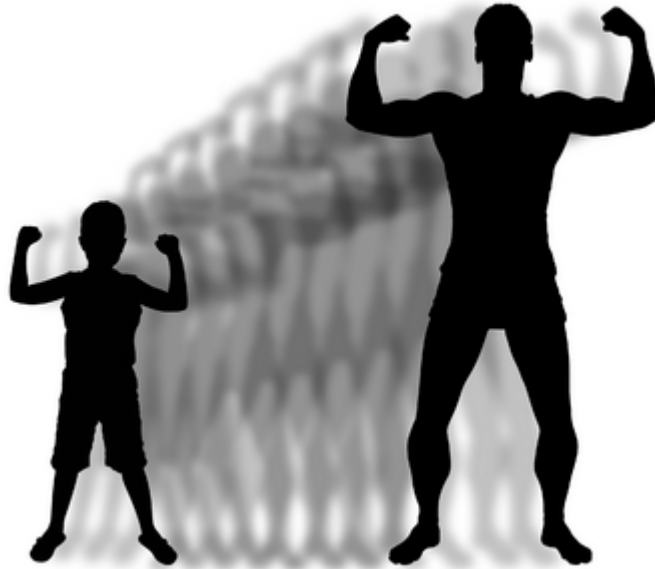


Maturing in God



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1. Three aspects of the Cross

The Cross of Christ is the centre of God's entire plan of redemption.

1 Cor.1:23-24; 1 Peter 2:24; Col.1:19-22

In Scripture, we see three aspects to the Cross:

The Heart of the Cross

Revelation 13:8

The Cross was not something God thought up at the last moment. From the moment of Adam's fall, the plan of the Cross was put in motion. The "heart of the Cross" - the sacrificial love that resulted in the sending of Jesus to die - has always been in the heart of the Father. His love is absolute - the Cross was simply its greatest expression.

The Work of the Cross

Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 5:6

There came a time, 2000 years ago, when the heart of the Cross was enacted out upon the Cross of Calvary. The work of the Cross had two aspects:

Christ died for you

When Jesus died, He took the judgment that you should have received. Christ was your substitute - because He died *for* you, you have *eternal life*.

1 Cor.15:3; Col.1:13-14; Titus 3:4-7

Christ died as you

Not only did Jesus die *for* you, He died *as* you. When Christ died on the Cross, God saw *you* dying on the Cross *in Christ*. Your old Adamic nature was crucified in Christ. Christ was your **representative** - because He died *as* you, you are now a *new creation* in Christ!

2 Cor.5:17; Gal.2:20

Many Christians understand the first part of the work of the Cross (the receiving of eternal life), but don't understand the second part (living as a new creation). Many believe they are now supposed to "die out to themselves" and "crucify the old man".

But the Bible tells us that you have *already* been crucified with Christ. This was part of the work of the Cross for you. You do not have to try to struggle to "die" to sin. You are already dead to sin! All you have to do is receive this truth by faith (the same way you received your salvation), and "count yourself dead to sin". The Holy Spirit then makes it real in your life.

Romans 6:3-14

The Way of the Cross

Luke 9:23

When Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him, He did *not* mean for us to crucify ourselves. We cannot kill off the old nature. That was the work of the Cross. It is the new creation that takes up the Cross and lays down its life for others. It means:

- Having the Heart of the Cross - like the Father (John 15:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:14).
- Bearing the Shame of the Cross - like the Son (Romans 15:3; 1 Peter 2:19-23).
- Denying ourselves for the sake of others - by the Spirit (John 12:24; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 5:15; Revelation 12:11).

Remember: You are not called to do the work of the Cross, but you are called to have the heart of the Cross and to walk the way of the Cross.

Two Trees

The two special trees which God planted in the Garden of Eden symbolized a choice for Adam and Eve.

The Tree of Life - represented the Life of God Himself. In it was God's nature. It offered the highest expression of life - God's love, wisdom and power. It imparted the fullness of all that God is. It symbolized Life.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil - represented independence from God. It imparted a lower expression of life - the ability to judge between right and wrong but without love to govern it. It symbolized Death.

Tree of Knowledge

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the Spirit of God left them, they sold themselves to Satan's authority and sin became their nature. It imparted a lower life-source. What they "ate" became part of them and was passed on, through them, to the generations which followed. They experienced:

- **Death - Genesis 2:17**
- **Broken relationship with God - Gen. 3:8**
- **Broken relationship with one another - Genesis 3:12**
- **Self-justification - Genesis 3:12-13**
- **Cursed life - Genesis 3:16-19**
- **Cut off from eternal life - Gen. 3:22-24**

Tree of Life

The Tree of Life represented a higher life-source. It is the expression of God's life flowing through us. God has the ability to judge between what is right and wrong. In the Tree of Life was also the "knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 3:22).

But with it were other vital ingredients - the *love*, *wisdom* and the *power* to do something with the knowledge.

Proverbs 3:13-26

Scriptural Examples

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil - Jonah (Jonah 3:10; 4:1-2)

Tree of Life - Jesus with woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11)

Tree of Life Available

If God had expressed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to us, we would have all been judged guilty because of our sin and rebellion against Him. He had every right to condemn us. But He didn't. Instead, He sent His Son to take the punishment we deserved so that we could go free. Even though we were in the wrong, because of His love He offers us forgiveness and a whole new life in Him. He has made the Tree of Life available to us in reality in Jesus Christ. In Christ we have "eaten" of the Tree of Life. We are to express to others the same heart that God has expressed to us.

The results of the Tree of Life

- **Life (Genesis 3:22)**
- **Relationship, forgiveness (Rev. 22:14)**
- **Restoration (Revelation 2:7)**
- **Healing (Proverbs 15:4; Revelation 22:2)**
- **Fulfilled desire (Proverbs 13:12)**
- **Righteousness (Proverbs 11:30)**

2. Law (Rules and Self Effort) and Grace

The question of the Law (God's Rules) is one of the most important subjects for a Christian to understand. The Apostle Paul devotes one whole book - Galatians - to the question of the Law, and many other large sections of the New Testament deal with it.

