourself to recognize, capture, and expel wrong thought, just as you would capture and expel a burglar who was stealing your possessions. The thoughts in your soul are of much more value than any worldly possessions. Your possessions decay and disappear as inevitably as your body; your soul lives forever. Keep it uncontaminated by avoiding sinful thought!

You will have to concentrate especially hard on this next divine principle because if you don't understand it, sin will defeat you. God never punishes anyone for any sin because Christ was already punished for it on the Cross. All sins, both of unbelievers and believers, were judged then and will not be judged again. Jesus Christ took your punishment so that you could have the potential of eternal life. Because of Christ's grace gift, you will never be punished for any sin. Never.

God doesn't punish you for the sin but for allowing the Sin Nature to control your soul, for not following His commandments. His punishment hurts and hurts and hurts. If it didn't, your soul wouldn't awaken to its enemies, and before long, you would be embracing them as friends, a sure road to perpetual misery and what is perceived as an untimely death.

Through sin, you choose to place yourself outside God's plan; therefore, He must warn you about the consequences of ignoring or defying His will.

Don't let sin reign in your physical body so that you obey its lust [desires]; and stop using the members of your body as weapons of wickedness, under orders to sin [the Sin Nature]; but place yourselves under orders to God as those who are alive from deaths [identified with Christ in His spiritual and physical deaths] and your members as weapons of righteousness to God [by executing the spiritual life]. (Romans 6:12-13)

BIBLE DOCTRINE IN THE SOUL PROVIDES DIVINE SOLUTIONS, THE ONLY SOLUTIONS THAT WORK.

We can't glorify God to the maximum if we don't recognize sin. The Bible presents God's viewpoint on sin: He hates it! (Proverbs 16:16-19; Romans 13:7-14; Ephesians 4:17-31) Blatant sins are listed often.

To help you recognize sin, I will list a few, divided into the three categories of sin: Mental attitude, verbal and overt sins. If you don't find your most recent sin on this list, don't figure you have fooled God. The totality of sin is much too long to list here. And, yes, believers can and do commit all these sins, and, yes, they still go to Heaven. God has stamped His guarantee of safe arrival on their souls.

1. Mental attitude sins include
 - a. Arrogance
 - i. Self-justification
 - ii. Self-deception
 - iii. Self-absorption
 - b. Self-pity
 - c. Indifference
 - d. Boredom
 - e. Bitterness
 - f. Moodiness
 - g. Emotion control rather than thought control
 - h. Jealousy
 - i. Resentfulness
 - j. Vindictiveness

- k. Implacability
 - l. Inordinate ambition
 - m. Fear
 - i. Worry
 - ii. Anxiety
 - iii. Panic
 - iv. Terror
 - n. Hatred and malice
 - o. Guilt
 - p. Greed
 - q. Envy
 - r. Selfishness
 - s. Self-admiration
 - t. Grudge bearing
 - u. Judging (You are to judge yourself through rebound but never judge others.)
2. Sins of the tongue include
- a. Whining
 - b. Sassing
 - c. Gossiping
 - d. Slandering
 - e. Maligning
 - f. Lying
 - g. Taking the Lord's name in vain
 - h. Committing perjury
 - i. Vilifying another
 - j. Creating the public lie
 - k. Defaming another
 - l. Quarreling
 - m. Criticizing
 - n. Embarrassing or degrading another
3. Overt sins include
- a. Neglecting or ignoring the teaching of Bible doctrine
 - b. Lusting, which begins as mental attitude sins, includes
 - i. Power lust
 - ii. Approbation lust (love of admiration and praise)
 - iii. Sexual lust
 - iv. Pleasure lust
 - v. Chemical (drugs and alcohol) lust

Understanding Your Soul

- vi. Money lust
- vii. Crusader lust (Christian activism)
- viii. Criminal lust
- ix. Conniving lust
 - x. Social position lust
 - xi. Revenge lust
- c. Shoplifting
- d. Borrowing without returning or repaying
- e. Stealing
- f. Getting drunk
- g. Abusing drugs
- h. Revenge
- i. Retaliation
- j. Violence
- k. Murder
- l. Idolatry, including the worship of the following, which first are manifested in the thinking
 - i. Man-made idols
 - ii. Self
 - iii. Wealth
 - iv. Social position
 - v. Health
 - vi. Power
 - vii. Violence
- m. Desertion
- n. Laziness
- o. Social climbing
- p. Sexual sins
 - i. Adultery: voluntary sexual intercourse of a married person with someone other than his spouse.
 - ii. Fornication: voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons or two persons not married to each other.
 - iii. Degeneracy
 - a. Homosexuality
 - b. Bestiality
 - c. Necrophilia
 - d. Crime
 - i. Rape
 - ii. Incest

Soul Enemy #1: Sin

- iii. Pederasty (two males with one of them a minor)
- iv. Prostitution
- v. Pandering (pimping)
- e. Evil: The phallic cult, including demonism and human sacrifice

Remember: These are merely the tip of the sin garbage pile. In its crevices and dark chambers lurk subtler and even sneakier sins. Be aware of all sin lest one catch you unawares. Study God's Word so that none seize your soul and wrestle it into captivity.

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER SIX

SOUL ENEMY #2: ARROGANCE

Arrogance is a sin, but we will study it separately for two reasons: First, God devotes more Scripture to arrogance than to any other sin; therefore, He considers it a sin of special danger and wants us to be especially wary of it. Second, the sin of arrogance is the basis for all sins and evil. That's right—all sin and evil have their origin in arrogance.

A person's arrogance will bring him low, but a lifestyle of humility will attain honor. (Proverbs 29:23)

- Arrogance was the original sin of Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, known more familiarly as Satan. Because of Satan's arrogance in pronouncing himself better than the Most High God, God sentenced him to incarceration in the Lake of Fire forever. (Isaiah 14:12–15)
- Because of arrogance, Eve decided she should be greater than her husband Adam, greater even than God Himself; therefore, she ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She was immediately spiritually dead. (Genesis 3:1–17)

God severely punishes the sin of arrogance, as He did with Satan and Eve,¹⁷ because arrogance always leads to more sins. He wants to awaken us early to our arrogance before we become slaves to it and corrupt our souls to the point of a premature death.

Whatever a person succumbs to, to that he is a slave.
(II Peter 2:19b)

So, what is arrogance, this king of all sins? Arrogance is unreasonable conceit, preoccupation with self, insolence, rejection of authority,

¹⁷Satan will bake in the Lake of Fire forever. Eve became spiritually dead, was kicked out of the Garden of Eden, was made to suffer in childbirth, and was under the authority of her husband. The same is true for all women.

vanity, or the exaggeration of your own importance. In other words, you start thinking you had something to do with who you are or what you have. You forget that everything comes from God and that He can take it all from you as easily as He gave it.

Suppose you think you are a pretty awesome specimen of the human race, and you may be, but what happens to that physical magnificence if you are in a fire and suffer indelible scarring? For that matter, what happens as you age and the inevitable wrinkles, skin discolorations, and bags under the eyes set in? (Psalm 102:11) Sure, you can have cosmetic surgery, but man's best attempts can't halt the aging process. To take that thought to its conclusion, how beautiful will you be after rotting in a grave for a while? (Job 19:26) That image may be gruesome, but it makes the point that you had nothing to do with gaining physical beauty, ability, or brains in the beginning, and you can do nothing to retain them in the end. Beauty, ability, and brains are grace gifts from God.

I further observed while on earth: The race is not always won by the swiftest; the battle is not always won by the strongest; prosperity is not always gained by the intellectual; wealth is not always accumulated by the most discerning men; nor does success always come to men of great ability. Time and chance [death] overtake them all. (Ecclesiastes 9:11)

You may be thinking, "I'm not beautiful (or handsome, brilliant, successful, popular, athletically great.) That's for sure! Therefore, I'll never commit the sin of arrogance." You just did. The moment you thought that you wouldn't sin is the moment arrogance ambushed you. You denied the truth of God's Word, which says,

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

See how easily arrogance can dirty the thinking of your soul? The moment you become preoccupied with yourself, you fall into its trap.

**YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE GENETIC
MAKE UP OF YOUR BODY BUT TOTAL CONTROL
OVER THE FORMATION OF YOUR SOUL.**

If you have ever felt fear, panic, terror, or even little stabs of anxiety, arrogance has invaded your soul. You have decided that God's promise of safety, security, and happiness doesn't apply to you. He can't help you in this particularly awful situation, which is especially dangerous, boring, embarrassing, or unusual. Your problem is too great for God's omnipotence to handle. Arrogance!

FEAR INSULTS GOD AND HIS PLAN.

Now, let's consider the arrogance of Christian activism. Because of arrogance, you decide the United States should be a Christian nation. Would it be wonderful if every American were a Christian and, therefore, had a one-way ticket to Heaven? Of course! Then why is it arrogant to demand that the United States be a Christian nation? Because, in forcing your views on others, you have decided that God made a mistake in giving volition to mankind. If God had wanted mankind to be volitionless robots, He wouldn't have created the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He wouldn't have given Adam and Eve the opportunity to sin.

Arrogance makes you presume that you have the responsibility to make people believe. Every American, every person in the world, has the right to choose not to believe in Christ as his Savior. That's right—to choose not to believe! The person making this negative decision is staggeringly stupid, but God gives everyone the right to be stupid.

God wants the United States, His client nation,¹⁸ to have the freedom to present the Gospel accurately and often. When freedom prevails, people believe of their own volition. They learn God's will for their lives, their country remains free, the Gospel continues to be spread, and more and more people are saved.

GOD SAVES PEOPLE. YOU DON'T.

¹⁸A client nation is a national entity in which a certain number of spiritually mature Christians have formed a pivot sufficient to sustain the nation and through which God specifically protects this representative nation so that Christians can fulfill the divine mandates of evangelism, communication and custodianship of Bible doctrine, providing a haven for Jews, and sending missionaries abroad. Only one client nation exists at a time. The United States is that client nation today.

You can give others the Gospel—and you should when God puts unbelievers with positive volition in your path—but Jesus Christ did the saving work on the Cross. To think otherwise is arrogance.

God does everything for you; you do nothing but learn to love Him by learning His Word. He is faithful and His love is unending even if you are unfaithful to the point of arrogantly denouncing Him as God.

This is solemn pronouncement of the Holy and Truthful One [Jesus Christ], “. . . I am the One who opens doors that no one can shut, who has the authority to close doors so that no one can open them. I know all about your pious and evil activities. (Look, I have unlocked a door, which is standing open in front of you, which no one can close again.) I Myself have done this because you didn't have much strength and because I have kept My word and because you didn't deny My name. Watch Me! I will expose those from the synagogue of Satan who allege to be Jews [who say they are spiritual believers] and who are not but are liars. Look! I will make them come and bow down at your feet because I love you [a believer] personally.”
(Revelation 3:7b–9)

Now, let's consider authority arrogance. You decide that you are justified to ignore or retaliate against a legitimate authority. Taxes are too high so you hide some of your income. Speed limits are too low, and you are a good driver so it's okay to use a radar detector. Your teacher doesn't teach well so you have the right to cheat on a test. Your coach is treating his players unfairly so you talk about him behind his back, trying to get things changed, even to get him replaced. Notice that in all these examples something unfair precipitated your action. God says unfairness, even cruel injustice, is never justification for defying proper authority. (Romans 2:21–23) When you arrogantly disobey any authority, you have put yourself above God's Word, which demands that, in all things, you obey all those in authority over you.

Let every soul be in subjection to the governing authorities [even tyrannical and unjust ones], for there is no authority except by God's appointment, and those

Soul Enemy #2: Arrogance

which exist have been established by God; therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the authority of God. Also, they who have opposed authority will receive condemnation on themselves. (For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior but for evil.) Do you desire to have no fear of authority? Then, do what is right, and you will have praise from the same. For it [the authority of the ruler, government] is God's servant to you for your benefit; but if you do what is evil [violate the law], be afraid! For it [government] does not bear the sword [capital punishment] for nothing because it is God's servant, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil [the habitual criminal]. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection to authority, not only because of the wrath [punishment for rejection of authority] of authority but also for conscience's sake. For this reason, you pay taxes because those in authority are God's servants, devoting themselves to governing. Render to all what is due them: Taxes to whom tax is due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. (Romans 13:1-7)

God put you under the authority of others. He isn't asleep when you are treated unfairly, and He, at the right time, will take away the authority of those who abuse it. Arrogance makes you want to quash the injustice yourself. God demands that you leave judgment to Him. (Deuteronomy 32:35; Matthew 7:1, 2; John 5:26-27; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30)

Arrogance culminates in self-absorption. Me! Me! Me! becomes the center of your thoughts—what you want the way you want it at the time you want it. Period. Of course, arrogance isn't so soul-consuming in the beginning. It wiggles its way into your soul, a thought at a time. Maybe it begins with anxiety about getting an A on a test. Then, being selected a cheerleader seems mighty important. You begin doing things your parents told you not to do, silly things that you are sure don't matter anyway. Before you know it, you have filled your soul with arrogance, leaving no room to execute the spiritual life.

**TEENS DON'T RECOGNIZE THE CONSEQUENCES
OF SINS; THEREFORE, PARENTS MUST TEACH THEM.**

God makes His punishment of arrogant children perfectly clear.

For God commanded, "Honor your father and mother," and "whoever insults his father or mother must go on to his end by death [the sin unto death]." (Matthew 15:4)

The ravens of the valley will pick out the eye that mocks a father and despises obeying his mother; and the young vultures will eat it. (Proverbs 30:17)

Did that sink in? If you continually disobey your parents, God will punish you severely, even to the point of what is perceived as a premature death. Birds don't pluck out the eyes of the living but of the dead. Consider carefully your attitude toward your parents. If your thoughts and actions are other than obedient and respectful, no matter your age or the age of your parents, change now before you become bird food!

Realize, too, that God doesn't say that you should obey your parents only when they treat you fairly and make perfect sense to you. You are to obey them always in all things. (Colossians 3:20) God says further,

Children, obey your parents because of the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

Obey because obeying is right. Right or wrong, God chose your parents for you, and you are to obey them because God commands it. However, mental, sexual, or physical abuse is out of bounds—tell your parents, a teacher, or a police officer. Your boss, teacher, coach, band-leader also have authority over you in all things. Likewise, you are under the authority of the laws of your community and country as well as those persons, such as police officers, firefighters, and soldiers, who enforce those laws.

ARROGANCE MAGNIFIES THE UNIMPORTANT.

Self-deception comes before self-absorption. Notice in our examples that you convinced yourself that your parents' restrictions were the

silly demands of old people who don't understand you or your situation, that being a cheerleader or getting a good grade was the yellow brick road to happiness. Arrogance assures you that your happiness comes from the things of the world, whether they be money, power, fame, or success. God disagrees, explaining repeatedly in the Bible that happiness is the result of a healthy soul. (Galatians 5:22; Hebrews 1:9) Because of God's unfailing love, you are caused to advance to a super abundance of happiness (Psalm 100) when you execute the spiritual life, including humbling yourself under the authority of others.

A SIN-FREE SOUL ALLOWS TRUE HAPPINESS.

The arrogant believer is so blind to anyone but himself that he doesn't recognize happiness when it stands behind an open door directly in front of him. He lives in a desert, assumes it's an oasis, and ignores the open doorway into God's paradise on earth.

The Lord says, "I will put a curse on the man who trusts in mere mankind and makes mere flesh [the Sin Nature] the source of his strength so that his soul turns away from the Lord. He shall be like tumbleweed in the desert [a stunted shrub with no spiritual life] and shall not experience prosperity even when it happens. It shall be as though he inhabits the parched places in the desert, in a salt land in which no one can live. My blessing is on the man who trusts in Me, who puts his confidence in Me. He shall be like a tree planted near water [Bible doctrine], which spreads its roots by the stream. Therefore, he does not feel alarm when heat [pressure, adversity, disaster] comes because his leaves are always green. He does not worry in the year of drought, and he never fails to bear fruit. (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

Bible knowledge is the water of your soul, nourishing and sustaining you even in times of greatest testing and temptation; but Bible doctrine is worthless until it travels from the Bible into your soul. God gives every believer his own pastor-teacher¹⁹, one who thoroughly

¹⁹The spiritual gift of pastor-teacher is given to men only.

understands the original languages of the Scriptures. He is the only person mandated by God to deposit into your soul the truth of Bible doctrine. Furthermore, your pastor-teacher²⁰ is your only authority in spiritual matters. He doesn't direct your life; instead, he teaches you divine doctrines, which give you the capacity to decide God's will yourself by using the stockpile of God's Word in your soul. Unless you have the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, which God gives to men only, you cannot adequately teach yourself. If you think otherwise, arrogance has deceived you. As more and more doctrine fills your soul, you have less wiggle room for the self-deception of arrogance.

THE BIBLE HAS ONE INTERPRETATION
BUT MANY APPLICATIONS.
IF YOU GET THE INTERPRETATION WRONG,
YOU GET THE APPLICATION WRONG.

A person of doctrine draws his strength from the well of doctrine in his soul. (Proverbs 20:5) He understands that people are limited wells of refreshment, but God provides infinite waters of comfort and strength, a never-ending source of divine grace. When you let go of your problems and trust them to the Lord, you let go of arrogance and flood your soul with the strength and happiness of God.

All the time you are wallowing in self-deception and self-absorption, your conscience is reverberating violently in your soul, trying to awaken you to your arrogance. Your Sin Nature is dead set against your awakening to your sins so it keeps fanning the flames of self-justification, the first step of arrogance and the one that trapped you in this ego-centric thinking in the first place. You find it so easy to convince yourself that you were right to do what you did. You were being treated unfairly so what other choice did you have? It felt so good it couldn't have been wrong. Everyone else was doing it. For crying out loud, what else made sense? You saw what he/she/it/they did to me! Unfair! Unfair! Unfair! I deserve better! And you had better believe that I can take care of myself. I! I! I!

²⁰Pray that God will direct you to a qualified pastor-teacher who teaches on a consistent basis. Contact me if you desire further nourishment from the Word.

Soul Enemy #2: Arrogance

If we contend that we have fellowship with Him and yet keep on walking in darkness, we are living a lie and not practicing doctrine. (John 1:6)

We've all justified ourselves so we know the sneaky mental games we play to try to get away with sin. Too often, we fool ourselves, thereby allowing the Sin Nature to continue its domination of our souls. Arrogant people are never satisfied because they always want more for themselves. Self is the star of all their dreams. Self is always better than others; if not there sure is a good reason, and it's not their fault. They are insensitive to others but hypersensitive about themselves. They easily justify boredom, discontent, anger, moodiness, emotional rage, vituperation, slander, gossip, lying—sin after sin after sin.

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures [the activities of the Sin Nature] that wage war in your body? You desire and do not have, so you commit murder; and you are jealous and you cannot obtain, so you fight; you quarrel. (James 4:1–2a)

Arrogance is sneaky. Be on the alert for it, not in others but in yourself. Looking for sins in others is arrogance. Being surprised by others' sins is arrogance. Wanting to change others is arrogance. See what I mean about sneaky? Arrogance is a contaminating virus, and just as with any virus, it infects your soul, often before you realize that you have been exposed.

Arrogant people seek wealth without honor, success without integrity, promotion without ability, praise without humility, love without virtue, and sex as a desire for their own happiness, not their spouse's. (A word of divine advice to anyone who isn't yet married: Sex outside marriage is always wrong, no exceptions. (1 Peter 2:11; 1 Corinthians 7:1–2; Galatians 5:19) Sex with your spouse is wonderfully right! Don't let your arrogant desire for sex, whatever the justification, cause you to forfeit the special blessings God promises to those who wait until after marriage to have sex.)

What solution does God suggest for the sin of arrogance? Humility, the king of all virtues and a tough soul warrior to boot. If you fill your thinking with God's humility, you keep arrogance from overtaking your

soul. Humility is grace thinking, the understanding that you are nothing and can do nothing apart from the grace of God, that God is gracious to you because of Christ, not because of you. Humility is willingness to rely on God rather than yourself or other human beings. Humility is casting all your cares on Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 5:6–7)

HUMILITY IS THE KNEELING POSTURE OF THE SOUL.

He gives strength to those who are tired; and to those who have no power, He gives renewed energy. Even athletes grow weary, and even strong young men clumsily stumble. Those who wait for the Lord's help shall exchange their strength for His. They shall rise up as if they had eagle's wings. They shall keep on running [intense adversity] and not be weary [because they have spiritual strength]. They shall keep on walking [normal life] and not get tired. (Isaiah 40:29–31)

No matter how much doctrine is stored in your soul, sometimes you will get tired. At that point, God will forcefully remind you to stand still and tap back into His power in the spiritual life. To “wait for the Lord's help” means to trust Him moment-by-moment, to remember that He will fight for you and deliver you from even the gravest danger—if you will stand still long enough to recognize your weakness and His strength.

HUMILITY TAKES FEAR OUT OF THE SOUL.

Rely on the Lord. Be strong, and let your soul take courage. Yes, rely on the Lord. (Psalm 27:14)

In the tranquility of humility, you are comforted knowing that God gives His power only to the faint and powerless. He doesn't help those who help themselves. (That is an evil thought promoted by Satan.) When you place your confidence in the Lord and not in yourself or others, you gain new strength—His strength.

The power of God does not come in fits and starts but as a steady, continuous divine energy. God's power is fueled by knowledge of and belief in His Word and depends on having the humility to take your life

out of your own puny hands and place it in gracious God's all-powerful, all-loving hands.

Self-discipline is a major component of humility and refers to God-orientation and authority-orientation in the soul. Without self-discipline, immediate self-gratification replaces commonsense. (James 4:10)

God provides a system to instill self-discipline in your soul, and that system begins in the family. If parents do their job as God would have it, they discipline their sinning children. (Proverbs 3:12) And they make it hurt!

He who spares his rod hates his son. (Proverbs 13:24)

Slowly, through patient and loving guidance, authority-oriented parents teach their children to distinguish between right and wrong and then eventually to abstain from wrong. They develop divine norms and standards in their children's souls, primed to awaken their consciences when violated. At the same time, such children grow to realize their own fallibility.

If children continue to gain humility by obeying their parents, they begin not only acting with integrity but also thinking with integrity. Eventually, such children mature from parent-demanded humility and obedience (Hebrews 12:6-11) to self-chosen humility and obedience. When they reach adulthood, they have self-discipline firmly seated in their souls.

Already, you can see the hand of Satan working to destroy God's plan to instill self-discipline in our souls. Satan's evil genius has persuaded many that discipline warps a child's character, marriage isn't sacred, children don't need a father in the home, having illegitimate children is acceptable, mothers should put their own needs first, fathers must get in touch with their feelings, and day care centers help a child socially. Satan's evil perversions of the family go on and on, unremitting and dreadful. If we surrender to his attacks, our arrogance grows.

The LORD says, "Wise people should not boast that they are wise. Powerful people [successful persons] should not boast in their might [great deeds]. Rich people should not boast that they are rich. If they want to boast, they should boast in this: That he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises

steadfast love in grace, justice and righteousness on earth.” (Jeremiah 9:23–24)

During His time on earth, Jesus Christ Himself had to learn obedience. (Hebrews 5:8) Respect for authority was the basis of His humility, just as for all of us. (Ephesians 6:1–3a)

Keep on having the same objective thinking which also resided in Christ Jesus, who though He existed [in His deity] eternally in the essence of God, He did not think equality with God [deity] as a treasure to be seized and held, but He divested Himself of His privileges [as deity], when He received the form of a slave, having been born looking like man [perfect man like Adam before the fall without a Sin Nature]. In fact, although He was found in outward appearance as man [but without a sin nature], He humbled Himself by becoming obedient even to the point of death [substitutionary spiritual death], even the death on the Cross.

(Philippians 2:5–8)

In the ultimate example of humility, Jesus Christ became a member of the human race, lived on earth without any of the benefits of His deity, suffered horribly to the point that His face was beaten beyond recognition, and then went willingly to the Cross, was punished unmercifully and unremittently by God the Father for every one of our sins, died spiritually so that we might live eternally, and finally died physically. Jesus Christ is God; but He chose to take on the frail body of mankind and be punished for every sin that ever has or ever will be committed. Christ is the model of humility we should emulate.

For you have been called for this purpose: Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth. When He was abused, He didn't return abuse. When He suffered, He did not threaten retaliation, but He entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:21)

THROUGH HUMILITY, GRACE THINKING
SATURATES YOUR SOUL.

Humility for you as a believer begins with the daily learning of Bible doctrine. You willingly put yourself under the authority of your pastor-teacher and the divine doctrines he teaches you. Genuine humility brings you the happiness and success which arrogance declares you should have but can't deliver. (I Peter 5:6-7)

This is what the Lord says, "The Heavens are My throne. The earth is My footstool. Where then is there a house you could build for Me? Where is a place I could rest? My hand made all these things [all creatures]. By Me, all these things came into being," says the Lord. "But on this one I will show special favor: The one who is humble and contrite of spirit [who acknowledges his sins to God], who trembles with awe and respect at My Word [Bible doctrine]." (Isaiah 66:1-2)

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOUL ENEMY #3: EVIL

You have just learned that arrogance is an incredibly sneaky sin. Evil is ten times, no, one hundred times, sneakier. Evil is Satan's policy, and Satan is slicker than any serpent. He takes God's Word, distorts it just a little, and then waits patiently for you to believe it. When you do, you allow evil into your soul; and evil, once admitted, clings tenaciously with its razor-edged claws of deception and rationalization.

EVIL, A SNEAK ATTACKER, DOESN'T DIRECTLY ASSAULT THE FORTRESS OF YOUR SOUL.

Loved ones, do not imitate the evil you see but imitate the spiritual good you see. The one who does divine good is of God, but the one [a believer] who does that which is bad has never seen God [because he doesn't study His doctrine]. (III John 11)

In order to recognize evil, you first must understand that Satan's policy of evil is completely the opposite of God's policy of grace. God loves everyone with a perfect love, regardless of how often we sin or how horrible our sins. His love never increases if we are "good" or decreases if we are "bad." Everything God has done or will do is for our good because He loves us with a perfect and unfailing love. (James 1:17) In the ultimate demonstration of His love, Jesus Christ died on the Cross for everyone: Murderers and sweet little old ladies, psychopaths and innocent babies, believers and unbelievers. No one can do anything to deserve or earn any of God's grace blessings, including salvation. God doesn't have to do anything for us, but He does because He loves us. That's grace. We don't deserve it, but God gives it to us anyway.

GRACE IS NEVER A REWARD FOR PERFORMANCE.

Satan's original sin was arrogance; that fact should help you understand his policy of evil. He doesn't care diddly squat about you. He certainly doesn't love you. All he cares about is using you to prove that God was unfair in assigning him to the Lake of Fire forever. If he can succeed, he will beat God by proving he is better than God. Of course, Satan can't prove this honestly so he resorts to every underhanded, sneaky, perverse, rotten, unfair trick he can. Through evil, he tries to convince everyone that right is wrong and wrong is right. He makes evil sound soooo good, and good sound soooo evil.

Those who call evil good and good evil are as good as dead, who substitute darkness for light and turn light into darkness and who turn bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter. (Isaiah 5:20)

EVIL APPEARS GOOD FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF CAPTURING YOUR SOUL.

Since Satan's policy of evil is the opposite of God's policy of grace, we know evil is anything which distorts God's grace. Interestingly, God calls Satan "The Evil One" several times in the Bible. (Matthew 5:37; 6:13; Ephesians 6:16; I John 1:18; 2:13; 3:12; 5:18, 19)

As in all of his strategies, Satan's evil begins with the distortion of Christ's grace gift of salvation. Repeatedly, God tells us that salvation comes through faith alone in Christ alone. (John 3:18, 36; 6:40) We do nothing but believe. In case you have the evil thought that believing is an action, and, therefore, you have a part in bringing about your own salvation, I want to show you Satan's sneakiness in making you even consider such a silly and outrageously arrogant idea. You believe China is a country, don't you? Did your believing China is a country have anything to do with its actually being a country? If you don't believe that China is a country, will it no longer be a country? Then, why would your believing that Christ died on the Cross for your sins have anything to do with you? It doesn't, except that Jesus Christ was thinking of you personally when God the Father punished Him for every one of your sins. You hadn't been born when Christ was hanging on the Cross so you certainly hadn't committed the sins, but Jesus Christ willingly accepted the punishment for you. He did everything; you can do nothing.

**CHRIST IS LORD WITHOUT
ANYONE MAKING HIM LORD.**

Satan further tries to distort salvation by slyly suggesting that you aren't really saved unless you walk an aisle or are baptized or give your life to Christ or weep tears of repentance at the altar or feel sorry for your sins or make Christ Lord or . . . or . . . or . . . Satan's distortions of salvation are never ending. If Satan can convince any unbeliever to add anything but belief in Christ to salvation, then he isn't saved. (1 Corinthians 3:11; Titus 3:5; Galatians 1:6, 8) He has bought into Satan's evil propaganda, and instead of securing his soul for Heaven through belief, he has filled his soul with evil lies.

**SATAN'S LIES ABOUT SALVATION ARE HEAVY
AND CAN SINK YOU INTO HELL. BELIEF IN CHRIST
IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION.**

If you are a believer, Satan failed to convince you of his lies about salvation, and at some point, you believed God the Father when He declared that Jesus is His Son. You received your ticket to Heaven, but Satan hasn't given up. He can still win part of his battle with God if he can convince you that your salvation isn't secure or that you don't need to execute the spiritual life. As long as you are alive, he won't stop pummeling you with lies about everything, and, remember, his lies sound soooo good! Let's compare some examples of the grace policy of God to Satan's policy of evil.

- God says that you should have no other God than He. (Exodus 20:3) Satan says: All religions believe in an equally important god. No religion is better than any other. You must be tolerant of all religions. How can you know which one is right? You mustn't offend anyone. You must respect everyone's god.
- God says that He has provided the only way of salvation (John 14:6) and if you don't believe in Christ as your Savior, you will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. (John 3:18) Satan says: How could a loving God throw His creations into Hell? Hell can't exist if God truly loves us—and He does. If you are nice, give enough money, say enough prayers, give away all your possessions, think good thoughts, light candles, invite Jesus into your heart, are baptized, make Christ Lord

- and on and on, I assure you that you will go to Heaven.
- God says that once you are saved you can never lose that salvation. (Ephesians 1:13; John 10:28–29) Satan says: If you miss church, commit a really bad sin, don't commit your life to Jesus, lose your faith after salvation, or neglect to part your hair on the left side, you are no longer saved.
 - God says that He has done everything for you. (Colossians 1:16–17) Satan says: You must do things for God. You must corner strangers and force them to hear the Gospel. You must hold basketball games and fairs and suppers and singles classes and old singles classes and really old singles classes because God helps those who help themselves.
 - God says that He promotes the humble believer. (Proverbs 3:34) Satan says: Let's list the people who bring the most newcomers to church and who give the most money. Let's cover the walls, windows, pews—every part of the church—with plaques honoring these godly men and women.
 - God says that a pastor-teacher is to teach his congregation accurately from His Word. (Ephesians 4:12) Satan says: Let's wave our hands! Stomp our feet! Sing! Sing! Just one more time! And the pastor had better not take up more than fifteen minutes of our time—and what he says had better be uplifting.
 - God says that thinking is all-important and that emotions detract from executing the spiritual life. (Galatians 6:8) Satan says: If you truly love Jesus, your emotional fervor will give you the rosy glow of true love for God. Feeling righteous and pious is true spirituality.
 - God says that His Word, as recorded in the original languages, is inerrant, infallible, always true, and unchanging. (Psalm 119:89, 160) Satan says: The Bible is full of contradictions. We aren't supposed to take the stories of the flood, the serpent, the Cross, or any other Bible stories literally. They are stories, not true events, and are meant to entertain. The Bible is too outdated, unrealistic, and unscientific to be seriously taught. We know so much more now than the people who supposedly wrote the Bible.
 - God says that if we know Bible doctrine, its truth will set us free, both as a nation and as individuals. (John 8:32) Satan says: We are great when we promote the brotherhood of man, embrace all religions, remove all risks, take from the rich and give to the poor,

serve man (who deserves it) and not God (who may not exist anyway.)

- God says that we must have fellowship with Him. (I John 1:6) Satan says: True Christian fellowship is getting together with fellow believers, talking about intimate problems, having revitalization weekends and sob-on-each-other's-shoulders retreats. Divorce classes are essential because divorce is inevitable.

You may have chuckled or felt a surge of anger at some of these examples, but how many times have these or other evil thoughts ambushed your soul and taken hold of a tiny corner of your thinking? You don't know unless you know all of the doctrines in God's Word. Since Satan is the master of deceit, you had better beware. You had better not let a day go by without learning Bible doctrine from a qualified pastor-teacher. Your rate of learning Bible doctrine had better be greater than your rate of forgetting it if you don't want evil grabbing the driver's seat of your soul. (James 1:22–25)

But this is the doctrine I explicitly commanded them saying, "Obey My voice [the Word of God], and I will be your God, and you will be My people. Furthermore, you live in all the ways I commanded you, and it will go well with you." But they did not obey or pay attention to Me. They followed their own counsel and lived in the stubbornness of their evil thinking; therefore, they went backward and not forward. They got worse instead of better. (Jeremiah 7:23–24)

EVIL WILL LEAD YOU BACKWARD IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AND THEN ENSLAVE YOUR SOUL.

Most people wouldn't recognize evil if it had green eyes and a pointy red tail—and Satan never makes evil so obvious. When we believe evil, we go backward in the spiritual life, not forward, and still we refuse to turn from our wicked ways and learn God's will for our lives.

Evil ideas sound reasonable. We find ourselves wanting to believe them because so many of our friends enthuse about them, so many rich and famous people support them, and many of our leaders tell us evil is true. Remember that much of the information disseminated over the airwaves, including television, radio, and the Internet, is evil.

Understanding Your Soul

Because baseness is exalted among men, evil struts
about on every side. (Psalm 12:8)

Evil is not always sin, but all sin is evil. Read that sentence as many times as necessary for it to sink into your soul. Let's compare the Truth of God's Word to the sneaky disguises of evil.

- Shoplifting is a sin as well as evil. Having a ministry that asks for money "to do God's work" is evil because God says that His Word is to be given freely. (Matthew 10:8) (Don't have the evil thought that you don't need to give money to the church. God demands that you give willingly, if you are able, with a thankful soul. (I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 8:3; 9:7))
- Plagiarism is a sin as well as evil. Taking the Word of God and twisting it to justify your sins and lusts is evil. (Exodus 20:14)
- Lying is a sin as well as evil. Sitting in church and not paying attention to God's message of Truth as presented by your pastor-teacher is evil. You are trying to fool God and/or men with your put-on piety. You may fool men, but omniscient God knows your every arrogant thought.
- Murder is a sin as well as evil. The sixth mandate of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not murder." However, the Bible also tells us that there is "An appropriate time to kill . . ." in Ecclesiastes 3:3. The difference is that murder is the unlawful killing of a person. Murder deprives a person of his volition and is, therefore, evil. Murder disobeys God's mandate and, therefore, is a sin. Examples of legitimate killing are: killing the enemy in battle, executing convicted criminals,²¹ and taking the life of a criminal who enters your home seeking to harm you and your family.

The solution to evil isn't simple. Certainly, the first step is acknowledging all sins to God. Because evil makes its home in our thinking, the next step—and it's a long and difficult one—is to replace the lies of Satan with the Truth of Bible doctrine.

But he who listens to me [wisdom] shall live securely
and shall be at ease from the dread of evil. (Proverbs 1:33)

²¹Discontinuing the use of capital punishment is evil because murderers, kidnappers, and other serious criminals destroy the freedom of law-abiding citizens.

**GUARD THE WORD IN YOUR SOUL,
AND DON'T FORGET IT.**

God exposes you to His doctrines little by little because the entirety of His revelations is too overwhelming, too thunderous to be absorbed and understood quickly. If you think you can sit down for a week, month, or even years and understand the whole realm of doctrine, you are arrogantly mistaken. Doctrine must be added to your soul every day for the rest of your life if you wish to execute the spiritual life to completion.

These are but glimpses of His sovereignty, the mere whisper we hear of Him. Who can absorb and understand the thunder of His power? (Job 26:14)

It may take years to turn your thinking into that of Christ. Even then, you can't stop studying God's Word because if you do, your thinking will slowly revert to the evil thoughts of the world. Good apples rot when in contact with a rotten one. Good thoughts rot just as surely. (Galatians 5:9)

We are either overwhelmed and distracted by evil and injustice or overcoming evil by means of the ultimate good, Bible doctrine in our souls. We are either filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), or our lives resemble those of unbelievers—hopeless, loveless, and faithless. We are either fulfilling our own agenda in evil and human good (which is also Satan's agenda) or serving the divine agenda through grace.

To love the Lord is to hate evil and evil ways . . .
(Proverbs 8:13a)

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOUL ENEMY #4: EMOTION

Emotion, like the Sin Nature, resides in the body. Both emotion and the Sin Nature are part of Satan's world and will remain with your body as it rots in the ground.

THE SOUL IS NOT THE SEAT OF EMOTION.

Knowing that emotion accompanies the Sin Nature should reinforce the danger inherent in emotion. When we are emotional, we are not thinking; therefore, when we allow emotion to control our thoughts, we allow the Sin Nature to control our souls. (Galatians 5:16–17) Sin is a symptom of rejection of God's Truth.

Because emotion is non-rational, an emotional believer can only retreat from reality. He doesn't know the reality of Bible doctrine, only the rah-rah, claptrap of emotional religion.²² Make no mistake: Emotion is nothing but smelly human viewpoint garbage wrapped in feel-good paper and colorful ribbons and streamers. Emotion has no nutritional value and, therefore, can't produce soul-muscle but can drain all soul-vitality.

God says that the emotional believer is a seasick child, queasy from lack of doctrine in his soul. We must pack our souls with doctrine

In order that we are no longer immature [seasick from lack of stability from Bible doctrine], driven out of control by every wave of false doctrine and blown here and there by every wind of false doctrine, by the trickery of men, who in cunning craftiness carry out their

²²Religion is a system whereby man, by his own efforts and merits, tries to gain salvation or the praise of God. Religion puts man in bondage to Satan; therefore, religion is a main tool for Satan and his followers. In religion, the merit belongs to man. In Christianity, the merit belongs to a Man, Jesus Christ. Christianity is God seeking us through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Christianity isn't a religion but a relationship with God through Christ Jesus.

deceitful plotting; but instead by practicing the teaching of doctrine in association with virtue love, we will be able to grow up in every way through Bible doctrine with respect to Him who is the absolute authority, namely Christ. (Ephesians 4:14–15)

CARNAL BELIEVERS ARE AT THE MERCY OF THE WINDS OF FALSE DOCTRINE.

A spiritual child (any believer, regardless of age, who is just beginning to fill his soul with Bible doctrine) is a destabilized ship in high seas, totally incapable of intelligent action because he lacks Bible doctrine, the only basis for rational thought. The original Greek language of these verses says that the believer who doesn't know doctrine is shooting craps with the Devil, who has loaded the dice. He is relying on momentary emotional highs to sustain him; and the higher he goes, the farther he falls!

Because of this [the evil in the Church Age], stop becoming non-thinkers [driven by emotion] but continue to become spiritually intelligent about God's will. (Ephesians 5:16)

PREPARE YOUR SOUL TO RECOGNIZE FALSE DOCTRINE!

Of course, Satan wants us to rely on emotions because thinking takes us from his plan and makes us receptive to God's plan! Too often false teachers, who may be believers, advise us to feel, to emote—to let our emotions explode into action. Evil. Evil. Evil. At the same time, our Sin Nature tries to wheedle us into listening to the emotions of our bodies, not the thinking of our souls.

Yes, my soul was bitter, and I was punctured in my emotions. I was foolish and ignorant of doctrine and lacked insight. I was as senseless as a beast before You . . . With Your Bible doctrine [in my soul], You guide me, and afterwards You will take me up to glory. (Psalm 73:21–22, 24)

When the writer of this Psalm was ignorant of doctrine, emotion ruled his soul, and he behaved as mindlessly as any wild beast. When he recovered his spiritual equilibrium by acknowledging his sins to God and resuming the storage of Bible doctrine in his soul, God was able lead him in the path of righteousness, guide him through the minefields of life, and deliver him to unimaginable rewards in eternity. He left the ranks of beasts and became a Medal-of-Honor warrior in God's army.

If you depend on emotion to guide you, precariously sustained by the emotional highs of a church that doesn't teach doctrine, you will fall apart under the slightest pressure. The inevitable pressures of life will prove intolerable.

At the onset of any emotion, including guilt, anger, hate, boredom, arrogance, or anxiety, stop, confess that sin to God, and turn back immediately to the solid food of doctrine. You must make a conscientious effort to put distance between your soul and all emotional sins.

I [Christ], even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake and will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43:25)

If Jesus Christ forgets your sins the moment you confess them, why should you continue to call them back to mind? Why should you continue to feel guilty or bitter about them? Emotion is the reason, and a soul-destroying reason at that! Never, never, never settle for the cheap substitute of emotion. Never settle for less than God's Word in your soul.

CONTROL OF THE MENTALITY OF THE SOUL INSURES CONTROL OF THE EMOTIONS OF THE BODY.

A word to spiritual believers: Reflect on this doctrine and become confident in your thinking. A word to carnal believers: Come back to your senses [thought instead of emotion] and to right thinking in terms of doctrine, you who are operating in opposition to righteous authority. (Isaiah 46:8)

Jeremiah was an Old Testament prophet of God in a time of great apostasy in his nation Judah [625–586 BC]. (Jeremiah 15:15–21) He

described perfectly the difference between a believer who lives his life as unto the thinking of the Lord and one who lives as unto emotion. Mental attitude sins related to emotion caused Jeremiah to blame God for his misery when, in fact, Jeremiah caused his own misery through sins of emotion. Instead of using God's recovery procedure to take responsibility for his self-pity, he blamed God.

He [God] has dragged me from the path and pulled me to pieces. He has made me desolate. He has drawn His bow and set me as a target for His arrows. He has shot His arrows into my emotions. I was a laughingstock to all my people, and the subject of mockery all day long. He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drunken with venom. He has broken my teeth with gravel stones. He has made me cower in ashes. My soul has been deprived of prosperity. I have forgotten what happiness is. So I said, "My strength and my hope has perished. I have lost all hope of deliverance from the Lord." Just thinking about my affliction and homeless condition is bitterness and venom in my soul. When I continually think about this, I become emotionally depressed. (Lamentations 3:11-19a)

Jeremiah blamed God, the Author of happiness, for the unhappiness that he brought on himself! Not only is this blasphemy but utterly and totally stupid, an arrogant waste of time.