Why the Law?

Galatians 3:19-25; Romans 3:20; 7:7-13

According to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, the Law was given to show God's standards, to reveal sin, to show mankind's helplessness to walk in the law by their own efforts, and to help lead people to a faith in Christ (apart from the Law). Its purpose was to act like a mirror. When we look into a mirror and see that our face is dirty, we do not pick up the mirror and rub our face with it to try to get clean. Its purpose is simply to show us that we need cleaning, but we go to another source - the water - to actually be made clean. The Law was given to show mankind their need of salvation and to point to the One who would make us clean (see Rev.1:5; Titus 3:5).

Two Covenants

Gal 3:15-17 NASB Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. (16) Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. (17) What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham and his "Seed" (Christ). The covenant was for Abraham to believe God, and God would then credit His own righteousness to Abraham (see Rom.4:1-5). The law of Moses was introduced 430 years later because of sin - to preserve Israel until the coming of the Messiah, then point them to Him. The covenant of law was only a *temporary, holding* covenant.

The two covenants interact but they are not the same. In fact, Paul says that when God gave the Law to Moses, it did not even interfere with the Covenant of Faith He had already made with Abraham. That Covenant of Faith continued, untouched, through to Christ and now to us who are in Christ (Gal.3:15-19). We are the "seed of Abraham" (Gal.3:29) and heirs of the Covenant of Faith. The Covenant of Law has *nothing* to do with you at all. **Romans 8:3-4; 1:16-17; Phil.3:3**

The Curse of the Law

Galatians 3:1-3,10-14; James 2:10

No wonder Paul said the Galatian Christians were foolish for reverting to the Law, for under its light two things are revealed:

1. God's righteous standard and judgment (Matt.5:21-48)
2. Our inability to reach that standard, and deserving of judgment (Romans 7:14-25).

Comparing Covenants

The Covenant of Law means that I try by my own self-effort to reach God's holy standard. This is what Paul calls living in the flesh, and the flesh has no ability to conquer itself

Romans 8:3-4 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Covenant of Faith recognizes that I cannot do anything to help myself, but trusts the grace of God to do the work in my life (1 Cor.15:10; Gal.2:21; 2 Cor.12:7).

2Co 3:3-11 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 10 For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory

The letter kills (Ex.32:15-28; Heb.12:18-21)

The Spirit gives life (Acts 2:1-40; Heb.12:22-24)

Moses came down from Sinai, after receiving the Law, to find the people worshipping the golden calf the very thing the Law forbade them to do. Because of this transgression of the Law, 3,000 people died that day. But on the Day of Pentecost, when all Israel was celebrating the giving of the Law to Moses, God poured out His Spirit, and His Law was written on "tablets of human hearts" (Jer.31:33-34; Luke 24:49). Through the preaching of this covenant, 3,000 people were made alive that day (**read John 6:63**).

We are dead to the Law! (Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 2:19-21; 3:13-14) Rom.5:5; Matt.22:36-40; Gal.5:1-4,14,16) with our human efforts to keep it. Now in Christ, as we follow the Spirit and are empowered by Him, the requirements of the law will actually be fulfilled in us.

Rom 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

3. The Firstborn and Their Birthright

The Scripture declares the Lord Jesus Christ is the "Firstborn".

Colossians 1:15-18

Romans 8:29

In doing this it is using the family culture of Old Testament Israel, instituted by God Himself, to picture His relationship to God the Father and to us as God's children.

The Picture in Israel

To be the "Firstborn" in Old Testament Israel did not necessarily mean they were the first born, e.g.

Isaac - Gen. 16-22

Jacob - Gen. 25-27

Joseph - Gen. 37, 49:22-26

Ephraim - Gen. 48:10-20

David - Psalm 89:19-37

The Firstborn held special status in the family. He had . . .

Special Position

He was the father's "right-hand man". He represented the father's *authority* to the family.

Special Inheritance

He received a double-portion of the inheritance.

Special Responsibility

He held responsibility for the welfare of the family. This was why he received the double-portion inheritance. He had sufficient to help any of the family should they be in need.

Deuteronomy 21:17 "But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn.

Exodus 34:19 "The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep.

Numbers 3:11-12 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (12) "Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine.

Genesis 43:33 Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment.

Jesus - The Firstborn

The Lord Jesus is declared to be "Firstborn" in three distinct relationships. In other words, He holds the special status in these relationships. He is . . .

Firstborn over all creation

*Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of all creation.***

Firstborn from among the dead

*Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

Firstborn among many brothers

Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

The Lord Jesus is, and always has been, the Firstborn, with the special position, inheritance and responsibility, over all creation. So when Man, the highest of God's creation, fell, He took His responsibility and came to save us. So, as Firstborn over all creation, He became Firstborn from among the dead, and through His resurrection, bringing many sons back into glory with Him, He became Firstborn among many brothers (Hebrews 2:10-11).

Church of the Firstborn and the Stories of Two Sons

Luke 15:11-32

In this parable, the older brother was just as "lost" in his relationship to his father as was the younger brother who took his inheritance and left home. The older brother failed in all three areas of being "Firstborn". He failed to take his position, he failed to use his inheritance, and he failed to take his responsibility for the younger brother.

*Heb. 12:22-23 "But you have come to **the church of the firstborn**, whose names are written in heaven."*

Church of the Firstborn

Jesus is the Firstborn by right - in His relationship to us, He will always be "the firstborn among many brothers." **But Jesus has included us in His birthright** (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 2:6). In Him, we are now called the firstborn ones by grace. We too now have special position, special inheritance and special responsibility. We are surrounded by a lost world. Will we be like the older brother who neglected the status of being firstborn? Or will we be like Jesus who, as the Firstborn, sacrificed all to bring a lost creation back to His Father?

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (see also 15:24).

Jacob and Esau and Their Attitudes toward the Birthright

Esau and Jacob each had a different attitude toward the birthright. This attitude became the motivation of their whole lives.

Heb.12:16 "See that no one is...godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (see also Rom.9:13).