EMOTION MAKES US STUPID.

Jeremiah allowed emotion to take over his soul, causing him to lose all capacity for happiness. Instead of joyfully acknowledging God's blessings and giving thanks for his circumstances, Jeremiah became an expert on self-induced misery. Now, note the change when Jeremiah finally remembered to abandon his arrogant emotions and take responsibility for his sins.

This I recall to mind; and, therefore, I have hope. The Lord's many kindnesses never cease because His great compassion never comes to an end. They are renewed

every morning. Great is Your faithfulness. Surely, my soul remembers and is humble within me. This [Bible doctrine] I recall to mind; therefore, I have hope. “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance,” says my soul. “Therefore, I will put my hope in Him.” The Lord is good to those who trust in Him, to the souls who seek Him.” It is good, therefore, to wait silently and patiently for the deliverance of the Lord. (Lamentations 3:21–26)

WE CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY—OR UNHAPPY.

What a difference! When the Sin Nature and emotion controlled Jeremiah’s soul, he was a gloom-and-doom wreck, afraid, bitter, and miserable. When the Holy Spirit commanded his soul, he exuded happiness. His circumstances were the same, but his confidence was unbounded because he had transferred his trust from himself to God. It makes sense, doesn’t it, to trust the One who gave you life? If He gave you life and gave His life for you, is anything beyond his power? Of course not! When Jeremiah finally awakened to this truth, his soul sang with confidence. He remembered to trust the Truth of God, and he rediscovered God’s unfailing love. God hadn’t failed him; he had failed God.

EMOTIONAL SINS DEVASTATE THE SOUL.

Emotion is a parasite that latches onto your brain, sucking out thought and leaving excrement behind. The longer emotion rules your soul, the stronger its attachment and the more you depend on it for your happiness. Eventually, you get so used to being miserable that you don’t have a clue to the depth of your wretchedness. Emotion deceives you into thinking you have the rosy glow of happiness when in reality a black cloud of unhappiness and unease enshrouds you. See how it works? Emotion fools you into believing that misery is inevitable, that “poor me” is the best you can be, and that God has forgotten you—if He even exists.

Therefore, you have not been limited [hindered in executing the spiritual life] by us [because we are teaching

you accurate doctrine], but you are limited by your own emotional pattern. (II Corinthians 6:12)

THE THINKING OF CHRIST ADVANCES YOU IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. EMOTION DESTROYS YOU.

It's perfectly all right to well up with emotion when you hear "The National Anthem," see a rainbow, watch the birth of your child, win an event, or accept an award. It's right to feel overwhelming joy at the multiple facets of God's grace. But these emotions wash over you for a moment and are gone. They must never replace thinking as the basis for your actions. Any emotion that lasts more than a few moments should cause you to sit up and examine your life because emotion has replaced thinking in your soul.

CHAPTER NINE

SOUL ENEMY OF MATURE BELIEVERS: LACK OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

The final enemy we'll study is lack of spiritual discernment, which only attacks the soul of the mature believer who recognizes blatant sins and evil but lacks enough doctrinal knowledge to throw light on the tricky nuances of both. Just when you feel confident that you recognize sin and evil, Satan attacks from your blind side. He gives you many innocuous choices, only one of which fully glorifies God. If your soul isn't firmly grounded in Bible doctrine, you will be tempted to take a path that veers only slightly from the true north of divine viewpoint. (Joshua 23:6) You will have committed no sin or evil but will have lost an opportunity to glorify God. You will have failed to take the final step in the spiritual life, being occupied with Jesus Christ so that every thought, word, and action are the best possible in every circumstance. (Psalm 36:9) A shadow of Satan's thoughts will have momentarily dulled your spiritual discernment of the Truth of God.

Know that wisdom is sweet to your soul. If you find it,
you will have a future, and your hope will not be cut
off. (Proverbs 24:14)

Spiritual discernment²³ is the eyes of the soul, seeing the world as God sees it, not through the distorted, warped eyes of mankind. (Remember that both unbelievers and carnal believers arrogantly believe that they see the world with perfect clarity; instead they are stupidly enthralled by Satan's lies.) When we have enough Bible doctrine in our souls to have spiritual discernment, we not only appreciate the Truth of God's Word but also recognize Satan's lies and appreciate the difference. We accept the evaluation of the mirror of the Word of Truth, not that of the world or our emotions.

²³God calls the ability to discern the shadows of sin and evil AISTHESIS in the original Greek of the Bible. (Philippians 1:9)

LEARN TO DISCERN GOOD, BETTER,
BEST, AND THEN TO CHOOSE BEST.

The authors of Proverbs beautifully summarized spiritual discernment:

To know wisdom and instruction; to discern wise counsel; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the naïve; to give to the youth both knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counseling [Bible doctrine] . . . Reverential respect for the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [AISTHESIS]. (Proverbs 1:2–5, 7a)

Happy with the happiness of God are those who find wisdom and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver; and her revenue, better than gold [epignosis²⁴ doctrine in the soul]. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand, and in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peaceful [tranquility of soul]. She is like a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Those who hold her fast are called happy. (Proverbs 3:13–18)

Think of it this way: When your soul reaches the elevated status of spiritual discernment, you readily see Satan's traps. You not only differentiate between right and wrong and between human and divine good, but you recognize that which is not bad or good but merely a waste of time. You discern good, better, and best and always choose best. You make all decisions based on their eternal ramifications, not the false promise of earthly pleasure, satisfaction, or help. You choose God's way, the straight way, avoiding every innocent but interesting side road,

²⁴EPIGNOSIS is the Greek word meaning Bible doctrine that has become Bible knowledge in the soul. GNOSIS is the Greek word meaning information taken in but not believed or used. GNOSIS is taken into the soul and becomes EPIGNOSIS through faith.

intent only on reaching your objective as quickly as possible: Maximum glorification of God. (Micah 3:9)

**TO REACH YOUR POTENTIAL,
YOU MUST THINK DIVINE VIEWPOINT.**

Even when you reach spiritual maturity and discernment, you will make mistakes because you have a Sin Nature. Those mistakes won't be major in themselves, but they can slowly accumulate into major distractions from the spiritual life. You can accumulate so much human viewpoint garbage in your soul that you become accustomed to its stink, eventually deciding it smells soooo good.

- Your friends will be “nice,” but their lack of spiritual focus will distract you from your spiritual life.
- Your time will be spent doing things which aren't wrong but which take time from the daily intake of Bible doctrine.
- You won't be sinning in your decisions, but because they are not the best decisions, they will create opportunities for Satan to distract and destroy you.
- Soon you will be making thoughtless, impulsive decisions made without a doctrinal foundation. Such decisions are sin. They slowly accumulate into a forceful magnet for other sins.
- Without spiritual discernment, you can't help but be gullible, tactless, and impulsive—the perfect description of anyone easily swayed by emotion. (Psalm 73:22)
- “It feels right” becomes your motto as you slowly take yourself off the true course of the spiritual life.
- You waste time on the nonessential because the truly important is no longer readily apparent to you.
- You either stop listening to doctrine completely or miss hearing so often that your rate of forgetting Bible doctrine exceeds your rate of learning.

**YOUR RATE OF LEARNING DOCTRINE
MUST EXCEED YOUR RATE OF FORGETTING
IF YOU DESIRE TO EXECUTE THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.**

. . . It is hard to explain [Bible doctrine] since you are deficient in the hearing department . . . Solid foods

[advanced doctrines] are for spiritually mature believers who, because of practice, have their perception properly trained to discern the difference between good and evil. (Hebrews 5:11b, 14)

The believer *without* spiritual discernment makes many right choices but blunders into situations that threaten his soul. The believer *with* spiritual discernment automatically glorifies God by making the best choices in life. The volition of his soul is motivated by a vast encyclopedia of God's viewpoint obtained through years of the consistent, daily study of God's thinking, the Bible. His soul is no longer dominated by his own thoughts and tainted with emotion and the thinking of the world but is filled with God's perfect viewpoint.

Whoever loves disciplined instruction [whoever makes the daily intake of Bible doctrine his number one priority] loves spiritual discernment. Whoever hates reproof [from the Bible] is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1)

God is blunt, isn't He? Either you love His Word and learn it daily, or you are stupid. God doesn't negotiate or compromise the Truth.

YOU ARE EITHER FILLING YOURSELF WITH DIVINE VIEWPOINT, OR YOU ARE STUPID.

Are all kinds of things permitted to me? Yes. But not all things are profitable or beneficial for me to do. I must not abdicate my spiritual freedom by becoming enslaved to any of these things. (I Corinthians 6:12)

All things [which are not sin] are lawful for me, but all things are not beneficial. All things [which are not sin] are permitted of me, but all things do not edify my soul. (I Corinthians 10:23)

The spiritually discerning believer knows that many things are not sinful, but because they distract from reaching maximum glorification of God, he chooses not to think or do them. True spiritual discernment is being able to choose the right course of action among a number of

courses, choosing that which is most fitting in a particular situation. God promises that this wisdom is available to all believers if they will just get serious about learning God's will for every aspect of their lives.

Wisdom shouts in the street. She lifts her voice in the town center. (Proverbs 1:20)

You can be sitting in church, dressed in your Sunday best, a smile on your face, and not a word of doctrine is penetrating your thick soul unless you are eager for it. When you desire the sweet refreshment of God's Word, it doesn't whisper in your ear. It shouts—clearly, enthusiastically, and succinctly!

**YOU ARE AS SPIRITUALLY INTELLIGENT AS
YOUR POSITIVE VOLITION WILLS YOU TO BE.**

Brick by brick you erect a doctrinal mansion in your soul. You begin with a foundation of basic doctrines. You listen day after day, week after week, year after year; and slowly your spiritual mansion grows. At times, you will still lean a little too much toward one solution, not recognizing that the best solution is just a tad the other way. The pull of any remaining human viewpoint garbage in your soul will shadow God's solution with a smidgen of man's solutions coupled with emotion. You may not sin or commit evil, but you miss the bullseye of the best decision, the one based on the whole of Christ's thinking stored in your soul.

**ALL DIVINE SOLUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE
SOUL AND HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN THE BIBLE.**

When spiritual discernment finally completes your mansion, you no longer feel overcome by life's decisions. Instead, you are calm and competent, sure in your soul because God's inerrant Word backs every decision, important and trivial. You discern that which is appropriate in God's sight, not merely the "okay" or "not wrong."

The soul of the spiritually intelligent seeks spiritual discernment, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.
(Proverbs 15:14)

Understanding Your Soul

The souls of the discerning persons seek knowledge,
and wise men seek understanding. (Proverbs 18:15)

Don't despair of completing your own soul-mansion of divine riches. (II Corinthians 3:11–16) If you continue taking in doctrine daily, you will continue manufacturing the bricks for advancement in the spiritual life; and eventually you will plant the flag of spiritual discernment on the highest tower of your soul, which will then be filled to overflowing with the thinking of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

By wisdom, a mansion is built; and by understanding,
it is established; and by spiritual discernment, the
rooms of that house are filled with all kinds of precious
and pleasant riches. (Proverbs 24:3–4)

The light of Christ's thinking will shine into every nook and cranny of your soul, dispelling all worldly shadows. Every devilish stratagem of Satan and his cohorts will be exposed. You will recognize his power to deceive, distort, and glamorize; but the doctrine guarding your soul will be stronger than Satan's best shot, giving you the knowledge necessary to resist even his most subtle temptations. The filling of the Holy Spirit will provide more than enough power to keep sin, evil, and emotion at bay.

That He would—once and for all—give you on the basis of the riches of His glory to become empowered with divine power by means of His Spirit in your inner person [the soul] so that Christ may be at home in your souls by means of doctrine when you have been firmly rooted [rooted so you can't be upturned] and established in a secure place by agency of reciprocal love,²⁵ so that you may use the power to understand with all believers, what is the width, length, height and depth, and thus to learn to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled up, resulting in all the fullness of blessing from the source of God. Now to Him [God the Father] who is able to do

²⁵God has always loved us with a perfect love. Bible doctrine firmly planted in our souls allows us to reciprocate that love.

Lack of Spiritual Discernment

infinitely more than all we could ask for ourselves or even begin to imagine on the basis of the power which is working for us, to Him, be glory by means of the Church by agency of Christ Jesus with reference to all generations of this unique age of the ages. Amen. (Ephesians 3:16–21)

The believer with spiritual discernment puzzles unbelievers and carnal believers, who judge him by the slick standards of Satan and the world. (I Corinthians 11:15) God's standards are infinitely different from those of mere man. Until you attain and retain spiritual discernment, you belong to the category of mere man.

Remember: Satan never concedes defeat. Your mansion of spiritual strength, values, and virtue will begin crumbling the moment you stop taking in Bible doctrine. The flag of spiritual discernment will be the first to fall. Suddenly, your soul will be awash in the human viewpoint garbage of the world.

Have nothing to do with worldly myths [false doctrines] fit only for the godless and gullible, but discipline yourself for the purpose of your spiritual life. (I Timothy 4:7)

Hang on tight to the doctrine in your soul. Protect it from every enemy so that you can grow in grace and the knowledge of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, (II Peter 3:18) whose grace and knowledge you must have in order to discern His will for your life. (Psalm 25:21; 119:9–11; Proverbs 2:11; Ecclesiastes 7:12)

Get wisdom, and with all your getting, get insight! Do not forget or turn away from the words I speak. Do not forsake her [wisdom], and she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. Exalt Bible doctrine, and wisdom will exalt you [with the highest and best]. She will bring you honor because you embrace her. Wisdom will place on your head a crown of grace. She will bestow on you a glory crown. (Proverbs 4:5–9)

Understanding Your Soul

The wisdom of God, which can be obtained only through the daily study of His Word, will crown you with glory both now and in eternity.

CHAPTER TEN

THE SICK SOUL

What happens if you continually wave the white flag of surrender to the enemies of your soul and you refuse to accumulate Bible doctrine in your soul? Obviously, you won't have a soul focused on Jesus Christ. Instead, your soul will sicken from believing the lies of that wily genius Satan and his minions, both human and demonic. Just as you can have a diseased heart, spleen, or liver, so, too, you can have a sick soul.

**SALVATION IS THE SOLUTION TO THE ETERNAL
PROBLEM BUT DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY BRING
WITH IT THE SOLUTION TO LIFE.
BIBLE DOCTRINE IN THE SOUL DOES.**

The first symptom of a soul under the control of the Sin Nature is an overwhelming stench. Human viewpoint garbage always stinks, and the Sin Nature delights in a diet of pure, unadulterated garbage, the more reprehensible the better.

In reference to your former manner of life, lay aside your old self [the Sin Nature], which is being corrupted in accordance with the deceitful desires.

(Ephesians 4:22)

THE SOUL SEWAGE OF HUMAN VIEWPOINT STINKS!

Let's get one thing straight. Garbage isn't just those sins that we love to hate, such as murder, fornication, drunkenness, and filthy conversations. It's not just arrogance, bitterness, and jealousy. Human viewpoint garbage is anything contrary to the Word of God, the thinking of Christ, and God's policy of grace, anything which advances Satan's agenda. It's the sweet song that says anything that feels good must be right, the news commentator who says that criminals aren't evil

but merely misunderstood, and the TV show whose engaging but unwed characters frolic in sex.

Human viewpoint garbage comes in enticing wrappers, many of them sweet and seemingly innocuous, just as sweet as the deceivers who promote them.

Such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder because 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 shall correspond to their deeds.

(II Corinthians 11:13–15)

**SATAN IS SWEET.
HE IS ALSO A SUPERB LIAR AND BRUTAL MURDERER.**

Satan is the master of deceit. Were he visible today, millions would be captivated by his charming personality and would vehemently deny his wickedness. Why is the Devil intent on revealing himself in the best possible light? Because he yearns to seduce as many followers as possible away from Jesus Christ, ever seeking to avert his inevitable doom in the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 19:10)

Beware of any thought that can't be supported by Bible doctrine as taught by a qualified pastor-teacher.

Finally, brethren, everything which is true [based on Bible doctrine], everything which is honorable [divine viewpoint], everything which is righteous, everything which is pure, everything which gives capacity for virtue love, everything which is commendable: if there is any virtue and anything worthy of praise [and there is in the spiritual life], concentrate on these things. Those things that you have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you [imparting peace to you].

(Philippians 4:8–9)

Do yourself a favor and protect your soul from believer friends who have chosen to take the sin road. For sure, don't go down the road of life with unbelievers. You can be certain of their ultimate destination; and if you choose to ride with them, along the way to a premature death, you will pick up a debilitating sickness of soul, which won't kill your eternal destination but sure enough will destroy any hope for spiritual rewards either on earth or in Heaven. (II Corinthians 6:14–17)

**CAN YOU STOP ADVERSITY FROM OCCURRING? NO.
CAN YOU STOP ADVERSITY FROM CAUSING
STRESS IN YOUR SOUL? YES.**

Everyone will have pressures in life, lots of pressures. Satan's world is pressure filled. That's been true since Adam and Eve first sinned, and it will remain that way until Christ returns.²⁶ You must be vigilant so that the inevitable pressures and adversities of life don't become stress in your soul. Let's repeat that: Adversity is inevitable. Stress is optional.

**DON'T LET INEVITABLE OUTWARD PRESSURE
BECOME SOUL-SICKENING STRESS.**

Adversity (pressure) is what life does to you, everything from a dishwasher that doesn't work to someone who cuts you off in traffic to a mean boss to an illness to the death of a loved one. Stress is what you do to your own soul. You allow your malfunctioning dishwasher, a mass of metal and wire, to make you mad or frustrated or depressed. And if the dishwasher doesn't do it, the repairman not coming on time does! You allow the jerk in traffic to ruin your day. You gossip about your mean boss, try to get yourself promoted in spite of him, or seethe because he makes you soooo mad. You get depressed about an illness or ask God why this had to happen to you or to someone you love. You decide your loved one would still be alive if only they'd seen the doctor sooner, had a more reliable car, or done this and not that. (All of these are evil thoughts because God doesn't make mistakes, and He cer-

²⁶"Christ returning" refers to the Second Advent, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium.

tainly doesn't mess up the time or manner of anyone's death. Everyone dies at the right time and in the right manner because God's plan is flawless. Let me repeat—God never makes mistakes.)

In all these examples, you have allowed the inevitable adversities of life to become sewage in your soul. Enough sewage, and your soul explodes into messy fragments of arrogance, discontent, depression, and bitterness. Not every soul reaches the extreme dysfunction of fragmentation at which point the build-up of human viewpoint garbage destroys the sanity of the soul, but sin always leaves its mark on the soul and sometimes on the body.

NOTHING HURTS THE SOUL MORE THAN STANDING ALOOF FROM GOD.

THE BRUISED SOUL: Some believers don't wait long to acknowledge their sins to God; therefore, they avoid sickening their souls; however, no sin is without consequences. Sin leaves a mark like a bruise. Your soul has taken a hit and shows it.

A prudent man sees evil and hides himself. The naïve man keeps on going and pays the penalty. (Proverbs 22:3)

Prudence means being careful in discerning long-term consequences. You need to understand that some sins have longer-lasting consequences than others. That child you hold in your arms as a result of having sex outside marriage is one of those lasting consequences, but so is the invisible but permanent damage done to your soul by any type of fornication. God is especially harsh in His punishment of sex outside marriage because such lack of self-discipline leads directly to the destruction of the family.

Arrogance is an invisible sin that receives maximum discipline from God because arrogance draws other sins to it like a malignant magnet. When filled with the sin of arrogance, the soul rapidly degenerates from bruising to sickness to fragmentation to the sin unto death.

Therefore, submit yourselves to God [by studying Bible doctrine every day]. Hold your ground against the Devil, firm in your faith [Bible doctrine], and he will fall back from you [and not attack you because of

The Sick Soul

your armor of light]. Draw near to God [by executing the spiritual life], and He will draw near to you. Wash your hands [acknowledge your sins to God often and consistently], you sinning ones. [The cleansing of the hands is a metaphor for acknowledgement of sin as compared to the full body wash of salvation.] Purify your hearts, you double-minded ones! (James 4:7–8)

A double-minded believer tries to convince himself that Bible doctrine and human viewpoint garbage can coexist. He likes his brand of sin and wants to hang on to it, but he also wants to pat himself on the back for giving time, money, or emotional fervor to God. He wants to be part of the world, doing Satan's bidding, but receive rewards from God. He can't! God isn't blind. Far from it! He sees into every hidden motive of your soul.

Sin and divine good can't share your soul. You are either 100% for God or 100% for Satan. God doesn't deal in wishful thinking. He condemns the double-minded believer who doesn't awaken to his sins.

NO MEDICINE CAN HEAL THE SOUL OF A BELIEVER NEGATIVE TO BIBLE DOCTRINE.