Esau was a man who loved the things of the world. He lived for the pleasures of life now. Jacob, on the other hand, had his eyes on an eternal dwelling place (Heb.11:9-10). His attitude was that he was a foreigner in the world (Heb.11:13-16). He had his eyes on one major goal - God's eternal purpose. But even though God had planned for Jacob to be the firstborn (Genesis 25:23), Isaac had chosen Esau, who had little interest in the purposes of God, to be the one to carry the birthright. But it was Jacob who had the heart of the firstborn. The firstborn's rights involved two parts:

Valuing the Birthright

Jacob grasped the opportunity to get the birthright from Esau (Genesis 25:29-33). When Esau sold his birthright to satisfy his physical hunger, the Bible says he was "godless." He was declaring that he placed no value on the purposes of God (Genesis 25:34).

Esau had no intention of giving up his material blessing and double portion inheritance (Gen.27:34-36; Heb.12:17). Yet in a time of perceived immediate need, he didn't value it to the point he sold it for a single meal. When he sold the birthright to Jacob, he knew he was selling him the birthright of God's purpose.

Taking Up the Birthright

Hebrews 12:1"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Paul uses the picture of a relay race that has been in progress throughout history. The heroes of faith in the past have all faithfully fulfilled their lap of the race, and have passed the baton on. Abraham passed it to Isaac. Isaac was going to pass it to Esau, but he didn't want it. Jacob desired it more than anything else in life and so he took it up. Down through the centuries the baton of God's eternal purpose has been passed on from one generation to another (Acts 13:36). Now it's our turn in the arena of faith. We are completing the race which they began so that together we might reach the goal (Heb.11:39-40).

The Lord desires each of us to have a heart like Jacob - not like Esau. God loves to bless us (Ephesians 1:3), but he does not want us to reject our birthright. He wants us to move beyond the blessing to the purpose.

Genesis 12:2"... I will bless you...and you will be a blessing."

4. Carnal Christians and the Birthright

Esau and Jacob

Genesis 25:21-34; 27:1-36; Romans 9:13

Esau and Jacob are given to us as examples of the kind of lives that attract either the love or hatred of God. This was because of a particular attitude of heart that each one had - an attitude that was the *motivation* of their whole lives.

Two Attitudes: *Gen 25:27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.*

Esau - the man of the field

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks of the "field" as a picture of the world (see Matt.13:24-30, 36-43). The statement that declared Esau a "man of the field" not only described his occupation, but also, as the Bible unfolds, was a picture of his heart-attitude. **Esau was a man who loved the things of the world - who lived for the pleasures of life now.**

Jacob - tent-dweller

Hebrews 11:1-12:3

Jacob, along with Abraham and Isaac, had his eyes on an eternal dwelling place. He believed God's promise to Abraham, his grandfather, that he would be the father of many nations.

Heb 11:9-10 NASB By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; (10) for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Genesis 12:2-3; 17:4-7,16; 18:18; 22:17-18

This promise was ultimately to be fulfilled in Christ and His people (the church) born through Christ's atoning work on the Cross, that would make up the "City" of God.

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; Eph 2:13-22...(14) For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall... (18) for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Heb 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, (23) to the general assembly and church

The key to Jacob's life was that "living in tents" represented a transient life. His attitude was that he was a foreigner and pilgrim in the world, with his eyes fixed on one goal – pursuing God's city, God's eternal purpose.

The Birthright

The Birthright of the firstborn was far more than the material blessings of an earthly inheritance. It was the right to fulfill in his generation the next step in God's continuing plan and purpose. When Esau sold his birthright to Jacob to satisfy his temporary physical hunger, he was virtually saying he put no value on the eternal purposes of God. *Hebrews 12:15-16 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; (16) that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.*

Esau is like Carnal Christians

It can be said that carnal Christians' claim citizenship to heaven, but live like locals. Their mind is on earthly things more than eternal things. Like Demas in the Bible, when faced with sacrifice or challenges they easily gift up pursuing the purposes (eternal) and make their priority the things of this life.

2Ti 4:10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Php 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

The Blessing

Esau, like all carnal Christians, wants blessing more than they want the birthright.

The birthright was the right to be part of God's purposes. The blessing probably had more to do with material blessings. When he sold the birthright to Jacob, he knew he was selling him the right to be part of God's purpose, but he had no intention of selling him the material wealth and blessing of his inheritance. (*Gen 27:36 NASB Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"*).

The Arena of Faith

Paul uses the picture of a relay race that has been in progress throughout history. The heroes of faith in the past have all faithfully fulfilled their lap of the race, and have passed the baton on. Abraham passed it to Isaac. Isaac was going to pass it to Esau, but he didn't want it. Jacob desired it more than anything else in life and took it up. Down through the centuries it has been passed on and now it's our turn in the arena of faith. We are completing the race that they began so that all together we might reach the goal. God desires each of us to have a heart like Jacob - not like Esau.

5. The Feast of Israel Fulfilled in Christ

Lev.23:4-44; Num.28:16-31; Deut.16:1-17

"Blessed - happy, fortunate (to be envied) - are the people who know the joyful sound (who understand and appreciate the spiritual blessings symbolised by the feasts); they walk, O Lord, in the light and favour of your countenance" Psalm 89:15 (Amp).

Shadows and Types

1 Cor.10:11; Acts 3:19-21; Col.2:16-17

All Israel's worship revolved around three major feasts or festivals, which celebrated three special experiences in God's dealings with Israel. These celebrations were a pre-picture of the work of God in the Church and in our lives personally.

Passover

John 1:29; 1 Cor.5:2,6-8; Luke 22:1,15

The Feast of Passover contained three festivals:

- **The Feast of Passover** (Lev.23:5-14; Deut.16:1-8; Num.9:1-14)
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Ex.12:8,15-20,31-39; 13:3-10)
- **Sheaf of 1st Fruits** (Lev.23:9-14; 1 Cor.15:20-23)

Passover celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and is a beautiful spiritual picture of our own experience of salvation. Jesus is described as the Passover Lamb. He was crucified *on the Day of Passover*, at the same time Jewish families were slaying their Passover lamb. Three days and three nights later, Jesus rose on a Sunday, *the morning of the waving of the Sheaf of First Fruits* before God. Christ, the fulfilment of the Sheaf of First Fruits, thus presented us before God in Himself.

Pentecost

Leviticus 23:15-22

The Feast of Pentecost is called the Feast of Weeks, because Israel was commanded by God to count off seven weeks plus one day from the Sheaf of First Fruits - 50 days altogether (Pentecost is a Greek word meaning "fifty"). Pentecost celebrated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The fulfilment of Pentecost came 50 days after the Resurrection when the Holy Spirit was poured out *on the actual day of Pentecost*, when the Law of God was written on the believers' hearts (2 Cor.3:3).

Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated Israel's sojourn in the wilderness and the conquest of the Promised Land. Like Passover, Tabernacles also contained three minor festivals:

- The Feast of Trumpets (Lev.23:23-25)
- The Day of Atonement (Lev.23:26-32)
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev.23:33-44)

The Feast of Tabernacles pre-pictures God's final work in the Church prior to the return of Christ. The Day of Atonement, the day of national cleansing, will be fulfilled in the Church God will have brought His Church to the unity and purity that He has desired from the beginning (read John 17; Eph.4:11-13). The Feast of Trumpets was to gather the

people to the door of the Tabernacle to prepare for the Day of Atonement. The last two decades in particular have seen a great blowing of the trumpet message of God calling the Church to come together. Tabernacles celebrated the great ingathering of the harvest. The greatest harvest of souls in all of history is approaching, and our Tabernacles will culminate in the return of Christ.

6. The Glorious Church

Ephesians 5:25-27

From before the creation of the world, God has had a plan and a purpose for His Church. All history and prophecy - from Genesis through to Revelation - has been building up to a great climax - the fulfillment of His glorious plan. The Church was in the mind of God...

- **At creation** (Eph.1:4; Titus 1:2; Rev.13:8)
- **In the calling of Abraham** (Gal.3:16,29)
- **In Israel** (1 Cor.10:11; Col.2:16-17)
- **In the sending of His Son** (Eph.5:25-27; Matt. 13:44; 2 Timothy 1:9-10)

What is the Church?

Ephesians 1:22-23

The Greek word Paul uses for the Church is *Ecclesia*, which simply means "*the called out ones, or the assembly*". The Greek background of the word was in cities people would be called out and assembled together to conduct the business of the city. Who is part of this *Ecclesia*? Those who have responded to the calling of Jesus and are assembled together to conduct His Kingdom business.

Ephesians 2:12-22

On the Cross, Christ "made the two one". The two groups of people were Jew and Gentile, who before Christ had a "barrier" between them - a "dividing wall of hostility". Now there is no differentiation between Jew or Gentile, male or female (Gal.3:28; Col.3:11). The Church is the company of all those who have responded to God's call, whether Jew or Gentile. This means that the Old Testament saints (who also responded to God's call in their day) are now just as much part of the Church that Christ redeemed for Himself (John 8:56; Heb.11:8-10,39-40; 12:22-23).

Overview of History

As we look at the Church from the Day of Pentecost to today, we see a great birth, a period of decline, periods of restoration, all heading toward the glorious finale (Rom 8:20-23, Eph 1:10).

Restoration of Truth

From the moment of the Church's birth, Satan began an attack, to corrupt, and to cause her to lose the glory and truth of God. Most of the New Testament epistles were written to correct churches that were moving away from God's intention (2 Cor.11:2-4; Gal.1:6-9). The church seemed to reach a low point historically in the Dark Ages when there was very little light. God moved to restore much of what was lost beginning with the Reformation.

AD 1517 Justification by faith, reformation.....Luther, Calvin

AD 1524 Water Baptism, call to holy living..... Antibaptist, Mennonites.

AD 1700 Great Awakening, Born-again, *Sanctification*.....Whitfield, Westleys, Edwards.

AD 1800 Second Awakening, Born-again, Cain Ridge, Camp meetings, Second work of grace, early Baptism in the Spirit, Finney, Moody holiness movement of late 1800s,

Missionary Vision.....CT Studd & others.

AD 1890s-1910 - Baptism in the Holy Spirit.....Cherokee County NC, Topeka/Baxter Springs KS, Azusa Street

AD 1948 Latter Rain, fresh Baptism of Holy Spirit, laying on of hands etc

AD 1960s- The Charismatic Renewal.

AD 1970s – Apostolic movement England and beyond, Shepherding etc

AD 1980- Purging and purification of the Church through ministry scandals

AD 1990- Prophetic movement, Men’s movement, Multiplication of Apostolic ministry

AD 2000s – Rise of Apostolic network movement, Mega church movement, resurgence of community, missional, marketplace ministry etc. God never finishes on a lesser note than on what He began (Hag.2:9). He always leaves the best wine till last (John 2:9-10).

Jesus is not coming back for a weak, anemic Church. His intention is for a Church "without spot or wrinkle". The world will get darker, but the Church will reveal more of the glory of God (Num.14:21; Prov.4:18; Ephesians 3:10; 4:11-13; John 17)

The NT Emphasis on the Local Church

The context of the Bible (The NT) is the context of the Local Church. The New Testament was written to local churches and it is only in the context of local churches that it can be properly understood and walked in.

The Greek word for Church, Ecclesia, is mentioned 114 times in the New Testament, 96 of those times it is in reference to a distinct local Church.

Definition Local Church: Those believers in a distinct geographic area who are joined together to serve the purposes of God. It is an identifiable group of believers who are joined together in a way of life serving God under the oversight of God given leaders.

It is:

- 1) Groups of believers in a given locality. Mt 18:20.
- 2) Gathered to the person of Jesus for worship. Jn 4:24.
- 3) Living a disciplined life. Mt 28:19-20.
- 4) Under the oversight of gifted ministries. Eph 4:9-13.
- 5) Established in the principles of Christ doctrine. Acts 2:42, Heb 6:1-2.
- 6) Keeping the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 11:23-34.
- 7) Locally governed yet in fellowship with other groups of believers. Rev 1:11, Phil 1:1.