THE SICK SOUL: When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you are purified with the purity of God, able to discern right and wrong. The light of Truth shines in your soul. But when you turn from God and His Word, darkness covers your soul bringing soul sickness with it. A soul sickens when sin is added to sin, and none are confessed to God. A sick soul is without the soul-health of the filling of the Holy Spirit but hasn't reached the point of the sin unto death. A sick soul feels the twinges of the conscience, but these wake-up calls from the Holy Spirit become weaker over time because perpetual sin has seared the conscience. (II Timothy 4:2)

The soul [when controlled by the Sin Nature] is more deceitful than anything else and is incurably bad. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

As a soul loses health, human viewpoint garbage denies more and more soul-space to the necessary nutrients of God's Word. Over time, personal sins, human good, and evil sicken the soul to death.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those without purity of conscience, the corrupt and unbelieving, everything looks impure because both their minds and consciences are defiled. (Titus 1:15)

THE ANESTHETIZED SOUL: No doubt, when you visit the dentist, he uses a local anesthetic so that you feel no pain as he works. Your soul, too, can become anesthetized to the pain of sin and evil. Your conscience can become so clogged that it no longer warns you about your enemies. You begin thinking evil is good, good is evil, wrong is right, and right is wrong. You do so for so long that your soul no longer defends itself from the assaults of its enemies but actually welcomes them. Through your own negative volition, you have anesthetized your conscience. You have become a soul zombie, superficially sustained by human viewpoint garbage. Because your soul needs the nutrition of sound Bible doctrine, you waste away, assuring yourself that you feel fine, and before you know it, you are staring death in the face and scared to death of dying.

DYING FOR THE CARNAL BELIEVER IS NEVER PLEASANT.

All of a sudden, the soul's anesthetic wears off, and the carnal believer reels in pain under the failure of his spiritual life. He dies a miserable death because he lived a miserable life, gorging his soul on human viewpoint garbage rather than the sustaining Word of God.

THE RUNAWAY SOUL: When a believer continually sins without acknowledging those sins to God, he has chosen to run away from God and the spiritual life. He has chosen to use his own power and knowledge instead of the power of the Holy Spirit and the divine viewpoint of God's Word. The longer he stays away from Bible doctrine, the deeper his soul becomes mired in human viewpoint garbage and the more difficult for him to return to the spiritual life.

In the parable of the prodigal son, God gives a perfect example of

a runaway soul. (Luke 15:11–32) After the prodigal son deserted his father, he descended into the spiritual void to the point that

He continually longed to fill his belly with the husks,
which the swine ate, but no man gave him anything.
(Luke 15:16)

Choosing to eat pig swill rather than acknowledge his sins to God—boy, is that stupid, but stupidity is exactly the mental state of any sin-laden believer. He has spent so much time telling himself he is brilliant to be out on his own, blazing new trails of self-reliance, that he fails to note that his self-chosen trail ends in a nauseatingly smelly pigpen. And he smells disgustingly worse than the huge hogs wallowing with him! (Ephesians 4:18)

NO BLINDNESS IS BLACKER THAN SOUL BLINDNESS.

We note in this parable that the father, an analogy to God the Father, continued to love his runaway son with a perfect love. He welcomed him back with joy and ceremony. This glorious welcome was possible only after the son recognized his sins and acknowledged them to the Father.

A runaway soul must choose through positive volition to go back to God and learn Bible doctrine daily, knowing that by running away from truth he will eventually forget all previously learned doctrine. God will prepare for him the fatted calf—all the doctrine he cares to learn, but he has to choose to learn it. Every time he chooses the tempting path leading away from doctrinal knowledge, the road back to divine viewpoint becomes more blurred and shrouded in greater darkness and deeper sewage.

THE FRAGMENTED SOUL: The longer human viewpoint garbage and sin are in your soul, the more sewer gas your soul produces. You may know this interesting fact about sewer gas; if it builds enough pressure, it explodes into messy fragments. A soul fragmented by the sewer gas of perpetual sin is the result.

Keep in mind that we are talking about believers. You will have to continually remind yourself because a believer who remains out of fellowship with God looks, acts, and stinks just like an unbeliever. In Paul's letter to carnal believers at Corinth, he gave them the ultimate

insult: They were saved, true, but no one could tell because they still acted like unbelievers.

You are still out of fellowship! For since there is jealousy and strife among you, aren't you carnal? Of course, you are! And aren't you behaving not as men but as those who can't be distinguished from unbelievers? Of course, you are! (1 Corinthians 3:3a)

Sorry those of you who were saved years ago and are just now starting to be interested in God's Word—your soul stinks!!! You catch whiffs of the stink every time you feel fear, anger, moodiness, anxiety, bitterness, boredom, and guilt—any sin. You catch only whiffs because perpetual carnality has not only dulled your spiritual nose but also deadened your conscience. Evil or sinful thoughts have become evil or sinful actions which have become an evil and sinful lifestyle which has determined your pitiful destiny, a fragmented soul and the misery-of-soul inherent in it.

Because of a darkening of understanding (blackout of the soul²⁷), the perpetually carnal believer places himself under the power of his own negative volition. Darkness and ignorance coat his soul. Any attempt to bury the truth of God leads to uneasiness of soul, a mental unease that may lead to mental disease. At its worst, soul fragmentation becomes psychosis, neurosis, and complete mental breakdown. You, a member of the royal family of God through faith alone in Christ alone, can become as pitiful as the most worthless unbeliever. You can literally drive yourself crazy when you allow human viewpoint garbage to control your soul. No human solution can help the soul of a believer who lies to himself and believes the lies to the point of total irrationality.

DON'T LET YOUR NEGATIVE VOLITION DRIVE YOU CRAZY!

Needless to say, if your soul is fragmented, you are looking down the barrel of the sin unto death. You will be miserable while alive and

²⁷Eph 4:17-19 Blackout of the soul means that all doctrine has been blacked out through perpetual carnality. The soul is empty of doctrine (light) resulting in darkness. If the believer in this condition acknowledges his sins to God, he will have to relearn all doctrine. If he doesn't acknowledge his sins, he will die the sin unto death.

die miserably because you will be scared of life and scared of death. You might even say you will frighten yourself to death.

SCAR TISSUE OF THE SOUL: Suppose when you sin, you don't acknowledge that sin to God. You sin again. Again, you ignore God's mandate to confess your sins to Him. Again and again and again. The claws of sin are sharp, and time after time, they injure your soul. (Ephesians 4:17-24) As with any injury, gradually scar tissue develops. When it builds to the point of hardening your soul completely, God takes you out in the sin unto death. You don't die because of your sins but because of your continued refusal to execute the spiritual life. Because you aren't using divine solutions, God's only solutions to the problem of sin, you are in rebellion against His authority as expressly stated in the Bible. You no longer have the potential of glorifying Him on earth so He takes you home to Heaven. Satan has won the battle for earthly control of your soul even though your soul now resides in Heaven with God. Not a pleasant picture, is it? You have failed God and embraced Satan.

As you scar your conscience through continual sin, you lose your capacity to think and judge rightly. You justify your sinful lifestyle by admiring those who enjoy the same sins as you. Interestingly, you dislike both the Christian who is in fellowship (because deep in your soul you know you aren't) and the person, believer or unbeliever, whose sins are different from yours. For instance, if you are a moral sinner, you are "righteously outraged" by the goings-on of the immoral. You look down your nose at those who drink and chew and hang out with those who do. However, if you drink and chew, you poke fun at prissy dogooders who waste time on "religion." Both forms of sin, moral and immoral degeneracy, are equally abominable from God's viewpoint, but everyone prefers his own brand of sin. We're proud of what we are and not about to change. Scar tissue of the soul has blinded us to the true, miserable condition of our souls.

WE MANUFACTURE OUR OWN MISERY.

When your conscience is hardened through scar tissue, you are unable to recognize your own sins or feel compassion for the sins of others. You fill your soul with self-induced misery. Yes, you make yourself miserable, not the repairman whose shoddy work drives you nuts, not an unfair boss, not a spouse who doesn't live up to your expecta-

tions or fantasies, not lack of money, beauty, power, fame, or health. No circumstance causes your misery. You and you alone have chosen to leave God's path of righteousness and walk on shattered glass through flickering fire, which blazes more furiously the farther you wander from the Truth.

SOUL SORROW: Sometimes, your soul becomes heavy with grief, not because of scar tissue but because of the suffering or death of a loved one or your compassion for others who are suffering. (Mark 14:34) God commands such sorrow.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep [in your soul, not in public] with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)

However, be sure your sorrow isn't filled with bitterness, regret, guilt, or discontent. A mature believer is happy with the happiness of God even in the midst of terrible grief. His happiness is a soul happiness based on his understanding of God's unchanging love. (Ps 118:24) No circumstance in life, even the death of a dearly loved one, can take that happiness from him unless he allows it to leave through mental attitude sins.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH: An early death is the final consequence of perpetually unconfessed sins. The perpetually carnal believer dies because he clung to his sins rather than obeying God's command to confess them to God the Father. (1 John 1:9)

For if, after they have escaped the filthy things of the world through the rich knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again get entangled in them and succumb to them, their last state has become worse than their first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandments that have been delivered to them. They are illustrations of these true proverbs: "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow, after washing herself, wallows in the mire." (II Peter 2:20-22)

Emotion is the state of mind of any believer dying the sin unto death. (1 John 5:16) If he were thinking instead of emoting, he would be executing the spiritual life instead of dying the sin unto death.

THE SOUL IS THE STAGING AREA
FOR ALL RATIONAL THOUGHT.
EMOTION IS THE ENEMY OF THOUGHT.

Behold, happy is the man whom God reprimands; therefore, do not despise the discipline of the Almighty, for He inflicts pain [warning discipline²⁸], and He bandages the wound. He wounds [intensive discipline], and His hands heal. (Job 5:17–18)

God disciplines us because we are His children, and children need discipline to grow into responsible adults. Discipline is designed to awaken us to our sins and our need to obey God's commandments. Divine discipline is never pleasant because God always hurts us where we need to hurt most; however, if we understand doctrine, we are grateful for the discipline because God only disciplines those who are members of His royal family. (Hebrews 12:6) Those He disciplines He also heals if they so desire.

The one true God who girds me with strength and has removed any obstacles from my way, he gives my feet the agility of deer feet and enables me to negotiate rough terrain. He trains my hands for battle so that my arms can bend even a bow of bronze. He has made me secure in my salvation. His right hand has helped me. His doctrine has upheld me to the end. Yes, His discipline itself shall instruct me. (Psalm 18:32–35)

Discipline instructs only when the believer is in fellowship with God. Believers who refuse to learn from God's discipline die the sin unto death. God takes them out of this world earlier than if they had lived a spiritual life—and they hate and fear going.

²⁸Divine discipline comes in three stages, each intensifying as sins remain unconfessed: warning discipline (a bruised, sick, or anaesthetized soul), intensive discipline (soul fragmentation and scar tissue of the soul), and dying discipline (the sin unto death.)

Correction is grievous to the believer who forsakes the way [the spiritual life]; and the one who hates discipline will die [the sin unto death]. (Proverbs 15:10)

Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? (Ecclesiastes 7:17)

**BELIEVERS WHO DIE THE SIN UNTO DEATH
ARE UNHAPPY IN LIFE AND UNHAPPY IN DYING,
BUT THEY STILL GO TO HEAVEN.**

Jesus Christ said of a carnal believer dying the sin unto death,

It was better for him not to have been born.

(Matthew 26:24)

Our Lord was expressing compassion for this believer who, because he refused to live the spiritual life, created for himself an emotional hell on earth. He would suffer until he died the sin unto death, not because God didn't love him (God loves everyone with perfect love) but because he refused to recognize God's love and follow His grace solutions.

**GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU IS DOCUMENTED
IN SCRIPTURE AND DEMONSTRATED IN TIME.**

Any believer who doesn't awaken quickly to the absurdity of his own sinfulness will soon be face to face with the sin unto death. Please notice that all sin roads lead to death. Sin is a dead end street that you don't want to take! Sometimes, the road of sin is short and sometimes long, but a miserable death always lies in ambush at the end.

Before leaving the subject of the sin unto death, you need to believe completely that God, through his omniscience, has chosen the perfect time for everyone to die. No one will die a second before that time or a second after because God in His omnipotence personally guides the soul of every believer from earth to Heaven. However, because perpetually carnal believers have chosen through negative volition to defy God and His plan and have chosen instead Satan's plan of sin and evil, God removes their souls from earth and calls them to Heaven earlier than if they had chosen to obey Him. God's timing is perfect; our volition is at fault.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TREATMENT FOR A SICK SOUL

Even though the power of the Holy Spirit is given to you at salvation, your spiritual enemies still camp around your soul, trying to gain admittance. You still have volition. At some point, your volition will surrender to one of its enemies. Maybe you will commit a sin that is as obvious to you as to everyone else, such as gossiping, getting drunk, or having sex with someone other than your spouse. Maybe you will listen to the siren song of a subtler enemy and decide you aren't interested in learning about God. Maybe you will become proud you are a Christian, forgetting that Christ did everything and you did nothing. No matter which soul enemy tricks you, the consequences are the same. You have kicked the Holy Spirit out of your soul and invited the Sin Nature to take His place.

Your conscience immediately kicks into overdrive, and you feel awful! You wish that you hadn't done whatever you did, but once you have committed a sin, wishes do you no more good than they do the unbeliever once he dies and reaches Hell. Through a bad decision, you have deserted God, but He hasn't deserted you. He never deserts you. He has given you a simple grace procedure to refresh your soul. This procedure is rebound,²⁹ a word which connotes the process of bouncing back from the soul injury or illness caused by sin.

Several terms in the Bible refer to rebound:

- Acknowledge your sins. (Psalm 32:5)
- Humble yourself. (Matthew 18:4; Luke 13:11; II Corinthians 7:14; James 4:10; I Peter 5:5)
- Present yourself to God. (Romans 6:13)
- Present your body as a living and holy sacrifice. (Romans 12:1)
- Judge yourself. (I Corinthians 11:31)
- Lay aside the old self. (Ephesians 4:22)
- Arise from the dead (spiritually dead through unconfessed sin.) (Ephesians 5:14)

²⁹The Christian's recovery system from sin is called rebound, meaning to acknowledge your sins to God. (I John 1:9) For more information, read *Rebound and Keep Moving* and *Rebound Revisited* by R. B. Thieme, Jr., who first defined "rebound" in this way.

- Set aside every weight. (Hebrews 12:1)
- Be in subjection to the Father of Spirits. (Hebrews 12:9)
- Lift up the hands that hang down. (Hebrews 12:12)
- Make a straight path. (Hebrews 12:13)

REBOUND IS YOUR INSTANT SPIRITUAL RECOVERY PROCEDURE.

The main rebound verse is I John 1:9.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive those sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing. (I John 1:9)

The solution to all sin is rebound, whereby, in the thinking of your soul, you acknowledge your sins to God the Father, not to anyone else. He forgives the sins you name and purifies you from all unrighteousness (any sins you have forgotten or don't realize are sins.) You are immediately back in fellowship with Him and filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit controls your soul, and you are able to begin recovering from human viewpoint, the thinking of the world.

If you decide not to heed the promptings of your conscience to rebound, you fail God's plan, and your soul is burdened with the consequences of that failure. Worse, the Sin Nature still commands your soul until you finally rebound or die the sin unto death. Those are the only choices when you sin: Rebound and keep advancing in the spiritual life or die the sin unto death. You would think every believer would rebound, but the majority of Christians don't bother to learn about it, much less use it.

IF YOU SIN, YOU HAVE THE PRIVACY OF YOUR SOUL IN WHICH TO REBOUND.

Because God is perfect righteousness and justice, He must punish you for kicking out the Holy Spirit and retreating from the spiritual battlefield. His punishment serves the additional purpose of encouraging you to "renounce your evil ways." Hit a stubborn mule enough times with a two-by-four, and he will decide to move. (Psalm 32:9) God will continue hitting you mightily until you wake up, rebound, and move ahead toward spiritual discernment and maximum glorification of God.

Rebound is the solution upon which all other divine solutions³⁰ depend; therefore, you can easily understand Satan's unrelenting attempts to convince you that your little sin doesn't matter, it can't really be a sin, or you might as well wait until you have finished sinning before you confess this insignificant one—which may not be a sin anyway. (Psalm 19:12–13) Don't be fooled! If you feel the slightest twinge of your conscience, you have sinned, and God the Holy Spirit is graciously prodding you to awaken to your failure. Listen to your conscience and rebound immediately. In the privacy of your thinking, agree with God that your actions, words, or thoughts were wrong.

REBOUND IS THE FIRST STEP IN TREATING A SICK SOUL.

The process of rebound consists of four steps:

1. Name your sin to God the Father. (1 John 1:9) Without this step, reentry into the spiritual life is impossible.
2. Isolate your sin. (Hebrews 12:15) Don't add sins such as bitterness, anger, self-pity, or guilt to your original sin.
3. Forget your sin. (Philippians 3:13) Once you have confessed your sin(s) to God the Father, don't think about them. Put them out of your mind.
4. Move on in the spiritual life. (Philippians 3:14) Now that you are back in the spiritual life, continue learning and utilizing Bible doctrine.

Listen to Paul's words of rejoicing to Corinthian believers who rebounded.

I rejoice now, not because you were made sad [anguish of divine discipline] but because you were distressed as God would have it, resulting in a change of mind,

³⁰You can't reach spiritual maturity and finally maximum glorification of God unless you know and use the divine problem-solving devices, which are explained in detail in His Word. They give the strength to face adversity and soul sickness. The ten problem-solving devices are Rebound (1 John 1:9); the Filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18); Faith-Rest (1 Peter 5:7); Grace Orientation (11 Timothy 4:17, Acts 7:60); Doctrinal Orientation (Luke 4:4); a Personal Sense of Destiny (Philippians 1:23); Personal Love for God the Father (Matthew 22:37); Impersonal Love for All Mankind (1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9); Sharing the Happiness (+H) of God (Jeremiah 15:16); Occupation with Christ (Philippians 1:21). To learn more about God's problem-solving devices, read *Christian Suffering* by R. B. Thieme, Jr.

resulting in a way of thinking which led to a decision to rebound . . . For the sadness as God would have it produces a change of mind, resulting in deliverance [from the anguish of being out of fellowship]; but the distress of the world brings about death [the sin unto death if the believer doesn't rebound].

(II Corinthians 7:9a, 10)

Without rebound, you build a stinking pile of human viewpoint garbage, which threatens to harden your soul (Ephesians 4:18) and then rot your body in the sin unto death. (I John 5:16) Rebound isn't inevitable because it is a matter of volition, and we can be downright stupid when sin gets its claws into our souls. We can and, too often, do choose not to name our sins to God the Father.

**IF YOU SKIP REBOUND,
NO OTHER SOLUTION REMAINS.**

God never tires of hearing your confession. He never tires of forgiving the sins you acknowledge to Him.

Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

(Romans 5:20b)

How can a soul which, at the moment of salvation, is filled with the Holy Spirit and living the spiritual life slide into the void of darkness? Sin and evil are the answers, but lack of rebound is the real culprit.

When you rebound, human viewpoint garbage is slowly replaced by Bible knowledge, and your soul's focus will be limited to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Slowly, your soul will heal. As with any healing, it may be painful at first. You may have to make gut-wrenching decisions, including removing yourself from the temptations of old friends, comfortable hangouts, and tantalizing habits. Healing a hurting soul takes time and determination. It takes doctrine after doctrine after doctrine, day after day after day.

You know the immediate solution to any sin is rebound. You know the long-term solution: The daily intake of Bible doctrine into your soul, pushing out the darkness of human viewpoint garbage to allow in the sweet light of the Truth.

REBOUND MUST BE USED EVERY TIME YOU SIN.

God always equates sin and evil to darkness. If you think back to the times you were out of fellowship with God, you will remember that darkness covered your soul. You felt smothered by it. That weight was scar tissue being added to your soul with each new sin. If you never rebound, you enter the void, swirling down and down into impenetrable darkness and ultimately a miserable death.

UNCONFESSED SIN PUTS YOU IN THE VOID.

For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Stop involving yourself in the barren production of darkness, but rather, to a greater degree, expose them because the hidden things, which they do, are shameful even to mention. But everything which is exposed under the scrutiny of light is revealed as its true source and nature; therefore, he said, “Awake you who sleep [believers who are out of fellowship and not learning Bible doctrine or who are not aware of the spiritual life] and arise from the dead [temporal death: being out of fellowship with God through sin], and Christ will shine on you [through God the Holy Spirit guiding the believer with no unconfessed sin in his life].” (Ephesians 5:9–14)

The Old Testament believer David sinned mightily. When we look at his sins, especially the adultery and murder (II Samuel 11), we may be tempted to be appalled by the magnitude of them; God, however, called David “a man after His own heart.” Why did God feel special affection for this major league sinner? Because David always eventually recognized his sins and acknowledged them in full to His Heavenly Father.

David’s conscience smote him . . . So David said to the Lord, “I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, O Lord, please cause the iniquity of your servant to pass away because I have acted very foolishly.” (II Samuel 24:10)

We are sinners like David. Our sins may not be as blatant to other men as David's, but God sees them clearly and abhors them equally. He will consider you a person after His own heart if you, like David, are conscientious in acknowledging every sin to Him.

When David didn't rebound immediately after sinning, God punished him just as He punishes all believers who sin. When David continued to disobey God's mandate to rebound, God piled punishment on top of punishment. And it hurt! David described his pain and sorrow in detail so that we could use the same problem-solving device he used and avoid the sin unto death.