Planted in a Local Church is God's Method of Growth and Maturity

*Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.***

*Col 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, **grows with a growth which is from God.***

Psa 92:12-14 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (13) Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. (14) They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green

In the context of the local church there exist the daily encouragement and example from fellow believers as well as teaching and exhortation from God given leaders. There are also the opportunities to practice serving with the "one anothers" of scripture as well as exercising Spiritual gifts, that will help the individual believer grow and mature. It is impossible to make progress in maturity apart from the local church.

7. The Plan for the Ages

From the moment of creation, God has had a plan for mankind described as the mystery. *Col 1:26 NASB that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,*

1 Corinthians 10:11

God hid this plan of His in the Old Testament, revealing it in patterns, types and "shadows" - in the Law (Heb.10:1), in the Sabbath (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 4:1-10), in the pattern of the Tabernacle (Heb. 8:5; 9:24), in the Feasts of Israel (1 Cor. 5:7). These "shadows" reveal the outline of God's plan - the "mystery of God" (Ephesians 3:4-9) that is even now unfolding.

Three Witnesses

1 John 5:6-8

2 Peter 3:8

THE FATHER

The Witness of Water

- The Flood in the days of Noah (Gen.7:1-24).
- Speaks of "baptism" of whole world (1 Peter 3:20).
- Speaks of the end of all flesh (Gen.6:13).
- The witness of a believer's baptism in water (1 Peter 3:21).

THE SON

The Witness of Blood

- Began with a son, Isaac, and ended with the Son.
- Began with the offering of Isaac and ended with the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.
- Characterised by blood sacrifices, ending at the Cross (Heb.7:27; 10:11-14; John 19:30).

THE SPIRIT

The Witness of Spirit

- Began at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).
- This is the age of the witness of the Spirit (John 15:26; 16:14; Acts 5:32).
- Begins with an outpouring of God's Spirit, and ends with an outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:17).

Read also:

Psalm 90:4

Ex.20:11

Gen.1:14

Rev.12:1

8. The Power of the Resurrection

Rom 1:4; 1 Cor.15:3-4,14-19

Jesus had prepared His disciples for His death well ahead of time, and had told them that he would be raised on the third day (*Luk 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."*).

Luke 24; John 20

After the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus, the disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. They went everywhere declaring the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and "turned the world upside down" in their day (Acts 17:6).

Understanding what the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ means for you will dynamically affect your life too.

Raised With Christ

Eph 2:5-6 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Col 3:1-3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (3) For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Not only was Jesus' death for you - His resurrection was for you too! Christ was raised to give you:

- **New life** (2 Tim.1:9-10; Rom.6:4)
- **New birth** (2 Cor.5:17; 1 Peter 3:3)
- **New position** (Eph.1:18-23; 2:6; 1 Peter 3:21-22)
- **New power** (Eph.1:19-20; Acts 4:33)

Resurrection Power

It is your release from the PAST

Rom.6:4-11; Eph.2:1-7; Col.2:12-15

Your old sinful life was put to death on the Cross with Jesus, and buried with him in the grave. Then, when Jesus was raised to life again, you were raised with Him as a new creation - leaving behind your old life in Jesus' grave!

It is your power for the PRESENT

Rom.8:31-39; 6:6-14

Because Jesus is ALIVE, we have now received the power of His Spirit to live a life of victory over sin and all Satan's attacks against us.

It is your hope for the FUTURE

1 Cor.15:17-23, 50-57; 1 Thess.4:13-18

Jesus is called "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18) because, in His resurrection, He was opening the way for all those who would believe in Him to be raised from the dead also! One wonderful day Jesus Christ will return to the earth again - not as a baby this time, but revealing to the whole world who He really is - the glorious Son of God and Ruler of all creation. At that time all those who have died, believing in Him, will be raised to life again!

Resurrection Life

Philippians 3:10"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings..."

As Christians, we have a power we can draw on daily. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:24-25). This life is described as:

- **Streams of living water** (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39).
- **Treasure in an earthen vessel** (2 Cor.4:7-10).
- **A quickening of our mortal body** (Rom.8:11).
- **Grace sufficient for every need** (2 Cor.12:9-10).
- **An unspeakable, glorious joy** (1 Peter 1:5-8).

"I have been crucified with Christ and I now longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" Galatians 2:20.

9. The Walk of Faith

Faith is the key to the Christian life. Through faith we have access to the impossible! (Mark 9:23). Faith is the key to connecting with God (Is. 65:24; Matt.6:5), the approval of God (Rom. 5:1; James 2:23), and the full inheritance He has for us, His people (Heb.11:1; John 14:12-14). Faith is a key that unlocks things in God (Rom.1:16-17).

Kinds of Knowledge

2 Corinthians 5:7

This scripture reveals two kinds of knowledge that we can receive:

- **Sense knowledge** - based on appearance
- **Revelation knowledge** - based on God's word (Rom.10:17)

Faith Pleases God

Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 1:6-7

Many Christians see faith as just being a way to get things from God. But faith is more than that. Faith *in itself* is something that pleases the heart of God. Some people think that true faith is where you get the answer straight away. But the Bible talks about the "trying of your faith", like gold being refined in a fire.

We often see only our immediate need, but God is after something far deeper in our lives than just the answer to our requests. The moment God answers our prayer, we don't need faith anymore - we already have our answer. When we encounter delays God continues to work valuable things in our hearts and character. In fact, some of the greatest examples of faith in Scripture are examples of *enduring* faith (see Mark 7:25-30; Rom.4:18-21).

How Faith Works

There is a principle we see in the word that shows us there are usually about four phases of moving in faith. :

We get a word from God

God gives us a word relevant to our circumstances. This may come through the written Scripture or by the inner voice of the Holy Spirit (see Gen.15:3-5; 17:15-21; Josh.1:8; Ps.1:2).

We move to obey the word - take steps of faith

It begins by taking *a step of faith* and obey that word. Faith is *active*, not passive. Most of God's promises are conditional - He will do His part, if we do our part (see Genesis 15:6; Matthew 7:24-27; James 2:17).