O Lord, do not continue to rebuke me in Your wrath. Don't continue to punish me in Your raging fury. For Your arrows [of discipline] have sunk deep into me, and Your hand whips me hard. My whole body is sick because of Your anger. There is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my sins are gone over my head [made me mentally off-balance]. As a heavy burden, they weigh too much for me to bear [because I am depressed]. My wounds grow smelly and fester. Because of my foolishness, I am bent over and greatly bowed down. I go mourning all day long. My loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am numbed with pain and badly crushed. I scream because of the anxiety of my soul. Lord, You know all my desire, and my groaning is not hidden from You. My heart throbs; my strength fails me: as for the light of my eyes [his personality: he was now like a zombie], it also is gone from me. Even my loved ones and friends keep their distance from my plague; and my kinsmen stand afar off. Those who seek my life lay traps for me; and those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction, and they devise treachery all day long. But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; and I, like a dumb man, do not open my mouth. Yes, I am like a man who does not hear and is incapable of arguing his defense. Yet in You, O Lord, do I hope. You will respond, O Lord, my God. For I said, "May they not gloat over me, who, when my foot slips, would arro-

gantly taunt me.” For I am about to fall, and my pain is continual. Therefore, I confess my iniquity [rebound]. I am concerned because my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 38:1–18)

GOD BY GRACE MAKES DISCIPLINE UNBEARABLE SO THAT WE WILL REBOUND.

How happy is he whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is pardoned [by the death of a substitute, Jesus Christ]. How happy is the person to whom the Lord never, ever imputes iniquity [intensive discipline] and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silence [didn’t confess my sins to God], my whole body began to waste away. I roared in pain all day long. Day and night, Your hand was heavy on me. My vitality was drained away by the intense heat of the summer. Then I acknowledged my sins to you, and I didn’t hid any. I made up my mind to confess rebellious acts to the Lord, and You forgave my sin.

(Psalm 32:1–5)

Note that David’s perpetual carnality harmed his body and soul equally. His description of divine punishment for unconfessed sins is graphic: His bones began to atrophy so that he was bent like an old man. He howled in pain day and night. He had no strength; his body sweated as if it were summer; and his stomach burned. He was mentally unbalanced. All enjoyment of life left him. His friends and family shunned him because he was so unpleasant, both physically and mentally.

David felt God’s hand of justice on him, and its weight was too much for him to support. At the depth of his despair, when his body was tortured with excruciating pain and his mind was filled with gloom and irrationality, a light of understanding finally switched on in his head. “I’m out of fellowship with God,” he thought. And then he confessed his sins, hiding none from God. Hiding sins from God is like hiding your body from yourself. Sins are there, as big as Goliath and twice as ugly—and Goliath was one ugly dude. God sees every one of them and is disgusted at your arrogance in trying to fool Him. (James 4:6) Don’t be disappointed because God’s omniscience makes it impossible for you

to get away with anything. Instead, thank God that He is with you, always knowing every nuance and need of your body and soul.

“Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?” says the Lord. “Don’t you know that I fill Heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24a)

David finally recognized his sins and confessed them to God. The relief was staggering. He was still in terrible pain, but the pain was bearable because God the Holy Spirit gave him the power and inner peace to bear it. His soul was at rest, and his thoughts were on His Lord, not on his body and its pain. Through the simple, grace process of rebound, David went from swaying over the abyss of the sin unto death to a super abundance of happiness in his soul, from soul fragmentation to soul health.

GOD TURNS DISASTER TO BLESSING WHEN YOU REBOUND.

All types of sin, those readily visible to others and those hidden in the recesses of your thinking, bear consequences; and all sins, if not confessed directly to God, lead inevitably to the sin unto death. Never underestimate the danger of a single sin. Just as an illness can come on quickly and escalate to death with frightening speed, so can a simple sin quickly overcome your soul, scarring it and causing death. Always rebound immediately before the virus of sin can completely contaminate your soul!

WHEN YOU SIN, THE SIN NATURE CONTROLS YOUR SOUL.

If you acknowledge your sins to God, the Holy Spirit is captain of your soul. If you don’t, the Sin Nature gleefully grabs your soul, sinking its talons deeper and deeper into your soul with every new sin.

Now then, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin [the Sin Nature], which dwells in me. For I know that noth-

ing good lives in me because I want to do good, but I find it difficult to do. (Romans 7:17–18)

We all will sin many times before we die even though our greatest desire is to stop sinning; therefore, God made rebound simple. Furthermore, Jesus Christ will be your personal Advocate if you will come through the door of rebound and put your trust in Him. (1 John 2:1) When you arrogantly decide to bypass God's open door and try the wall instead, you bloody your nose and get nowhere. Arrogance convinces you to ignore God's plan of rebound in favor of hanging on to your own puny power. You stand with blood dripping from your crooked nose, grin, and declare yourself happy and in control. Arrogance makes you not only stupid but blind and senseless as well!

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: Problem-solving device #2, the filling of the Holy Spirit, was given to you originally at salvation when God forgave every one of your pre-salvation sins. Your soul remained filled with the Holy Spirit until you sinned and forced Him to leave. When the Sin Nature controls your soul, the Holy Spirit can't, and you can't serve God.

Rebound and the filling of the Holy Spirit are inseparably bound together. You can't have the filling of the Holy Spirit unless you rebound. Without the filling of the Holy Spirit, you no longer have fellowship with God, the ability to understand God's Word, or the power to advance in the spiritual life and overcome life's adversities. Your soul is dead to sin.

Rebound allows you to eject sin and the Sin Nature from your soul and ensconce the Holy Spirit.

Keep moving forward in the spiritual life and the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will not carry out the lusts of the Sin Nature. (Galatians 5:16)

NO POWER IS GREATER THAN THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

God wants your soul to shine with His Word, but it can't on its own. The enemies of your soul are too powerful; therefore, God gives you a Helper, a Coach, a Mentor, God the Holy Spirit, who guides you and gives you the power necessary to repel your soul's enemies. (John 14:16)

Under the healing ministration of the Holy Spirit, who also provides the stamina and perseverance to advance in the spiritual life, your soul slowly regains its spiritual health and the glow of divine strength.

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TRIUMPH IN THE SOUL.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is described in several ways in the Bible:

- Walking by means of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16)
- Imitating Christ. (Ephesians 5:1)
- Being filled with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)
- Partakers of the divine nature. (II Peter 1:4)
- Walking in the light. (1 John 1:7)

The purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit is to provide the enabling power to execute the spiritual life. Jesus Christ in His humanity was the first Person to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He used the power of the Holy Spirit to withstand unparalleled pain during His life and especially on the Cross. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives you the same awesome power that allowed Christ to remain hanging on the Cross as God the Father ravaged His body and soul with the punishment for every sin in history. Think about that a moment. You, a helpless human being in a corrupting body, can use the same power as Christ! God the Holy Spirit imparts this power to you whenever you allow Him access to your soul by using rebound and thereby ejecting the Sin Nature and the sins festering in your soul.

But God has revealed them [His doctrines] to us by means of His Spirit; for the [human] spirit examines all things [the whole realm of Bible doctrine], even the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man [human phenomena], except the spirit [his thinking] of man, which is in him? So, too, no one knows the things of God [Bible doctrine], except by the Spirit of God. Now as for us we didn't receive the spirit of the world [human viewpoint garbage and human IQ], but the Spirit who is from God in order that we might come to know the things that are freely given to us by God, which things [Bible doctrine from the Word of

Treatment for a Sick Soul

God] we [pastor-teachers] also set forth, not by words which man's wisdom [human IQ, human cleverness] teaches, but by words which the Holy Spirit teaches: Comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the soul-
ish man [the unbeliever—unrenewed through the new birth and who, therefore, only has a body and soul without a spirit; or the carnal believer who is not filled with the Holy Spirit] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness to him. Neither can he understand them [all Bible doctrine] because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:10–14)

Because God is gracious and loves us with a perfect love, He insures that we can hear His voice. The filling of the Holy Spirit allows us, regardless of our human IQ, to understand God's plan and purpose for our lives.

The choices are simple: Acknowledge your sins to God the Father and thereby harness the unending power of the filling of the Holy Spirit or choose to continue in your sins, forcing your soul to whirl out of control until it plummets to the sin unto death. The choices are as plain as their consequences. Your volition determines your soul's destiny on earth and for eternity. You alone choose your path through life: The path of righteousness or the path of misery and the sin unto death.

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER TWELVE

GUARDING YOUR SOUL

Your soul is a battlefield, the most important one in this world. The irrational thinking of sin, evil, and emotion battle against the rational thinking of Bible doctrine. Both the Holy Spirit and Sin Nature want control of your soul. If you surrender to the sinful or evil intents of your Sin Nature, your soul is wounded and succumbs to soul sickness. Continued surrender without rebound makes you a casualty, a loser. You will go to Heaven because once you believe in Christ, you are always saved; but you will arrive as a prisoner of Satan and his evil world, not as a victorious combatant for God.

So, how can you guard your exquisitely vulnerable soul from the unrelenting attacks of its enemies? As is true for any soldier, you, a spiritual warrior, have weapons and armor; and because you are in full time Christian service, Jesus Christ, your Commander-in-Chief, orders you to put on the whole armor graciously provided by Him. You can defy His orders but at the peril of your soul.

THE GREATEST CONFLICTS IN LIFE ARE CONFLICTS IN THE SOUL.

Finally, keep on being strengthened in the Lord even by means of the inner rule of His endowed power [the spiritual life given to every believer at the moment of salvation]. Pick up from the rack and put on for yourself the whole armor from God, in order that you may be able to hold your ground against the schemes of the Devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [human beings], but against principalities [the highest rank of the demonic army], against powers [lesser ranked demon officers—commissioned officers], against the world rulers of this darkness [ambassador demons who influence the rulers and decision-makers of the world], against the spirit-forces of evil in high

places [rank and file demons]. For this reason, pick up and put on the full armor from God in order that you might have the ability to resist in the evil day [the day of attack] and, having done everything, to stand firm against the forces of Satan. (Ephesians 6:10–13)

YOUR SOUL MUST BE EQUIPPED TO SUSTAIN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

You already know that the first step in arming your soul is rebound because rebound fills you with the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit without which you are defenseless against the devious, incessant onslaught of the Sin Nature, Satan, his demons, and the human viewpoint of the world. (Colossians 3:5–10) Through rebound, you take the right first step by laying aside your old self (the Sin Nature), but you don't want to spend every moment of the rest of your life rebounding. You want to serve God, not ping-pong from sin to rebound and back again. God makes this possible through a total suit of armor that protects your soul as you advance in the spiritual life, the invisible armor of Bible doctrine deposited in the mentality of your soul, protecting you from your enemies through knowledge of the Truth of God.

ARMING YOUR SOUL MEANS ESTABLISHING A BIBLICAL INVENTORY OF DIVINE THOUGHT IN YOUR SOUL SO THAT YOU CAN IDENTIFY YOUR OPTIONS AND CHOOSE WISELY.

We're going to examine that armor piece by piece so that you can wear it comfortably.

Stand firm, therefore, having buckled the belt of Truth around your waist . . . (Ephesians 6:14a)

Why does anyone wear a belt? To hold his clothes in place. The same is true of the belt of your spiritual armor. The Word of God, secured in your soul, holds the rest of your spiritual armor together, ready to protect your soul. Without knowledge of God's Word, the rest of your armor lies in a useless heap at your feet.

. . . also having put on the breastplate [body armor] of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:14b)

A breastplate protects your vital organs and allows you to survive every soul attack unscathed. God's righteousness is your spiritual breastplate. You received His righteousness the moment you were saved. You understand His righteousness when you understand His Word. When you recognize that you have His righteousness only because of His grace toward you, you in turn want to show that grace to others. Overtly, His righteousness manifests itself through your thoughtfulness of others, a relaxed mental attitude of live and let live, recognition and respect for the freedom and privacy of other members of the royal combat team, in short, in a nobility of soul which matches your noble station as a member of the royal family of God.

Jesus, therefore, was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue to learn My word [Bible doctrine], then you are truly disciples of Mine, and you shall know the truth [Bible doctrine], and the truth shall make you spiritually free." (John 8:31-32)

Bible doctrine in your soul makes you free to serve your Commander-in-Chief, Jesus Christ. His spiritual life gives you the spiritual freedom and power to advance to victory.

A SINGLE SUCCESS IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS NOT VICTORY. VICTORY COMES FROM CONSISTENT EXECUTION OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE UNTIL DEATH.

And having put combat shoes on your feet, with the equipment of the Gospel, even peace [reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ]. (Ephesians 6:15)

Imagine rushing into battle with bare feet! In minutes, you would be limping around, holding your bloodied toes. You would not only be a total failure as a soldier, but a laughingstock to both enemy and fellow soldiers. That's exactly the pain and humiliation you will suffer if you go into spiritual battle without understanding the Gospel, which

refers to the entire the Word of God because all of the Word focuses on Christ. You were saved by a simple act of faith, but that faith was based on a series of sacrifices made by your Savior. You have to understand those sacrifices if you are to successfully survive the attacks of sin and evil.

Jesus Christ set aside His deity and became humanity, suffering the same indignities that attack every human body. He chose to spend much time studying Bible doctrine to the point it filled His soul and gave Him the weapons needed to face His enemies. (If you have ever wondered why the Bible tells us little about the first thirty years of Christ's life, that's why. He was studying Bible doctrine to prepare Himself for the upcoming battle—actually an all-out war.) On the Cross, God the Father imputed every one of your sins—and those of everyone else—to Jesus Christ and then judged them. Jesus Christ died as a substitute for everyone, paying the price which God the Father exacted for our souls. Every word in the Old Testament looks forward to Christ's work on the Cross. Every word in the New Testament looks back at the Cross with emphasis on salvation first but with an in-depth study of the spiritual life, our place in God's plan, and the road to PLEROMA.³¹

EVERY WORD OF THE BIBLE IS IMPORTANT.

If you decide that you have sinned so horrendously that you are no longer saved, you are walking barefoot. If you try to work for your salvation, witnessing to a certain number of people or never missing church for fear you will loss your salvation, you are walking barefoot. If you think that you must walk an aisle, make Christ Lord, or have a heart belief to be saved, you are walking barefoot. If you reject God's surety that you are saved forever regardless of anything you do or don't do, you are walking barefoot. If you ignore or reject any part of God's Word, you are walking barefoot. With each failure to use God's Word, the pain intensifies until your feet no longer support you, and you crawl through life, wondering at the suffering that dogs your bloody trail.

³¹In the original Greek, PLEROMA means "all the fullness of God" and is a description of the Church Age believer who has reached occupation with Christ and maximum glorification of God. Reaching PLEROMA status should be the goal of every believer because PLEROMA is the highest level of spiritual attainment. God rewards the few believers who reach PLEROMA with the highest and best on earth and in Heaven, including a super-abundance of happiness.

Arrogance convinces you that you aren't to blame, and so you remain barefoot and miserable.

As you move through life, your responsibility is to be, as it were, on your feet, wearing God's combat boots, ready to meet and defeat every test and temptation for the Lord Jesus Christ. You can do so only if you know with certainty in your soul that you were saved through faith because Jesus Christ did all the work. You can do so only if your soul is saturated with God's Truth. Then and only then, will you have a peace that protects you from the tumult and attacks of this world.

Your boots of Bible doctrine remind you that salvation is possible in one way only: Faith in Jesus Christ. They remind you that one issue has priority after salvation—the absorption of Bible doctrine today, tomorrow, the next day, and the next. Satan gives no warning before he attacks. Your only defense is the continual intake of God's Word.

THE ARMOR OF GOD IS A REFLECTOR
OF DIVINE INTEGRITY AND A DEFLECTOR
OF SATANIC INGENUITY.

In every crisis of life, take up and wield the shield of faith [Bible doctrine] with which you will enable yourself to extinguish all of the flaming missiles of the Evil One [Satan]. (Ephesians 6:16)

Have you noticed a similarity in the components of your armor, that they all include having Bible doctrine securely guarded in the mentality of your soul? All sin and evil begin as thought; Bible doctrine in your soul shields you from all sinful and evil thoughts.

The "fiery darts" of Satan can attack in many guises, including fear, worry, doubt, boredom, loneliness, bitterness, disappointment, adversity, even prosperity. Some of these so-called darts will feel like hydrogen bombs as they explode in the weakest part of your soul, the part most vulnerable at that moment; but if you guard your soul with the shield of faith, remembering the doctrines stored in your soul, you can fend off any Satanic lie with the antidote of God's truth. Satan, for all his power, has no weapon powerful enough to destroy or even penetrate the shield of faith.

**JESUS CHRIST GIVES JOY.
SATAN IS A KILLJOY.**

And take on the helmet of salvation . . . (Ephesians 6:17a)

If you remember that your soul is in your thinking, you will readily understand the Lord's mandate to wear the helmet of salvation. The Bible discusses two types of salvation: Eternal salvation which occurs at the moment you believe in Christ as your Savior and temporal salvation which occurs as you execute your spiritual life to meet and overcome suffering. One salvation delivers you from the flames of the Lake of Fire; the other delivers you from the testings and temptations of life.

Let's go over that again. You are saved eternally at the moment you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior. You are saved (meaning delivered) temporally (while you are still on earth, before you go home to Heaven) every time you rebound and allow God the Holy Spirit to have dominion over your soul.

When you believe in Christ as your Savior, your ticket to Heaven is guaranteed. That helmet is in place forever. Your soul is protected forever. You don't have to worry about doing something so stupid that you lose your salvation. You are protected from fear of death and have the joy and security of knowing that God watches over you on earth and in heaven. Salvation, meaning deliverance, saves your soul during the time after salvation when you fight the good fight of faith. Take off your helmet, and the Sin Nature jumps into your soul. You stumble through life, afraid of living because you are afraid of dying.

Your thoughts must be focused on Christ. Only then can your helmet protect your soul from sinful and evil thoughts.

And take on . . . the sword from the Spirit, which is the
Word from God. (Ephesians 6:17b)

The sword of the Spirit is available to every believer through the filling of the Holy Spirit, which imbues the sword with power. If Jesus Christ had to rely entirely on the Holy Spirit to sustain His humanity so that He could execute the plan of God to its humiliating and pain-filled completion, and He did, how much more dependent are we on that power! We receive the filling of the Holy Spirit at salvation; we lose it through sin; and we regain it through rebound. What could be simpler!

By agreeing with God that we have sinned, we regain the most powerful weapon in the world, God's Truth.

The Word of God is constantly living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit and joints from marrow and is able to judge the thoughts and intents of the mind. No created being is exempt from its scrutiny, but everything is naked and exposed before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. (Hebrews 4:12)

Both believers and unbelievers have souls; therefore, the Word teaches us to distinguish between that which is soulish (a thought any unbeliever could have—human viewpoint³²) and that which is spiritual (a thought which comes from God—divine viewpoint.) God's Word, which enters your soul only through your human spirit, is perfect in the original languages; and in those languages it penetrates, divides, and distinguishes between the smallest distinctions of soul and spirit. Even as the secret to life is found in God's Word so also is the secret to power; therefore, you must believe the Word of God and appropriate its doctrines and promises into your soul in order to have divine power available for your life. If you are positive toward God's Word, it becomes a sword that is able to cut deeply into you for your benefit, changing your mental attitude and giving you lasting peace and contentment. Further, Bible doctrine defends you from the influence of Satanic doctrine and the temptations of sin and evil.

Guard your soul with all vigilance because out of it are the issues of life [Bible doctrine in the soul].

(Proverbs 4:23)

Even though God gives you a sword of power, He never commands anyone to attack Satan. Exactly the opposite! He gives every believer the necessary armor to protect his soul, not attack the enemies of his soul. Any attacking is God's prerogative. The Word of God, nestled in your soul, defends you from all enemies, both human and invisible. You

³²At the Judgment Seat of Christ, Jesus Christ will search your soul to judge its content, determining whether it is filled with divine viewpoint doctrine or human viewpoint garbage.

never need to defend the Word against those who defame it. The Word of God defends itself when you guard it in your soul and express its commandments in your life.

**EMOTION TURNS YOU INTO A COWARD IN A CRISIS.
BIBLE DOCTRINE IN YOUR SOUL MAKES YOU AN
INVISIBLE HERO.**

The principle of taking the defensive against Satan—not the offensive—cannot be overstated. You are to defend yourself through Bible doctrine. Leave in God’s hands any attack against Satan or those who advance his evil agenda..

“Vengeance is mine,” says the Lord, “and retribution. At the right time, their foot shall slip, for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending events are hastening on them.” (Deuteronomy 32:35)

Note again God’s first command to you, a spiritual soldier, in Ephesians 6:14. “Stand firm.” God doesn’t command you to attack the enemy. Instead, He commands you to hold your ground and leave the fighting to Him. Only when your soul is filled with His Word are you able to trust God completely in all things, including the destruction of all soul enemies.

**BY ARMING YOUR SOUL WITH BIBLE DOCTRINE,
YOU UNDERSTAND GOD’S WILL.**

Again, we look to David, one of the greatest believers of all time, who demonstrated this principle of complete trust. From his youth, David lived in vast fields, watching and protecting his father’s sheep. He also diligently studied God’s Word while alone under the stars. Because he trusted His Lord in all things, he was unafraid of the brutal Philistine warrior, Goliath, who threatened God’s people, Israel. David went before Saul, King of Israel, and volunteered to destroy this mere man who spoke against his Lord, the only God.

Then Saul clothed David with his own fighting attire and put a bronze helmet on his head. He also clothed him with armor. And David strapped the sword over his armor and tried to walk, but he was not used to them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot walk in this because I am not used to them." And David took them off. And he took his staff [his shepherd's crook] in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook and put them in the shepherd's bag, which he had in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine. The Philistine came closer to David, with the shield-bearer going in front of him. When the Philistine looked carefully at David, he despised him because he was just a youth, ruddy and handsome. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks [his shepherd's crook]?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods [demon gods]. The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the field." Then David replied to the Philistine, "You come against me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name [authority] of the Lord of the Armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. I will give the corpses of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the land so that all the earth may realize that there is a God in Israel, and 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 deliver you into our hands."

(1 Samuel 17:38-47)

David magnificently declared a comforting principle for the Christian life: The battle is the Lord's. Goliath was a mammoth of a man with hundreds of notches on his sword to match the hundreds of men he had slain. This human killing machine viewed life through man's eyes, and he laughed when he saw David, an untried youth barely old enough to

shave, marching toward him—and without any armor! Goliath laughed and then he died. David was protected with God’s invisible armor of the soul.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF GOD.

David was distinguished from his fellow Israelites (who were believers, by the way) by the doctrinal knowledge in his soul. The Israeli soldiers were clothed in intimidating armor and carried deadly swords, but they cowered with fear because their souls were filled with the human viewpoint garbage of the world. They saw a mammoth, murderous giant before them and quaked at the thought of becoming another notch on his sword.

David wasn’t captive to the fear of the world because he brought every thought into captivity in obedience to Christ. (Psalm 56:3–4; II Timothy 1:7) Good weapons and armor did not destroy Goliath. The power and grace of God did. (In case an evil thought is worming its way into your mind, I want to make a divine principle perfectly clear. God commands us to kill the enemy. (Deuteronomy 20:17, 20; Joshua 11:21–23; 14:11–15) David not only killed Goliath, but he lopped off his head and stuck it on a stake for everyone to see. Grisly, yes, but everyone who saw that head was reminded of God’s power and grace, and anyone who considered attacking Israel immediately changed his mind!)

David was fighting a champion backed by all of the powers of Hell, but as God’s servant, David possessed much greater strength, confidence, and wisdom because he was clothed with humility and divinely provided problem-solving devices. No weapon or armor forged by the world will ever replace or overcome the power of God. By refusing the armor of Saul, cowardly King of Israel, David rejected the worldly method of facing a crisis and preserved the grace of God in his soul. (Don’t let evil convince you that a soldier doesn’t need protection. Of course, he does! Commonsense alone tells you that. The principle is that a Christian who serves in the military must put on the invisible armor of God before donning the visible armor and weapons of man. In David’s case, the weapons were a simple slingshot and several smooth stones.)

Because David filled his soul with the doctrines of God, his life was filled with confidence, peace, and genuine happiness. This mature believer wrote,

Guarding Your Soul

The Lord is my allotted portion, my share, and my destiny. I have been given a prosperous inheritance. My assigned portion is pleasant. I will praise the Lord for His doctrine, even for the nights when my conscience rebuked me [because of unconfessed sin in his soul]. I have kept the Lord in mind continually. With Him beside me, I can't be disturbed. Therefore, my soul is glad, and my glory [a soul maxed out with Bible doctrine] rejoices. My body will dwell securely [without fear], for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol [death]. Neither will you allow your Holy One [Jesus Christ] to undergo corruption. You will make known to me the path of the spiritual life. In Your presence is complete happiness [sharing the happiness of God]. Pleasures forevermore are at Your right hand.

(Psalm 16:5–11)

Because David filled his soul with doctrine, he was clothed in an armor of light, the same protective armor God has prepared for all believers who love Him enough to learn His Word.

The night is far advanced, and the day has drawn near; therefore, it is time to lay aside the activities of darkness and to put on the armor of light. (Romans 13:12)

God, who is light, has given us the armor of light. When we know His Word, we have the means and power to do His will because we are clothed in His full armor.

Therefore, submit yourselves to God. [Execute the spiritual life. Study Bible doctrine daily.] Hold your ground against the Devil, firm in your faith, and he will fall back from you. (James 4:7)

You don't have the power to whip the Devil. He is unimaginably more powerful than any human being, but you can stand your ground against him and his followers³³ when you wear the armor of God, His Word,

³³The followers of Satan are both invisible-fallen angels called demons or evil spirits-and visible-those human beings who believe Satan's lies and advance his agenda, frequently unknowingly. Satan can only be in one place (unlike God who is everywhere)

because God and His Word are unimaginably more powerful than Satan.

**A BELIEVER WITHOUT BIBLE DOCTRINE
HAS A SOUL WITHOUT POWER.**

But I have this treasure [Bible doctrine in the soul] in an earthenware jar [a frail human body in which to fulfill the plan of God] in order that the superiority of the power may be of God and not of myself. I am completely pressed on every side but never pressed in. I am always perplexed [because of spiritual combat] but never to the point of utter despair. I am always being pursued but not deserted. I am frequently being knocked down but never knocked out. I am always carrying around in my body the state of death [the possibility of death] of Jesus so that in my body the spiritual life of Jesus may be clearly evident.

(II Corinthians 4:7–10)

God is the One who gave us bodies that are no more durable than clay pots. He is also the One who gave us the spiritual life of Jesus Christ so that we can overcome every attack on those frail bodies. Our power is in our souls, in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are nothing without Him. Only when we reach the point of complete dependence on God, only when we pick up and put on God's full armor, do we have the invincibility of His power. We become as David of old, able to confidently face even the most fearsome of enemies because we have clothed our souls in the invincible power of His Truth. (John 15:5–11, 18)

By using God's armor, we can march boldly into spiritual battle, confident that He will guide us to victory through the wealth of Bible doctrine guarded in our souls.

**THE CHRISTIAN MOTTO:
THROUGH CHRIST, I CONQUER.**

at once); therefore, he will give his personal genius to the most advanced believer. If you are in fellowship with God, you will definitely have demons looking for a wedge to drive into any miniscule opening in your spiritual armor, any anxiety, guilt, arrogance, discontent, etc.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DIVINE SOUL TESTING

When your soul is protected by the full armor of God, God the Father will begin testing you in order to strengthen your soul's muscles. God only tests a mature believer, one who rebounds when he sins and takes in more doctrine than he forgets. No believer can be tested when he is out of fellowship because he has already flunked the test. He has failed and is out of contention for the rewards awaiting those who execute the spiritual life to completion. He has chosen to flee the battlefield.

Only when the Holy Spirit is captain of your soul can you be tested, and God will test every believer who is advancing in the spiritual life. Because God is perfect justice, He will never test you in a unique or impossible-to-pass way.

No testing [undeserved suffering] has seized you that has not already been endured many times by others with divine power [the power of the spiritual life] and is common to all mankind. But God is faithful. He will not permit you to be tested beyond what you are capable of bearing, but with the testing [undeserved suffering for blessing] will also provide a solution [a way of escape through Bible doctrine], in order that you may be able to successfully endure it. (I Corinthians 10:13)

OUR TEST IS OPEN BOOK.

Testing is *undeserved* suffering. That makes sense because deserved suffering is discipline, designed by God to awaken you to your sins so that you will rebound and He can test and bless you through undeserved suffering. (Deuteronomy 8:23) You pass the test of undeserved suffering when you thank God for pain, sorrow, illness, poverty—for every suffering—because you know He wants only the highest and the best for you. Yes, the Bible commands you to thank God

for every seemingly bad circumstances He graciously allows to happen to you.

Let the brother of humble circumstances [the believer under testing] rejoice at the prospect of his imminent [and inevitable] elevation [if he passes the test].

(James 1:9)

Testing takes place in your soul because your soul stores your thinking. What you think is what you are. (Proverbs 23:7) Testing involves your thoughts first; therefore, you are able to pass more tests more easily when your soul is filled with Bible doctrine. The greater your knowledge of God's Word, the greater your success in keeping the Holy Spirit as captain of your soul.

Search me [through undeserved suffering], O God, and know my soul. Test me and know my thoughts and see if any wicked way is in me and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23–24)

Your pastor-teacher teaches divine doctrines; you are the one who stores them in your soul. (I Thessalonians 2:3–4) Your testing can be the incessant nipping of bedbugs, the smothering tentacles of an octopus, or the blood-dripping fangs of a man-eating lion charging directly toward you. It can be as simple as not gossiping with friends or as complex as not fearing as bombs explode on your house. God is all-powerful. No suffering is beyond His power if you “stand still and watch the deliverance of the Lord.” (Exodus 14:13)

YOU MUST BUILD THE ANSWERS TO GOD'S TESTS INTO YOUR SOUL.

The severity of your testing increases as your spiritual strength increases.

And in order that I should not begin to become arrogant [a potential arrogance problem because Paul knew so much doctrine] because of the extraordinary quality of the revelations given to me, I was given a thorn in

the flesh, an angel from Satan that he might torment me lest I should become arrogant. Concerning this [the thorn in the flesh], three times I implored [an intense appeal in prayer] the Lord that it might depart from me. [God did not take away the thorn because the thorn would be the source of tremendous blessing for Paul.] Then He [God] assured me, “My grace has been and still is sufficient for you, for the power [of the spiritual life] is achieved in the state of weakness [helplessnesses].” Most gladly, therefore, I will boast about my weakness in order that the power of Christ may reside in me. For this reason, I am content in weaknesses, in insults, pressures, persecutions, and stresses on behalf of Christ. For when I am particularly weak [helpless and know it], then I am particularly powerful [because I finally trust God and let Him take care of everything]. (II Corinthians 12:7b–10)

To the simple tests of everyday living, those that try your patience and sap your energy, are added the kamikaze attacks of major undeserved suffering. The more you advance in the spiritual life, the greater the attacks on your soul. Each attack successfully withstood by the armor of God increases your soul’s strength and provides greater potential for blessings now and rewards in Heaven. (Romans 5:3–5)

This brings you great joy although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials. Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (I Peter 1:6–7)

A BELIEVER’S INTEGRITY IS PROVEN WHEN A TEST IS PASSED BY EXECUTING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The Old Testament patriarch Abraham is a prime example of a believer triumphantly passing severe testing.

Abraham staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what God had promised God would perform. (Romans 4:20–21)

God presented Abraham, a mature believer, with a tremendous test of faith when He promised him a son by his own loins and from his wife Sarah. Abraham could have assumed that because he and his wife were old and sexually dead, obviously incapable of having children, God couldn't fulfill His promise. He could have failed the test completely at the first moment by thinking as man thinks. Instead, Abraham looked at the doctrine in his soul and realized God is not only faithful to keep His promises but has the power to fulfill even the impossible ones. Abraham didn't stagger under the absurdity of God's promise. He didn't look at the problem through the eyes of man. Instead, the doctrine in his soul gave him the faith to trust God completely. God supplies sufficient grace to pass any test.

Abraham's son, Isaac, became living proof of the power and grace of God. Abraham's descendent, his greater son, Jesus Christ, became the way of salvation for all mankind. What an inestimable reward for Abraham, a doctrine-loving believer who trusted God above the evidence of his own withered body! He passed this great test, not because he was a great man, but because he trusted in the knowledge in his soul about his faithful and true God. By consistently taking doctrine into his soul, he learned to love God with a faith that remained uncorruptible even under seemingly impossible circumstances.

Fortunate with the happiness of Christ is the honorable believer who has staying power under testing [the mature believer receiving the imputation of undeserved suffering, who successfully passes the tests which accelerate spiritual growth] because when he has passed the test, he will receive the Crown of Life³⁴

³⁴The Crown of Life is the highest reward God gives any believer in eternity, and He gives it only to believers who execute the spiritual life to the point of maximum success before crossing the golden bridge of dying grace into eternity. These super-grace believers receive maximum blessings both on earth and in Heaven because they have fulfilled God's objectives for Church Age believers on earth: To learn Bible doctrine, gain spiritual momentum, grow in grace and attain spiritual maturity, and then finally become completely focused on Christ.

which the Lord has promised to those reciprocating His love [the mature believer who endures testing and overcomes, thereby reciprocating God's love]. (James 1:12)

This verse, straight from the Holy Spirit, speaks to each individual believer because each believer is tested individually. We succeed or fail in the spiritual life because of our own volition. No one can force us to sin, not even Satan. No one can force us to glorify God. We choose to do so when we choose to make the intake of His Word our number one priority. Testing is an opportunity for spiritual growth for us as individuals. We rise or fall by our own volition.

But I say, "Keep on living [one day at a time advancement in the spiritual life] under the power of the Spirit, and you will not carry out the lusts [desires] of the Sin Nature." For, you see, the flesh [the Sin Nature] rises up against the Spirit [God the Holy Spirit], and the Spirit makes war against the flesh because these are constantly opposed to each other, with the result that you do not continue doing those things [advancement to spiritual maturity] you want to do. (Galatians 5:16-17)

Suppose, then, that when you sin, and sinning is inevitable for everyone, you rebound. You sin again and again, but you rebound again and again. You dust yourself off every time and continue studying Bible doctrine. You are glorifying God by following His grace procedure of rebound. Between sins, you are growing in grace and passing God's tests. God blesses you and tests you again so that you can use Bible doctrine in your soul to pass another test and, in the process, increase the muscles of your soul and glorify Him even more. So, even as you become more mature spiritually, your adversities increase, and, oddly enough, so does your happiness. You have more suffering (testing) than ever before, but because you trust God more, you are happier than ever before.

Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that

when His glory is revealed, you may also rejoice and be glad. (1 Peter 4:12–13)

HAPPINESS IS IN THE THINKING OF THE SOUL.

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. Test my motives and my innermost thoughts. For I am aware of Your loving-kindness [every grace gift from God] because I have walked in Your truth. (Psalm 26:2–3)

You should want God to test you because only through passing His tests can your soul gain spiritual strength and glorify Him. You should rejoice when you are under testing because only mature believers filled with the Holy Spirit are tested. Only they are on the battlefield.

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall pressure? Obviously not! Distress? Obviously not! Persecution? Obviously not! Famine? Obviously not! Lack of sufficient clothing? Obviously not! Dangers? Obviously not! The threat of violent death from human weapons? Obviously not! . . . In all these circumstances we have complete victory through Him who loves us, for I am thoroughly convinced [have absolute confidence] that neither death nor life, angels [elect angels] nor demons, present things nor the future things [present or pending circumstances], height [nothing in Heaven] nor depth [nothing in Hell] nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God as shown in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Romans 8:35, 37–39)

GOD IS TRUE EVEN IF EVERY MAN IS A LIAR.

As you learn doctrine, God transplants into you the thinking of Christ, including His perseverance, impersonal love,³⁵ determination,

³⁵Impersonal love is (Problem-solving device #8) is the love that mature believers feel for those who dislike or disappoint them. Impersonal love allows them to feel relaxed toward everyone because the love for God lives in their souls. When believers imitate

and optimal objective optimism (joy.) (Philippians 3:10–11) When your soul guards the stamina and determination of Jesus Christ, you have His power to pass God's tests because the power of the Holy Spirit is in your soul (soul power!).

I have remembered Your doctrines from old [those which I learned in the past] and comfort myself [with them]. (Psalm 119:52)

Jesus Christ as Man had a soul and human spirit exactly like those of all believers. Because Christ studied and filled His soul with God's Word, God the Holy Spirit placed into His soul the divine power to execute the plan of the Father: The spiritual life. Through that spiritual life, the very same one received by every believer at salvation, we have access to Christ's power to pass every test of life.

Virtue love endures patiently, believes all doctrines, has confidence in all the attributes of God, and endures all testings. (I Corinthians 13:7)

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES YOU THE POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

When your soul receives and retains Bible doctrine, when it passes God's tests, you can be confident that God the Holy Spirit has poured Christ's perseverance into your soul. You have undergone a soul transformation and begun to take on the iron soul of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Be strong, therefore, and courageous. Do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

the impersonal love of the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity, they repay insults with patience and humility, antagonism with compassion and kindness and at the same time retain tranquility in their own souls.

Understanding Your Soul

When you trust the Lord in all things, you are able to say with the apostle Paul,

I can do all things through the power of Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SATANIC SOUL TEMPTATION

Because Satan is constantly fighting to influence the souls of believers who love God, his temptations come at the same time as God's testing. God wants to reward you through testing. Satan wants to control you through temptation. God is supporting and guiding you. Satan is bribing and undermining you. As long as you are filled with the Holy Spirit, God will continue testing you because He will continue desiring that you advance in the spiritual life. He wants your soul jam-packed with doctrine and, therefore, ready to receive rewards when it reaches Heaven. (I Corinthians 4:5) Satan, on the other hand, wants to thwart you by taking hold of your soul and forcing you off of the spiritual battlefield. He wants you on his side, not God's. He wants your soul filled with human viewpoint garbage, thereby disqualifying you for eternal rewards. He wants to control your soul.

Satan is the author of temptation. God never tempts anyone.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted [induced to sin, do evil, or quit] by God" because God cannot be tempted by evil. Furthermore, He does not tempt anyone. (James 1:13)

God never has and never will tempt anyone. Never! Temptation is Satan enticing you to sin, enter into evil, or plain give up. God has nothing to do with either sin or evil. He definitely doesn't want you rationalizing some reason to exit the spiritual life. He loves you with a perfect love and wants only the best for you, and sin and evil are absolutely the worst. Satan doesn't care a flip about you, only about justifying himself before God. (Satan's sin was arrogance, and self-justification is the first stage of arrogance.³⁶) (Luke 16:15; Isaiah 14:12-14) Temptation is his attempt to make you fall as he fell. If he

³⁶Reread Chapter Six if you are confused about arrogance.

can tempt you into putting the Sin Nature in control of your soul, he has made you a witness and warrior for him, not God.

**THE SIN NATURE IS THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION.
VOLITION IS THE SOURCE OF SIN.**

Now, in fact, everyone who wants to live with loyalty to the Word of God in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
(II Timothy 3:12)

Each of us has a sin or set of sins that are easier for us to commit or justify than other sins. Some of us find it easy to lie. Some are filled with pride and arrogance. Others of us jump from one bed to another, assuring ourselves of the pleasures of sex and the noose of marriage. Still others of us never work (a sin) but depend on welfare (an evil) to provide our needs. You know your own soul—at least you should—and you know which sins are the most difficult for you to resist, those which beckon and intrigue you.

Satan and his demons watch, alert for any weakness. Then, they tempt you with those very things. The more often you give in to evil temptations, the more easily you can be enticed to continue giving in. Arrogance eventually blots out all distinctions between right and wrong. Your conscience is short-circuited by the scar tissue encasing it. You have justified your actions for so long that you fully believe you are doing nothing wrong. By giving into temptation, you have become a willing, even though unwitting, ambassador for Satan and his cosmic system.

But every man [believer] is tempted when he is enticed and lured away by his own particular lust pattern. Next, the lust pattern, or the temptation, having become pregnant [through the volition of the believer who gives in to temptation], gives birth to sin; and the sin, having been full grown, gives birth to death [temporal death: being out of fellowship with God through sin], then the sin unto death. (James 1:14–15)

**TEMPTATION ISN'T SIN.
YOU SIN WHEN YOU EMBRACE THE TEMPTATION.**

Lust can only become sin when temptation is embraced. To say it another way, lust control of your soul conceives and gives birth to sin. God says that when you give in to temptation, the lust that enticed you gets pregnant and bears the child called sin. Sin, the child of lust, is born when you succumb mentally or overtly to the temptation to sin. Such an evilly conceived child is always born dead, causing you to be dead in your relationship to Christ. You haven't lost your ticket to Heaven,³⁷ only your ability to have fellowship with God. You have kicked the Holy Spirit from your soul and willingly welcomed the Sin Nature.

Sin can seem fantastic at the time. Ask any guy who has had sex with his girlfriend. We give in to the temptation because we anticipate the pleasure. At the same time, we close our minds, literally, to the consequences. We knowingly choose Satan's temptation at the same time that we ignore the peril to our relationship with God.

When anyone [believer] commits a sin, he has become the agent of the Devil because the Devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed [the First Advent of Christ] for this purpose, that He might destroy [nullify] the works of the Devil [through the spiritual life under the power of the Holy Spirit].

(1 John 3:8)

Satan uses evil as well as sin to tempt you. He desires you to think his thoughts, which are always stinking evil. He isn't content to debilitate your conscience with sin; he wants to control your thoughts with evil so that you will advance his evil agenda. He can only do so if he can convince you that Bible doctrine and the spiritual life are outdated, useless, boring, powerless, or unworthy of notice. In other words, he has to distort the Truth with lies.

**TO BELIEVE THE LIE,
YOU HAVE TO REJECT THE TRUTH.**

³⁷Once you believe in Christ as your Savior, you can do nothing, no matter how despicable, to lose your salvation. All believers go to Heaven because God the Holy Spirit puts His guarantee (seal) on their salvation. (II Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 4:30)

Satan used this very tactic against Jesus Christ in His humanity on earth when he took the truth of the Scriptures, twisted it just a tad, and tried to get the Lord to swallow it. (Matthew 4:1–11) Remember that these temptations took place after Christ had been in the wilderness without food for forty days. He was at His weakest point physically, which is just the time Satan especially likes to confuse and seduce all mature believers.

Jesus Christ was tempted often on earth, and Satan himself tempted Him to sin three times, each time distorting Scripture in hopes of tricking our Savior. Three times Christ accurately quoted Scripture back to him. Satan realized he couldn't entice Christ with his scriptural distortions; therefore, the temptations ended. Soon Christ died both spiritually and physically on the Cross, sealing His victory and Satan's defeat.

If you are following Christ's example and living His spiritual life, you can be assured of being tempted often. You will be tempted many more than three times, tempted until your soul finally leaves your body in physical death. Your solution to temptation, however, is exactly the same as Christ's: Bible doctrine in your soul, ready to fend off any attacks of sin and evil. The unbeatable power of the Scriptures, accurately applied, always fortifies you against Satan's attacks.