The testing of faith

Circumstances often appear contrary to what God has spoken. If it's a prophecy we get prophetic contradictions, like Abraham, Moses and others faced. Everything happening

around us appears contrary to what God has said, and there seems to be no natural evidence for our believing. At this point, our faith tends to rest completely on God's word (see Rom. 4:16-21; Ps.105:17-20).

The victory

Both the moving in faith as well as receiving answers bring glory to God. (1 John 5:4; Genesis 21:1-3; Psalm 105:20-22; Acts 3:16; Heb.6:13-15).

Hebrews 11 shows us that the heroes of faith sometime brought glory to God by continuing to believe for things up until the time they died. This was a faith that believed even though they saw no evidence in their lifetime of receiving what they were believing for. The fact that they lived by faith gained God's approval. *Heb 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

The Life of Faith

- **What I am** - righteous by faith (Eph.2:8; Phil.3:9)
- **What I have** - promises by faith (Heb.6:12)
- **What I can do** - exploits by faith (Mark 16:17-18; John 14:12)

10. God's Victory in Persecution

John 15:20; Acts 14:22

*2Ti 3:10-12 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, (11) persecutions, and sufferings...what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! (12) **Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.***

Persecution is something that the Lord didn't hide from us. He indicated that it is somewhat expected. In fact, it is a promise from the Lord Jesus to all those who would follow Him (*Mar 10:30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, **along with persecutions**; and in the age to come, eternal life).*

There is a war that is always going on around us. We are at war with the powers of darkness (Eph.6:12). Satan's dominion is in direct, violent opposition to the advance of the Kingdom of God (Matt.11:12). We must remember that the spiritual forces of darkness hate us. If you are living in obedience to God, that opposition is sometimes going to touch your life (Luke 12:49-53).

Even when we attempt to live "harmless as doves" there is a light in us that darkness hates. Jesus gave us insight into this. His life testified that the deeds of this world are evil *Joh 7:7 "The world...hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.*

We tend to have the have the same effect on the world. We are to love the world but not expect the world to love us because of our light *Joh 15:18-20 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (20) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

God Uses Persecution

1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-4

- **To launch us into the same life as Jesus** (Philippians 3:9-12; Mark 10:38-39)
- **To bring comfort to others by our experience** (2 Cor.1:3-6; Heb.2:18)
- **To encourage other believers to be courageous** (Phil.1:12-14)
- **To keep us from becoming conceited** (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
- **To train us in righteousness** (Heb.12:11-12)
- **To teach us obedience** (Hebrews 5:8-9)
-

Results of Persecution

God is able to turn all attacks of Satan around for our good and the good of His Kingdom (Rom.8:28).

- **The Church is scattered to spread the Gospel** (Acts 8:1,4-8)
- **New places are opened to the Gospel** (Acts 16:14-15)
- **Believers share everything with one another** (Acts 4:29,32)
- **The genuine believers are revealed** (Hebrews 12:27-29)
- **It produces life in others** (2 Corinthians 4:7-12)
-

Victory in the Church in the midst of Persecutions

We are not to approach this warfare in a fatalistic, defeated way. There is a victory that God is always working in and through us, even in the midst of persecution.

We are more than conquerors

Romans 8:35,37 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (read also verses 36,38-39; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

We have overcome the world

1 John 5:4 "...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" (see Rom.8:31; John 16:33).

We have a treasure in jars of clay

2 Corinthians 4:7 "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (read also verses 8-10).

We count ourselves dead

Galatians 6:14 "Yet God forbid that I should boast about anything or anybody except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means that the world is a dead thing to me and I am a dead man to the world" (Phillips).

We experience a deeper aspect of the grace of God in persecution

2 Corinthians 2:9-10 "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (read also verses 7-8,10; 11:23-33).

We experience a supernatural joy that abounds in persecution

Acts 5:41 "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (see also Matthew 5:11-12).

1 Corinthians 4:9-13

2 Corinthians 6:4-10

11. Walking in the Spirit

Gal 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (17) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

You can cast devils out of people, but you cannot cast out their flesh. We are stuck with our flesh until we die, or the Lord returns to give us a glorified body 1 Corinthians 15. Biblically speaking, our flesh is the pollution that is in our body as a result of the fall. The final portion of our salvation is when we receive a glorified body, completely free from that pollution.

Many Christians struggle to overcome their flesh, but God never designed the Christian life to work on the basis of self-effort apart from Him (Gal.3:1-3; Rom.8:3-4). In other words, you can't deal with your flesh by your flesh. Self-effort comes from our own flesh, and flesh cannot overcome flesh. So how do we overcome the flesh? By walking in the Spirit (by the Spirit, putting to death the deeds of the body/flesh)!

*Rom 8:1-13...(2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (3) For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did..., (4) so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit... (8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you... (12) So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- (13) for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; **but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.***

New Walk In The Spirit

Romans 8:1-8; Galatians 5:25; 6:8

Just as a space rocket shoots a man out of the law of gravity into a whole new law, so the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the power which "rockets" us out of *the law of sin and death into the law of Spirit of life*. We are called now not to "walk in the flesh" any more, but to "walk in the Spirit". Once the revelation of Christ's complete work on our behalf is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, the freedom of *choice* lies before us. Whereas before we had no choice (Rom.7:15-23), now we have, by the power of the Spirit, the ability to *choose* to walk in the Spirit (Rom. 8:12-13).

How It Works

Walking in the Flesh

God created our body with certain basic appetites - appetites for *food, sex, power, rest and excitement* - and these appetites are good. But when they become the controlling factor in our lives, they become corrupted by sin and destructive. These appetites are fed by the five senses - what we *see, hear, touch, taste* and *smell* - the information sources of the flesh. We walk in the flesh when we:

- **Obey our fleshly appetites**
- **Allow our five senses to be our basis for action**
- **Struggle to do things in our own strength**

Walking in the Spirit

The governing factor in our lives is not our body, but the Holy Spirit indwelling us. So we react to temptations and the circumstances we face not according to what we see and hear, but according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He reminds us of God's Word (John 14:26;16:13-15). Thus, our minds, emotions and will are "fed" by the Spirit.