Remember those fiery darts of Satan and his demons that pierce your soul with sinful thoughts? (Ephesians 6:16) You aren't supposed to dwell on every thought that enters your mind. You are to throw out those thoughts contaminated by Satan's view of the world, allowing admittance only to those that are 100% based on the Bible doctrine in your soul. Your conscience does the questioning, using the God-based thinking of your soul. Listen to your conscience! Give the boot to any questionable thought that requires rationalization or justification. Kick it out and forget it!

**DON'T SUCCUMB TO THE TEMPTATION
TO THINK EVERY THOUGHT
THAT COMES INTO YOUR MIND.**

Because you [a winner believer of the Church Age] have guarded in your soul the principle of My perseverance and endurance [the message about My perseverance against My testing, how I persevered on

earth], I [Jesus Christ] also will guard you from the period of testing and temptation [PEIRASMOS] which is about to come on all of the earth to test and tempt all those [doctrinal believers] who live on the earth.
(Revelation 3:10)

In the Church Age, the current dispensation³⁸ of divine history, we live in a climate of temptation. We aren't tempted every moment of every day, but temptation can wrap its soft tentacles around us suddenly at any time, especially when we least expect it and are the most vulnerable. Our only defense is a soul overflowing with Bible doctrine. If we guard the Word of Jesus Christ, keeping it free from emotion and distortion, He promises to keep us from the disaster inherent in every temptation.

**LIFE GOES ON AFTER EVERY DISASTER,
EVEN THE DISASTER OF GIVING IN TO TEMPTATION.**

No matter how diligently you study Bible doctrine, at times you will surrender to some temptations. You will fail some divine tests. All mature believers do. Again and again and again. God knows the weakness of your human body with its Sin Nature; therefore, He gives you a simple solution: Rebound. When you sin, you receive the consequences of that sin; and when you rebound, you receive the consequences of that rebound: Blessings in time and eternity. If you keep on learning doctrine and executing the spiritual life through the filling of the Holy Spirit, you, a sinner, will receive God's highest awards simply because you followed His perfect plan for your life: Rebound and the consistent acquisition of doctrinal knowledge. (Matthew 25:21, 23)

God rewards you for using your spiritual life, the same spiritual life used by Jesus Christ on earth, to pass safely through the booby traps of temptation.

You should think it nothing but joy, brothers, when you are embroiled in various tests and temptations, recognizing that the using of your faith produces endurance.

³⁸A dispensation is a period of human history that is characterized by God's method of revelation to man.

Now let the endurance come to its full completion of PLEROMA so that you may be a completed one, [that you might have a spiritual life totally integrated to the point of maximum glorification of God] not deficient in anything. (James 1:2–4)

The greatest embarrassment of all eternity is for the child of God to arrive at the Judgment Seat of Christ in his resurrection body and discover that he failed to execute the spiritual life, God's plan for his life. (Romans 4:12)

This is the reason we labor so that whether alive or absent [face to face with the Lord] we may be approved by Him [at the Judgment Seat of Christ]. After all, we must all [believers] appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ so that each one may be rewarded [recompensed] for the things he has done in his body [that is, during his life on earth], whether good [inside the spiritual life] or worthless [human good, sin, evil]. (II Corinthians 5:9–10)

In order to understand and thwart the clever stratagems used by Satan to derail your soul, we are going to examine a major area of testing: Trusting God in all things. The temptation to fear, a bedbug that can become a lion in your mind, hovers over your soul any time you are under God's testing.

FEAR IS A TERRORIZING SIN.

Fear wears many masks, including nervousness, anxiety, stress, distress, panic, and terror. Everyone has moments of fear—when a dog attacks, a speech must be given, a burglar invades, or war is declared. Satan uses these situations, from stressful to downright dangerous, to tempt you to feel some form of fear. God uses them to test your commitment to Him. You have two choices: You can raise the white flag of cowardice or confidently face all terrors, knowing that God is always with you. If you succumb to the temptation to fear, you short-circuit the mentality of your soul with debilitating emotion. You are alive but mis-

erable because you have allowed fear to invade and capture your soul. An unseen and impotent emotion, fear, has made you a casualty in the war for your soul.

EMOTION CAN'T DELIVER YOUR SOUL IN TESTING OR TEMPTATION.

Fear makes many believers soul-cripples, causing them to suffer a soul pain much greater than any physical pain. Their fear has dug a deep, dark pit in their souls, leaving them screaming in terror at the dark. Darkness is the abode of Satan and his evil. Light can penetrate a darkened soul only when Bible doctrine is introduced into the soul, and that can happen only through rebound and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Your Word is a light unto my path and a light to my feet
. . . Therefore, I esteem as righteous all your precepts
concerning everything. I hate every deceitful action.
Your commandments are wonderful; therefore, my
soul observes them. The exposition of Your Word gives
light . . . (Psalm 119:105, 128–130a)

You create your own darkness by succumbing to the temptation to fear, and you shed light by allowing the Holy Spirit to return as captain of your soul. Positive volition is light; negative volition is darkness. When you are positive at the point of danger or stress, you allow the light of God to remain in your soul. When you are negative and succumb to the temptation to fear, you extinguish the light yourself and invite the Sin Nature to control your soul.

DON'T FAIL THE TEST BY GIVING IN TO THE TEMPTATION.

Most people convince themselves that living to one hundred is an admirable goal—at least one hundred! They try to prolong their lives by exercising, taking vitamins, or following every fad diet. They are so busy polishing their bodies, which will age and decompose regardless of their attempts at preservation, that they forget to nourish their souls, which really do last forever. They fear death, over which they have no control but neglect their souls, over which they have complete control through their volition. Strange and stupid creatures, mankind!

Understanding Your Soul

Do not fear those who can kill the body but can't kill the soul. Instead, fear [have awesome reverence and profound respect] the One who is able to permanently destroy both the soul and the body in the Lake of Fire.

(Matthew 10:28)

God cautions us wisely when He commands us not to fear those who can kill our bodies, but instead to have awe and reverent trust in the Only One who has control over both our bodies and souls. We are arrogant when, through some form of fear, we try to yank our lives from God's hands. We can't do it, of course, because once we're saved, we're always saved, but we sure can make ourselves miserable trying! Arrogance is such a misery manufacturing sin, and arrogance walks in lock step with temptation.

God knows the perfect time for us to die. We won't live a millisecond past that time or die a millisecond before, and yet we worry about death! We live our lives in the all-consuming black cloud of that fear! We neglect our souls in our arrogant search for longer life, and in doing so we lose the doctrine that could fill our souls and accompany them to Heaven as a flag of victory. We choose the temptation, which makes us miserable, and fail the test that would bring us the happiness of God.

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life. Whom shall I dread? . . . Even when an army is deployed against me, my mind will not be afraid. Even when war is imminent, I remain confident. I have asked the Lord for one thing—this is what I desire. I want to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life so that I can gaze at the splendor of the Lord [through Bible doctrine] and inquire in His temple [Bible doctrine taught by a qualified pastor-teacher]. (Psalm 27:1, 3–4)

David, the author of this Psalm, not only trusted the Lord to preserve him against all enemies but also recognized that his confidence came from Biblical knowledge in his soul, accumulated through many years of learning doctrine.

Fear not! Stand still [do nothing but trust God] and watch the deliverance of the Lord. The Lord will fight for you today. (Exodus 14:13)

**GOD ALWAYS GIVES THE ANSWERS
BEFORE HE GIVES THE TEST.**

When you resist the temptation to fear, you are victorious, regardless of any continuing danger. (James 4:7–10) Each time you turn to God and away from the temptations of the Sin Nature, you prepare yourself for more intense battles. You discover that happiness is the result of Bible doctrine in your soul, not peaceful and secure circumstances. God wants you to pass the fear test so that you can share His happiness.

Leave every skirmish, battle, and war in God's hands. Stand back and watch His wondrous plan unfold for you. Relax. Forget your own inadequacies, and remember the Lord's unparalleled power. (Isaiah 43:13) Forget yourself and remember Him. Take His test because you trust Him to give you every answer.

Satan and his band of demons are arrayed against you because you are a believer, but God commands His elect angels, who are twice in number to demons, to protect you because you are a member of His royal family.

No evil will approach you; no disaster will come near your home because He will order His angels to guard you in all you do. They will lift you in their hands so that you will not slip and fall on a stone [have an accident]. (Psalm 91:10–11)

Even if all of God's angels failed in their job of protecting you (but they won't because God never breaks a promise), God in His omnipotence can flick off any enemy as easily as you and I squash a pesky mosquito. Satan wants you to believe he is a vicious lion and deadly cobra rolled into one, venomous and invincible. If you know God and His power, you know how silly Satan is. God could backhand him off this earth at any time. He chooses not to do so because the timing isn't right.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD EXCLUDES FEAR.

They who wait for the Lord's help shall exchange their strength for His. They shall rise up as if they had the wings of eagles. They shall keep on running [intense adversity] and not be weary [because of spiritual strength]. They shall keep on walking [normal life] and not get tired. (Isaiah 40:31)

Think of it: God can exchange your puny power for His omnipotence. He can give you the power to soar through the air as effortlessly as an eagle. Most believers look down and faint at the height. Only a few laugh at the danger, secure in God's promise to uphold them with His limitless power. That is Faith-Rest, the third problem-solving device—laughing in the face of imminent disaster, never fearing because of the certain knowledge that

. . . If God be for us—and He is, who can be against us? He [God the Father] who did not even spare His own unique Son but delivered Him over as a substitute for all of us, how shall He not with Him freely and graciously give us all things? Who can make any accusation stick against the elect ones? . . . Even as it stands written: “Because of You, we [mature believers] are being killed all day long. We are considered [by Satan's kingdom] as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things, we have complete victory through Him who loves us. (Romans 8:31b, 36–37)

When you clothe your soul in the whole armor of God, you have absolute confidence that nothing visible or invisible can harm you. You will die eventually, of course, at the time chosen by God, but even your death is victory because God instantaneously transports your soul to Heaven with Him.

When you know enough Bible doctrine to trust God, you stand unafraid in the midst of raging warfare with bloodied bodies strewn around you. You know that bullets kill, knowledge Satan continually thrusts before your eyes; but you know more surely that God is with you in every circumstance, even the seemingly impossible ones. You fear disappointing God, whom you can't see, more that you fear the bullets you can see. Your trust in God gives you the courage to take His tests and resist Satan's temptations to fear.

TOO MANY BELIEVERS WANT THE POWER OF GOD WITHOUT THE DISCIPLINE OF LEARNING HIS WORD.

Now that you recognize fear and anxiety as the miserable, gloom-and-doom bedbugs they are, now that you firmly believe rebound to be the great fear squasher and are prepared to use it at the first sign of a fear or anxiety infestation, let's move on to another test, one which all believers face if they are in fellowship, the test of unfair treatment. Maybe your boss promotes others less qualified than you, your coach plays others not as skilled as you, you are accused falsely, or you become the innocent target of gossip. Such testing happens often if you are executing the spiritual life as God would have you. Frequently, the unfair treatment escalates. Why? Because God has seen your success in calmly accepting injustice, He wants to give you more opportunities for more blessings. It's easy to be happy when everything is going well but more difficult to continue executing the spiritual life under the burden of unfair treatment. The more difficult the circumstances, the greater the blessings when you succeed in the only way possible, by using the Bible doctrine stored in your soul.

As soon as the unfair treatment begins, the temptations begin as well. "This isn't fair," you think to yourself. "I have to do something, explain to someone, complain, quit." Watching you act upon these evil thoughts, Satan smiles and the fallen angels applaud because you have flunked God's test and given in to their temptation. The Sin Nature now roosts in your soul. Satan gloats as you receive divine discipline instead of divine rewards.

So, what should you do when you are treated unfairly? You should remember the doctrines you have learned, especially those about authority. God is all knowing. He didn't go to sleep and not notice that your boss is an A#1, nasty jerk. In fact, He put you in just that place so that you could have that A#1, nasty jerk ordering you around. He did so because He loves you with a perfect love. He knows you have the doctrine in your soul to live your life contentedly in the face of adversity, and the daily control of an A#1, nasty jerk is definitely adversity, one which slowly wears away your impersonal love for all jerks if your soul isn't stuffed full of Bible doctrine.

Therefore, when you cast all your fears, apprehensions,
and anxieties on Him—because He cares for you—you

allow yourselves to be humbled under God's mighty hand of authority [the authority of the Word of God] in order that He may promote you at the proper time.

(1 Peter 5:6-7)

Under the test of unfair treatment, God expects you to remember Christ's attitude toward those who beat Him unmercifully, screamed obscenities at Him, called Him odious names, and hanged Him on the Cross. Christ never once opened His mouth in protest. Instead, He loved His persecutors with an impersonal love so great that He willingly took their place on the Cross, dying for their sins so that they could have the opportunity to go to Heaven. (By the way, many who were at the Cross to gloat ended up believing.)

We all like sheep have gone astray. Each one of us has turned to his own way and desire, and the Lord [God the Father] has cause to strike Him [Jesus Christ] with the punishment of all of us. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He did not open His mouth; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before His shearers is silent, so He didn't open His mouth.

(Isaiah 53:6-7)

When you look at all Christ suffered for you (an A#1, nasty jerk in your own right because you, too, have a Sin Nature), your puny suffering pales in comparison. Yet, even you, who will never suffer as He suffered, have the same spiritual life that He used to overcome the testings and temptations of His life, even the temptation to avoid dying on the Cross. If His spiritual life was powerful enough to overcome His unparalleled suffering, then certainly it can overcome your puny-by-comparison tests and temptations. And it can! It certainly can! Jesus Christ knew that He didn't deserve to die for our sins. He was blameless; nevertheless, He recognized that only through undeserved suffering could He accomplish His purpose on earth—to glorify His Father. Only then could He give to us His perfect spiritual life.

Right now, My soul has become greatly distressed, and what shall I say? Father save Me from this hour? No,

because this hour is the very reason I came. Father, glorify Your essence through Me . . . (John 12:27–28a)

Jesus Christ glorified His Father through undeserved suffering. You glorify your Heavenly Father, the Father of Christ, in the same way.

Let's look at another test, a difficult one in which evil temptation attacks at the moment of spiritual success. You have done something to hurt someone—lied, gossiped, or maybe slugged him or her in a fit of anger. You have received the consequences of your sin, possibly a black eye, suspension from school, or a spat of return gossip. Whatever the consequences, you have come through a winner because you immediately recognized your sin and rebounded. You are back in fellowship with God. You faltered by sinning, but you rebounded to ace your test!

Then sin enters your mind; you start feeling guilty about what you did. Through rebound, you have gotten up and put yourself back on the battlefield. God is ready to initiate additional testing so that He can reward you even more, and you throw it all away because of an evil desire to feel sorry for yourself. That's what guilt is: An evil, arrogant preoccupation with yourself. God wants to put you in another situation in which you can resist the temptation to lie, gossip, or throw your fists. He wants to reward you, and you hang on to your past sin, feeling guilty about it as if Christ somehow forgot to accept the punishment for it on the Cross. You had success in your grasp, you were a winner in God's eyes, and you blew it all because you allowed guilt to enter your soul. You didn't have enough doctrine to resist the tantalizing temptation of guilt.

People tell you to save money for a rainy day. God says to save doctrine, which has an eternal value, and He will provide everything you need on earth no matter how torrential the downpour. He will take care of every rainy day if you will take care to fill your soul with His Word.

YOU CAN NEVER OVERDOSE ON DOCTRINE!

We glory in testing, having come to know that such adversity produces endurance [courage]. Endurance leads to a state of having been approved through refining tests. This fosters confident expectations. Absolute confidence never disappoints and is never frustrated

because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts [with the result that it keeps on being poured out in our souls through the mentorship of God the Holy Spirit because our souls are filled with doctrine] through the personal agency of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us for our benefit. (Romans 5:3–5)

**IN THE BELIEVER WHO GUARDS DOCTRINE,
THE LOVE OF GOD IS COMPLETE.**

One final reminder: Don't ever fall into evil self-pity, believing that no one has ever suffered as you suffer. First, you are suffering as punishment because self-pity is a sin. Second, Jesus Christ suffered a million times more than you will ever suffer—and He did so in a frail human body just like yours, one which bled and bruised and hurt like Hades. Third, God assures us we will never suffer in a unique or especially dreadful way.

You must resist him [Satan and his forces of evil], stabilized and fortified in doctrine, fully aware that fellow believers are undergoing these same sufferings. And after you have suffered a little, the God of every type of grace, who summoned you into everlasting glory by Christ Jesus, will stabilize you. He will make you strong. He will establish you. To Him belongs the victory [the power of rewards and the spiritual life which attains them] forever. Amen. (I Peter 5:9–11)

**ONLY LEARN AND BELIEVE BIBLE DOCTRINE,
AND YOUR SOUL WILL BE STABILIZED.**

Don't despair when you fail a divine test or Satanic temptation. Acknowledge your failure to God and regain your focus. Even the greatest athletes don't win at first. They have to practice, practice, practice.³⁹ They don't achieve victory until they develop the necessary skills.

³⁹You can order my book, "Practicing Your Christianity," from the address in the front and back of this book.

Satanic Soul Temptation

The presence of undeserved suffering in your life indicates that you are a warrior for God, a winner in the battle for your soul. To triumph over undeserved suffering, you must press forward, not merely without complaint but with joy in your soul, thereby glorifying God.

Rejoice in hope while enduring in suffering . . .

(Romans 12:12a)

If you feel joy in suffering, you are in fellowship with God, suffering undeservedly for the purpose of advancing in your spiritual life. If your suffering makes you unhappy, you are suffering as punishment and had better rebound immediately.

Understanding Your Soul

— Notes —

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE STRENGTH OF COMBINED SOULS

How would you like to have a soul that, when combined with another soul, is much stronger than either soul alone? Sounds good, doesn't it? We've all had times of feeling alone, wishing we had someone at our side to add strength to our own resolve to serve God to the maximum. We may have had this feeling in the middle of a room full of people, even in a church service.

God knows the weaknesses of our human bodies. He knows we are constantly under attack from our enemies, which are also His enemies. He understands that two or more together are stronger than one alone.

Two are better than one because they have a good return [righteousness] for their labor. If either one falls, the other will lift his companion, but woe to the one who falls when there is not a second one to lift him. Furthermore, if two lie down together [in marriage], they have warmth. But how can one person keep himself warm? And if an assailant can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands [epignosis doctrine, love for God, spiritual discernment] is not quickly torn apart. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Marriage⁴⁰ is one of two areas in which souls merge to create super-strength of soul. As Solomon so graphically described in Ecclesiastes, a husband and his wife have the power to warm each other, not just physically but soulishly. When one falters in his spiritual life, his spouse is beside him to offer support and encouragement. Even better, the combined souls of a Christian husband and wife can become the greatest possible witness for God.

There is a catch, however, and you recognize it immediately. The only husband who can be a superman to his wife and the only wife who

⁴⁰To learn more about marriage, read *Focus on Christian Marriage*, Moses Onwubiko, Grace Evangelistic Ministries, PO Box 17246, Nashville, TN 37217.

can be a super-helpmeet to her husband are ones in fellowship with God. And both husband and wife have Sin Natures. The combination of two Sin Natures in marriage can be—and frequently is—a lighted stick of dynamite, ready to go off at the slightest misunderstanding. You had better believe that's not the warmth God has in mind for marriage!

We all know from personal experience the constant struggle to remain in fellowship, resist the blandishments of Satan, forsake evil, rebound consistently, and never miss an opportunity to take in God's Word. Imagine, then, the increased difficulties for two people, living together, combining their souls—and, more important, their Sin Natures—creating their own intermingled problems.

True, the problems of marriage are greater than the problems of single life, but the rewards are greater also for those who together glorify God to the maximum. These happy few become a strong cord, helping each other, warming each other, overpowering their enemies together. Such coalescence of souls in marriage is difficult to attain; therefore, God rewards such believers abundantly, both on earth and in eternity.

Visualize Satan's demons swarming around every home, trying to unravel the cord of soul coalescence that a husband and wife have created together. Consider the attacks on marriage, which you see and hear every minute of every day in newspapers, on television, in movies, and among your friends; and you will begin to understand Satan's evil desire to prevent you from ever experiencing the joy of a husband and wife growing in grace together, the special joy of two souls united as one.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT IN YOUR SOUL AS UNTO THE LORD.

The goal of every husband and wife should be to have souls filled to PLEROMA with God's Word. God makes that possible through His armor and the supernatural power attained through the fillings of the Holy Spirit. If you rebound, you are immediately filled with the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and you immediately have the super-power of God the Holy Spirit in your soul. Use the power of the Holy Spirit in every decision of your life, and you become a super-spouse, sharing a strong soul with the one that you love immeasurably above all others. What better wedding or anniversary gift could you give each other than a combined soul, which you both continue to fill

with the thinking of Christ?

The family that prays together doesn't stay together. (Another evil saying promoted by Satan. Prayers only have power for believers filled with the Holy Spirit.) Only the family that fills their souls daily with the nourishment of God's Word stays together and glorifies God together.

Suppose you are not married. Or suppose your spouse isn't interested in Bible doctrine. Has God forgotten you? Has He neglected to give your soul added protection and strength? Of course not! God never forgets anyone. He wants the best for everyone.

You, too, can have a super-powered soul by standing shoulder to shoulder, shield to shield with fellow believers, advancing together with them to the high ground of maximum glorification of God. That's God's definition of a church—believers who learn His Word together, soldiers in this spiritual battle, protecting each other through one bloody attack after another. Those believers whose souls are filled to the maximum with doctrine lead and encourage those whose souls are still garbage-laden, have unconfessed sin, or have yet to reach spiritual discernment. Their common goal of glorifying God links their shields in a protective wall. When one believer becomes discouraged, others protect him until he rebounds and takes up his shield once more.

TRUE HEROISM RESULTS FROM THE DAILY DECISION TO TAKE IN BIBLE DOCTRINE.

. . . Stand fast in one spirit with one soul, fighting side by side for the faith of the Gospel and not being intimidated at all by your enemies. For them, this is evidence of their destruction and of your deliverance, and this is God's doing. (Philippians 1:27b–28)

In a letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul reiterated this theme of standing firm against the attacks of Satan. He amplified the responsibilities of each Christian toward other believers who were fighting side by side with him. Keep in mind that mature believers are said to be “of the day” because the light of Bible doctrine shines in their souls.

But, in contrast, you, brethren, are not in darkness so that the day overtakes you like a thief. All of you are sons of light and sons of day, neither sons of the night

nor sons of darkness. Consequently, you must not sleep as the others do, but on the contrary must stay awake, attentive to Bible doctrine, self-controlled, and aware. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we are of the day, we must be vigilant, circumspect, not drunk with the things of the world, attaining spiritual self-esteem, after we have put on the breast plate of doctrine and virtue love and the helmet consisting of confidence because God has not destined us for wrath but for the acquisition of deliverance made possible by that Lord of ours, Jesus Christ, the One who died a substitutionary spiritual death and a unique physical death on behalf of us in order that, whether awake [alive, mature believers] or asleep [either dead or in the spiritual death of carnality], we may live together with Him. Therefore, continue to encourage each other and be contributing to one another's advancement in spiritual growth just as you are now doing. But we request you, brethren, that you appreciate those [pastor-teachers] who diligently labor among you and have charge over you and give you instruction [doctrinal teaching], that you esteem them very highly in the sphere of love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. . . . Protect the weak. Be patient toward everyone. See to it that no one repays evil for evil. Rejoice always. Always pursue what is good for one another and for all. Make a habit of prayer. In everything [suffering and reward] give thanks because this is the will of God [the divine plan] in Christ Jesus for you. Stop quenching the Spirit [by not rebounding] . . . Test everything [all human viewpoint garbage]. Retain only that which is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely and may your spirit, soul, and resurrection body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who called you, who also will do this.

(I Thessalonians 5:4–19, 21–24)

The Strength of Combined Souls

Every soldier depends on his fellow soldiers to stand steadfastly beside him, guarding his back, encouraging him forward. As Christian soldiers, we have an equivalent responsibility to our fellow believers. Our battlefield is equally strewn with the bodies of those who have succumbed to the enemies' evil stratagems. Our warfare is equally bloody though the blood of a pierced soul is invisible to our eyes. Our successes are frequently invisible to all but those who have reached spiritual maturity. Nevertheless, we must persevere, never abandoning our brothers just as they would never abandon us. Sometimes, they choose of their own volition to leave the battlefield, but while in spiritual combat, they remain faithful in their devotion to God's principles and, through them, to every other believer, carnal or spiritual.

See to it, brethren, that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes the living God. But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "Today," that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception. (Hebrews 3:12–13)

Jesus Christ is our Supreme Commander. He has gone before us, unbending in the face of tests and temptations that we can't even imagine. He succeeded in winning His war by using His spiritual life; and He has bequeathed to us that same spiritual life, full of supernatural power and peace.

You, pastors, be communicating the absolute truth in the sphere of virtue love [in the spiritual life] so that we, the congregation, may grow up in every way, knowing all doctrine, with regard to Jesus Christ, who is the absolute authority, from whom the whole body of Christ being fitted and compacted together through every joint of supply, every church, according to the proper working of each part, causing the advance of the body for the edifying of itself with love.

(Ephesians 4:15–16)

We are in this battle together, our souls joined with those believers who, like us, recognize that the bloody battlefield under the command of Jesus Christ is preferable to any earthly pleasures, praise, or riches.

We are under His command as long as we acknowledge our sins to God the Father and execute Jesus Christ's spiritual life through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Shoulder to shoulder. Shield to shield. Remember those words any time your soul aches with despair, anxiety, or bitterness. You are not alone. Not only is Jesus Christ with you every moment of every day—and in the darkest hours of every night—but other believers stand invisibly at your side, ready to protect you until you awaken and choose the soul-healing process of claiming God's problem-solving devices, and thereby rejoin the fight.

**YOU CAN'T WIN WHEN YOU KICK
AGAINST THE SUPERIOR POWER OF GOD.**

Never give up! If you do, you not only destroy your own soul but also add to the combat pressure faced by the band of Christian brothers fighting by your side on the battlefield of the soul.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

YOUR SOUL IN ETERNITY

God promises that the souls of every human being will never be without bodies. While we live on earth, our bodies are visible housing for our invisible souls. Those bodies decay as we age; and when we die, they decompose completely, eventually becoming part of the ground from which they came. Our earthly bodies don't accompany our souls to Heaven or the Lake of Fire, but because God promises our souls will never be uncovered, at our physical death He immediately provides a new home for them. If a believer dies before the end of the Church Age, his soul transfers from his human body to an interim body. Then at the Exit Resurrection of the church, he receives his permanent resurrection body to house his soul forever.

THE BODY IS A TEMPORARY HOME FOR THE SOUL.

Even after my skin [human body] is destroyed, yet in
my flesh [my resurrection body] I shall see God.

(Job 19:26)

The Bible doesn't describe the body of the dead unbeliever. All we know is that it suffers terribly from the eternal fires of Hell. Whatever an unbeliever's eternal body resembles, we can be sure its soul feels sorrow, regret, fear, depression, utter hopelessness and helplessness—a super-sensitive body to house a super-suffering soul.

THE BODY OF CORRUPTION IS DESTROYED AT DEATH. GOD GIVES US A NEW BODY TO HOUSE OUR SOULS FOR ETERNITY.

If you believe in Christ as your personal Savior, you will never see any unbelievers' bodies because you will be separated from the horrors of Hell forever. On the other hand, if you never believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, your soul will exist forever, entombed in a body

that suffers the agonies of the damned. If you haven't yet believed in Christ as your Savior, stop now to feel the scorching flames of the Lake of Fire licking in anticipation of feeding on your soul for eternity. Stop for a few moments to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, so that you can secure your soul's future in Heaven with Him. Stop now and believe.

If you have believed, the destination of your soul is entirely different from that of an unbeliever's. Your eternal body is entirely different also. Any believer who dies before the Rapture of the Church⁴¹ will be given an interim body in Heaven as soon as he dies. (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14; Revelation 12:12) God gives us this temporary body for the sole purpose of housing our souls until the time of the Rapture, at which time we will receive our ultimate reward, a resurrection body like that of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only human being who has a resurrection body at this time.

God will remodel the body of our humble state [our mortality], making it to correspond in life-form and character to the body of His glory by means of the power that enables Him to also bring into subjection all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:21)

Church Age believers—that means all believers who live between the Day of Pentecost, which occurred ten days after Christ's ascension, and the Rapture of the Church—will receive resurrection bodies at the Rapture. Our souls, with our human spirits firmly attached, will live in these perfect bodies forever.

So also is the resurrection of the dead, which is sown in corruption [human body] and raised in incorruption [resurrection body]. What is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. What is sown in weakness is raised in power. A human body is sown, and a spiritual body [resurrection body] is raised. Since there is a soulish body, there is also a spiritual body. Just as it stands written in

⁴¹God divides human history into time periods called dispensations. The Rapture will occur at the end of the Church Age, in which we are now living. At that time, all believers will go to Heaven to be with the Lord; and the Tribulation, the last seven years of the dispensation of Israel, will begin.

Scripture, “The first man Adam became a living soul.” The final man Adam [Jesus Christ] became a life-giving Spirit . . . The first man came from dust; the second man came from Heaven. As is dust so also are the creatures of dust. As is the nature of the Heavens, so are the Heavenly beings. And just as we have worn our human bodies of dust so we will wear the likeness of Heaven. Now this I confirm, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption [the body] inherit incorruption [the resurrection body]. Listen, I communicate to you a mystery [Church Age doctrine]. We will not all die, but we will all be changed. In a moment, in the winking of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible [in a resurrection body], and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption [a body of immortality] and this mortal shall put on immortality. Now when this corruption [body at physical death] shall put on incorruption [the resurrection body], then this mortal [human soul] shall have put on immortality [resurrection bodies], then the doctrine which stands written will occur: “Death is swallowed up for all time because of the victory [of the Cross].” (I Corinthians 15:42–54)

If you have health problems now, you won’t in eternity. If you are ugly now, you won’t be in eternity. Every resurrection body will be perfect, able to move with ease and speed, unencumbered by the limitations of our earthly bodies. Inside these resurrection bodies, our souls will live in perfect peace. No more Sin Nature. No more sin, evil, and temptation! Hallelujah!

You can’t take any of your toys or human successes with you to Heaven, but you sure enough do take your soul and all that fills it. God will reward the Bible doctrine you learned on earth. Human viewpoint garbage and all human good will be burned. (I Corinthians 3:12–15) Human viewpoint garbage can be glitzy or holier-than-thou, but glitzy and pseudo-holiness burn just as completely as less pretentious types of human good. Glitzy garbage burns. Doctrine doesn’t. Human good burns. Divine good doesn’t.

You can readily see that a few souls will reach Heaven loaded down with doctrine; however, most will be as empty as the promises of Satan. You are the one who determines the content of your soul. If your volition is positive toward God and His Word, then you put God first in your life and devote yourself to learning as much as possible about Him. If you are negative toward God and His Word, you put yourself first, equally devoted to leaving untried no chance for fun, success, fame, morality, or wealth.

For many [believers out of fellowship] keep living, (concerning whom I have communicated to you many times and now continue communicating to you even though I am weeping.) They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction [the sin unto death], whose god is their emotion, whose fame is in their shame [their excuse to sin and their dishonor at the Judgment Seat of Christ] and who form and hold an opinion [that justifies their sin] about earthly things [human viewpoint garbage]. For our real citizenship is in Heaven, out of which region also we eagerly await our Savior, namely the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Philippians 3:18–20)

LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY.

Even before we reach Heaven, God reminds us that we are temporary citizens of earth. Our true citizenship is in Heaven; therefore, we must live our lives on earth focused on the eternal destination of our souls. We must pack for our eternal trip with an eye toward taking as much doctrine with us as possible.

I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth [at the Second Advent of Christ]. And after my skin has been destroyed, then from my flesh [my soul in a resurrection body] I shall see God. (Job 19:25–26)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FINAL THOUGHTS

You can only love God when you know Him. You can only glorify Him when you know Him. You can only be rewarded when you know Him. And you can know Him only through the daily study of His Word. The daily study of Bible doctrine is the only road to love for God, glorification of God, and rewards from God. The one and only road. You receive your ticket to travel that bumpy and mine-filled road when you make a conscious decision to execute the spiritual life to completion. Through the volition of your soul, you must decide daily that learning about God is more important than all the distractions of your soul's enemies.

**BEING SAVED INVOLVES ONE DECISION.
BECOMING A MATURE CHRISTIAN INVOLVES MANY.**

Your soul is going to live forever. You should believe that now because you now understand in a small way just what your soul is. The question you must ask yourself now is, "Does my soul, that which is 'the real me,' glorify God to the maximum?" If human viewpoint garbage in your soul keeps you from answering yes, now is the time to begin changing your soul so that you can begin glorifying your Savior.

But instead keep on growing [in the spiritual life] by means of grace and of the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory [acclamation because we use His thinking], both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (II Peter 3:18)

You now know God's plan for your life: Rebound and keep learning Bible doctrine. Now do it. Keep doing it until you reach Heaven and God Himself places the Crown of Life on your head. Advance boldly through the tests and temptation of life, knowing His strength will sustain you even as His love wraps you in never-ending grace. Pick your-

self up every time you fall, and then keep advancing. Always keep your eyes on your goal: Glorification of God both now and forevermore.

THE THORNS OF OUR TESTING BECAME A CROWN FOR CHRIST.

You are either on the battlefield, bloodied but unbowed as a warrior for God, or in the stands, drunk with Satan's tempting but false promises of popularity, success, health, wealth, and happiness. Your soul is either filled with the Holy Spirit and full of the truth of God's Word or under the control of the Sin Nature and full of the stench of sin and evil. You are either being tested by God and tempted by Satan or off the battlefield, wallowing in your own misery until God takes you out with the sin unto death. Those are the only choices, but because God is fair, you are the one who decides your own destiny. Choose wisely from a position of strength, from the Bible doctrine stored in your soul.

It is not good that a person be without knowledge, and he who acts hastily sins. (Proverbs 19:2)

Don't "act hastily" by trying to skip over some doctrines in God's Word. Each one builds on the last. You can't reach maximum glorification of God unless you follow God's steps exactly.

It's a win-win situation when you use Bible doctrine to perpetuate your soul happiness even in times of undeserved suffering and temptation: You are happy on earth and receive rewards in Heaven. It's a lose-lose situation when you give in to temptation or fold under testing: You make yourself miserable on earth and lose the rewards God has waiting for you in Heaven. The volition of your soul determines if you will be a spiritual winner or a carnal loser.

Therefore, hear with understanding the parable of the sower. In the case of everyone who hears the Word of the kingdom [the trends and tragedies of the human heart, including negative volition, neglect or rejection of Bible doctrine, but especially in this verse the rejection of Christ as Messiah as taught by John the Baptist and the disciples] and doesn't understand, the evil one, Satan, inevitably comes and violently snatches away

that which has been disseminated upon his soul even as seeds are eaten by birds. The seed sown on rocky soil is like a person who hears the Word and immediately and impulsively receives it with joy [a superficial, emotional reaction]; but he has no root system in himself [no substructure of doctrine in the soul] and, therefore, continues for only a limited time; and when adversity inevitably arises because of the Word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown in a thorn bush [referring to the anxieties of life] is like a person who listens to the Word, but the anxieties of this world and the delusions created by the pursuit and possession of wealth stifle the Word so that it produces nothing. But the seed that is sown on good quality soil [positive volition in the soul] is like the person who hears the Word and comprehends it thoroughly. He is fruitful indeed, producing in one case 100 times what was sown, in another 60 times, and in another 30 times.⁴² (Matthew 13:18–23)

The One who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed are the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed this seed [weeds which resemble wheat] is the Devil. The harvest time is the end of the age [the Tribulation], and the elect angels are the harvesters. Just as the bastard wheat [that looks like wheat but is a weed] is gathered and incinerated so shall it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will dispatch His angels, and they will collect from the kingdom [earth] everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers. They [God's angels] will throw them [unbelievers] into the fiery furnace, where there will be screaming and gnashing of teeth. At that time, the righteous ones [Old Testament and tribulation believers] will generate light like the sun in the king-

⁴²The believer advances to the full measure of the happiness of God according to the ability God gives them. God's blessings make our souls 100, 60, or 30 times richer than we could have imagined.

dom of their Father. Those who have ears [everyone] let them listen with understanding. (Matthew 13:37b–43)
Do not fret when wicked ones seem to succeed. Do not envy wrongdoers because they will dry up quickly like the grass and wither away like green plants. Trust in the Lord and do that which is right. Settle in the land and maintain your integrity. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your future to the Lord. Keep trusting also in Him, and He will do everything. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently, longingly for Him. Do not fret over the apparent success of a sinner, a man who carries out wicked schemes. Don't be angry and frustrated. Don't be anxious because anxiety leads only to evil doing. Evildoers will be wiped out, but those who rely on the Lord will inherit the land [prosper]. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; you will look carefully where he once was, and he will not be there . . . The Lord grants success to the one [a believer] who does a right thing in a right way. Even if he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down because the Lord upholds him with His hand. I was once young. Now I am old, and I have not seen the righteous abandoned or their offspring begging for food. The man of peace [the tranquility of the PLEROMA believer] will have posterity because the Lord loves justice . . . Take note of the person who has integrity and complete attainment and notice the PLEROMA saint, for there is posterity for the person of soul integrity. (Psalm 37:1–10, 23–28, 37)

THOUGHT DETERMINES ACTION.
ACTION DETERMINES HABITS.
HABITS DETERMINE LIFESTYLE.
LIFESTYLE DETERMINES CAPACITY
FOR REWARDS IN ETERNITY.

Biblical Promises and Principles

Salvation Assurance

Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
Genesis 15:6

. . . I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand.
Exodus 33:22b

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the
defense of my life; whom shall I dread? Psalms 27:1

The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who take refuge
in Him will be condemned. Psalms 34:22

The Lord knows the days of the blameless; And their inheritance will be for-
ever. Psalms 37:18

For the Lord loves justice, And does not forsake His godly ones; They are pre-
served forever. Psalms 37:28a

Surely there is a future, And your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:18

. . . Because mankind is constantly walking toward his eternal home while
mourners go round and round without direction, remember Him [Jesus Christ]
before the silver thread is snapped or the golden bowl is broken or the clay jug
is smashed on the side of the well is shattered or the wheel on the well is bro-
ken. Ecclesiastes 12:5b, 6

"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have
chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He.
Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. "I, even
I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me. "It is I who have declared
and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you
are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And I am God. "Even from eternity I
am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can
reverse it?" Isaiah 43:10-13

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. Isaiah 53:6

Understanding Your Soul

Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way [rejecting Christ] and live [by means of faith alone in Christ alone].' Ezekiel 33:11

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. John 1:12

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'
John 3:6, 7

For God loved the world so much with the result that He gave His Son, the uniquely born One, with the result that anyone who believes in Him will never perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:18

He who believes in the Son [Jesus Christ] has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36

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

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. John 6:47

I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. John 10:28

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies." John 11:25

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.
John 14:1

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except through Me." John 14:6

Biblical Promises and Principles

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

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

For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. John 16:27

These have been communicated [written] that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God, and that believing you might have eternal life through His name. John 20:31

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

... Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved ... Acts 16:31b

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." Romans 1:16, 17

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Romans 3:28

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness. Romans 4:4, 5

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died as a substitute for the ungodly. Romans 5:6

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died as a substitute for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Romans 5:8-10

Understanding Your Soul

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

There is no judgment, therefore, to those who are in Christ Jesus.
Romans 8:1

The [Holy] Spirit Himself bears witness with our [human] spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.
Romans 8:16, 17

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? Romans 8:32

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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. Romans 8:38, 39

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

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:3

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18

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. He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin [impeccable spotless lamb] to be sin on our behalf [as a substitute for us], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21

Biblical Promises and Principles

For He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

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. Ephesians 1:5, 6

In Him [Christ] we have redemption [at salvation] through His blood [substitutionary spiritual death on the cross], the forgiveness of our [pre-salvation] trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us . . . Ephesians 1:7, 8a

In Whom we have received a destiny, having been pre-designed according to a predetermined plan from the One who works all things according to the decree from His Will and purpose. Ephesians 1:11

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13, 14

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

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

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

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6

Stop grieving [failing to name known sins-per 1 John 1.9] the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30

Understanding Your Soul

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, that at the name of Jesus every knee should 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. Philippians 2:8-11

Not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. Philippians 3:9

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13, 14

. . . He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through [spiritual] death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. Colossians 1:22b

To whom God decreed to make known what are the riches of His glory of this mystery [God's glory as manifested in the royal family, not revealed until the Church Age] in the Gentiles [gentile believers - the Church Age has interrupted the Jewish Age], which is, Christ in you, the hope [confident anticipation] of glory. Colossians 1:27

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions. Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Colossians 2:13, 14

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. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. 2 Timothy 1:9

In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal. Titus 1:2

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all mankind. Titus 2.11

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Rick Hughes, the founder and President of Rick Hughes Evangelistic Ministries, is a native of Birmingham, Alabama. While in high school, he participated in football and track. In 1964, Rick was selected to the High School All American football team and set state records in the shot put and discus. The University of Florida signed Rick to a four year football scholarship, but his SAT scores were too low to allow his admittance. This failure was a turning point in his life. Rick's football coach challenged him to apply himself in the classroom just as he had done on the field. In the spring of 1964, The University of Alabama offered him a second chance. This time he passed his SATs and was accepted as a freshman football player. Rick stresses that bad decisions limit future options. His bad decision to leave after one year of college was the low point in his life.



The turning point came in the summer of 1967 when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. At this time, he learned of the ministry of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas, and its pastor, R. B. Thieme, Jr. Under the encouragement of Pastor Thieme, Rick returned to college and helped direct the Youth for Christ High School Ministry in the greater Birmingham area. Continuing to study under the mentorship of Pastor Thieme, Rick learned principles and promises of God's Word that directed him into a lifetime of Christian ministry.

In the fall of 1970, he co-founded Teen Crusades, Incorporated, which opened the door to speaking in high schools all across the nation. Later, he joined Operation Grace World Missions and eventually formed RHEM, Inc. Since that time, he has spoken in thousands of schools and hundreds of churches. His Student Emphasis Week program has been tremendously successful and widely acclaimed throughout the southeast.

He and his wife Lydia live in Cropwell, Alabama. They have three daughters and a son.

Understanding Your Soul is an in-depth study of the human soul. The Bible says the real you is what you think. Your motives and desires all originate from the mentality of your soul. Learning to think as Christ thought is the secret to the Christian life. This book explains the battle for your soul and the importance of your thought life. Study and enjoy the material because the Bible is the source of it all.