We walk in the Spirit when we:

- **Obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit**
- **Make the Word of God our basis for action**
- **Rely totally on the power of the Holy Spirit**
-

An OT Example

Numbers 13:17-14:11

The Ten Spies: believed what they *saw*. They fed their **minds** with it - and the result was *unbelief* in God's word. They fed their **emotions** with it - and the result was *fear*. They fed their **wills** with it - and the result was *they decided to go back to Egypt*.

The Two Spies: believed God's Word *despite* what they saw. They fed their **minds** with it - and the result was *faith*. They fed their **emotions** with it - and the result was *courage*. They fed their **wills** with it - and the result was *they were ready to go in to possess the land*.

Living in the Spirit

- **Be aware of the Spirit** (Eph.4:30).
- **Fellowship with the Spirit** (2 Cor.13:14).
- **Listen to the voice of the Spirit** (1 Thess.5:19)
- **Obey the promptings of the Spirit** (Rom.8:14)
- **Pray in the Spirit** (1 Thess.5:17; Jude 20)
- **Worship in the Spirit** (John 4:23; Heb.13:15)

Baptism in the Spirit (Spirit filled walk)

Biblical accounts of initial fillings

The Biblical accounts of initial fillings of the Spirit contain the Biblical ways the early church were filled with the Spirit. They contained means of filling, experiences, and manifestations we need to expect today with initial fillings.

- **Acts 2:1-11** The Spirit fell on them while waiting in prayer before God vs 1-4. The initial result was speaking in tongues about the mighty deeds of God vs 4,11
- **Acts 8:12-24** A period of days elapsed between the time they received the word and were later filled with
- the Spirit vs 12-17. They were filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on them vs 17. Something
- observable happened as a result of them being filled with the he Spirit vs 18.
- **Acts 9:1-17** A period of 3 days elapsed between Paul's Damascus road experience and being filled with the Spirit. He was filled with the Spirit as hands were laid on him vs 17-18. We do not know what the initial manifestation of the Spirit was in Paul's life but we

do know that he later operated in gifts of the Spirit, especially speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14:1-40, 18.

- **Acts 10:43-48** The Holy Spirit fell on them while Peter was speaking. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and exalting God vs 45-46. This event occurred before they were baptized in water vs 47.
- **Acts 19:1-6** Something in their experience gave Paul the indication that they hadn't received the Spirit when they initially believed vs 2. They were filled with the Holy Spirit as Paul laid his hands on them vs 6. The initial manifestation was speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Observations we can make from the facts/examples from the Biblical accounts of initial fillings

1. There is no automatic assumption that one is filled at salvation.
2. There is very clear accompanying manifestations when one is filled such as tongues, prophecy, exalting God, and boldness. The most common manifestation is speaking in tongues. We should expect accompanying manifestation when filled.
3. People were filled at times when hands were laid on them, when praying, and when listening to the word being preached.
4. It is obvious that being filled with the Spirit is not a one time only thing. These accounts along with the exhortation in Eph 5:18 to be continually filled with the Spirit shows us that it is to be continual experience.

Biblical accounts of continual fillings

From the Biblical accounts of the continual fillings of the Spirit and the river flowing we see that it is not just a one time thing but something continual.

- *Act 4:8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,***
- *Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.***
- *Act 7:54-56 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. (55) **But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens***
- *opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*
- *Act 13:9-10 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, **filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on***
- ***him, (10) and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"***

It is clear that to be channels of God's Spirit we need to be filled and continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

*Act 13:52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 5:18 NASB And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be (continually) filled with the Spirit,(read Luke 11:9-13; Acts 5:3)*

Matthew Henry accurately comments on being continually filled in Eph 5:18 “The meaning of the exhortation is that men should labor for a plentiful measure of the Spirit, that would fill their souls with great joy, strength, and courage, which things sensual men expect their wine should inspire them with. We cannot be guilty of any excess in our endeavours after these: nay, we ought not to be satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but aspiring after greater measures, so as to be filled with the Spirit.”

12. Eating Daily Bread

Matthew 4:4 "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Communication is key for any relationships to thrive. Daily communication with God is essential to growing in Him. Jesus walked in this. He listened to the voice of His Father all the time and spoke of the reality of hearing from God every day *Joh 8:47 "He who is of God hears the words of God."*

When facing the temptation in the wilderness Jesus sets for the importance of hearing from God every day by quoted from Deuteronomy regarding the manna God provided on a daily basis.

Mat 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Deuteronomy 8:2-3"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years...He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

Giving Israel the manna everyday in the wilderness was both answering a physical need but also showing a spiritual reality that they need to feed on His word everyday (1 Cor.10:11).

What was the Manna?

Exodus 16

In the same way that the people of Israel gathered the manna, we are to live on the word of God. What does the manna in the wilderness teach us?

- **It had to be gathered daily** (verse 4)
- **It had to be gathered personally** (verse 16)
- **Each person had to gather as much as he needed** (verse 16-17,21)
- **They could not live on yesterday's manna** (verse 19-20)
- **They had to gather a double portion on the 6th day, enough for the Sabbath as well** (verse 5)
- **The manna was only for the period they lived in the wilderness** (verse 35)
- **An individual portion of manna was hidden in a golden jar inside the Ark of the Covenant for the generations to come** (verse 33-34)

Jesus and His words are our Manna

John 6:32-58 - He is the Bread of Life

After the feeding of the 5000, the people asked the Lord to give them a miraculous sign, just like Moses did when he gave the people of Israel manna in the wilderness. Jesus answered that He Himself was "the true bread from heaven". In other words, what God was trying to teach Israel by sending manna was fulfilled in the person of Christ. Jesus is the "Word become flesh" (John 1:1-2,12; 1 John 1:1-2).

Heb.1:1-2

Jesus gives His people the hidden Manna

*Rev 2:17 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him **I will give some of the hidden manna**, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'*

In the Lord Jesus, God's spiritual Manna from heaven is hidden from others but available to God's people.

Joh 6:32-58 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven...58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

We have the privilege of eating of this "hidden manna" each day, as we spend time with the Lord, and through the Holy Spirit, search the deep things of God (1 Cor.2:7-10).

Colossians 2:2-3 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge".

Where we gather our Manna

Jesus shows us that we gather the hidden manna in the hidden place of our prayer closet. It is the private place in the presence of God where we gather and eat our daily manna.

Mat 6:5-6 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (6) "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

13. Living as a Son/Daughter

1 John 3:1; Rom.8:15-17

Gal 4:6-7 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (7) Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

We have a relationship with God as a son/daughter. We are also heirs. To fully appreciate and walk in our relationship with God we need to understand what Christ's inheritance is all about.

Christ's inheritance

The inheritance of Jesus includes:

- **A name superior to every other** (Phil.2:9-10).
- **Everything in heaven and on earth** (Col.1:15-20).
- **The kingdom** (Matt.25:34; Luke 22:29; James 2:5).
- **Us** (1 Kings 8:51,53; Titus 2:14; Eph.1:18).

Our inheritance

Because we are heirs together with Him, our inheritance involves:

- **The name of Jesus** (John 14:13-14; Rev.3:12).
- **Everything in heaven and on earth** (Eph.1:22).
- **The kingdom** (Matt.25:34; Luke 22:29; Col.1:12).
- **The Lord** (Psalm 16:5; 73:26).

We usually tend to fail to walk in our inheritance in one of two ways seen in the story of the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-31 (11) And He said, "A man had two sons.

The parable is about two sons not just one. We usually focus on the Prodigal who left as the one that missed out on what his father had for him. But the one who stayed on the farm also missed out on what the father had for him.

The Prodigal Son

- had a change of heart from being rebellious, to becoming humble and submissive.
- was willing to forgo his rights as a son, just so he could be in relationship with his father again.

The Older Brother

- really didn't enjoy the life with his father (**lack of relationship**).
- was probably jealous that the father went ahead and have part of the inheritance to the younger brother (**envy, jealousy**)
- because he didn't have a real, abundant relationship with his father he was only conscious of how hard the work was and how long her served (**duty without delight or a slave without sonship mentality**)

- had the **responsibility of a firstborn son** to go after the younger brother yet never did (**jealousy coupled with legalistic attitude of I deserve what I am laboring for**).
- **lived as a servant of the house**, not as a firstborn son.
- the robe and ring given to the younger son were **symbols of the firstborn** - the older brother obviously never used them.
- unable to love or enjoy what the father did when asked to join the celebration (**another indication that he didn't love the father as he should**).
- **despised** his brother and was **angry** with his **father (a legalistic and rebellious attitude)**.
- was **self-righteous and self-centered**
- **did not receive back** the prodigal as his own brother.

It is often the people who remain in the church and faithfully serve who end up with the older brother mentality. They never fully enjoy life with the father or aspects of the inheritance they are entitled to now. The prodigal did what was wrong but he did "come to his senses." The older brother never seemed to see the error of his ways. He continued, like many in the church, to be in religious bondage, duty without delight in their son ship with the father

Gal.3:26-29; Eph.1:18-21; 2:6; 1 John 3:1- 2

We can fall from enjoying the blessings of God's grace in our sonship by two ways, seen in the story.

Sin: Licence, Carelessness, Living a self centered life without the Father. (Gal.5:13-21).

Law: Legalism, Carefulness, Living a self-centered life without the Father (Gal.2:16,21; 5:1-4).

The Father's will for us, however, is:

Grace: Liberty, Carefreeness, Enjoying and delighting in the Father and His life (Rom.6:14).

We have special **privileges** that come from being a son (Heb.4:16; 10:19; Eph.3:12), but was also have matching **responsibilities** (Eph.6:10-18; 1 Thess.5:17; Matt.16:18-19; 2 Cor.5:18-20).

Our Father's desire is for us to grow into mature sons - sons just like His firstborn Son, Jesus!

Rom 8:29-31 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (30) and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (31) What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 1 John 3:1-3

14. Living as Sons/Daughters who are Servants

Philippians 2:5-8"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant."

The Christian life of servanthood isn't one in which we **serve to be** accepted as sons/daughters. We **serve because we are** sons/daughters. Our great example, the Lord Jesus, did not serve God to qualify to become a son. He already was the Son of God, yet He laid aside His glory to become the servant of all (Matt. 20:28).

There is often selfish motive in servanthood. When we serve to obtain something from God (salvation, acceptance etc) our service is tainted. We have already been made sons of God (John 1:12; Gal.4:4-7), who have all things we need in Christ (2 Pet.1:3; Col.2:9-10), and are seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Like Jesus we no longer have to "grasp" for something but freely give. *Mat 10:8... Freely you received, freely give.*

God has Designed us to be Bond-Servants/Love Slave

Rom 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

The Greek word Paul uses for bond-servant is *doulos*, which actually means "slave". He is referring to the custom of his day. If a slave came to the time when he could be set free, but because of his love for his master chose not to accept his freedom, he then received a mark pierced in his ear. This was a sign that he was a "love-slave" to his master for life (see Exodus 21:5-6; Deuteronomy 15:16-17). We, having been set free by Christ from the ownership of Satan, now by free-will choice become love-slaves to the One who has purchased us with His own precious blood.

1 Cor.6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:16

Serving God by Serving Others

Matthew 25:35-40...40... 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

We serve the Lord when we serve one another. God counts the love we show to others as love expressed to Him. God so much wants us to walk in love that He expresses through Paul that love is the only debt we owe. We love God by continuing to love others. (Romans 13:8).

Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 4:10-11

Qualities of a Servant

The Lord pours out His Spirit upon His servants (Acts 2:18) and so we are filled with His qualities of servanthood:

- **Joy** (Psalm 100:2; John 15:10-11).
- **Faithfulness** (Luke 19:17; Hebrews 3:2-3).
- **Wholeheartedness** (Rom.1:9-10; 1 Sam.12:24; 2 Chron.31:20-21).
- **Undivided loyalty** (Luke 16:13; 1 Sam.7:3; Joshua 24:14-15).
- **Enthusiasm** (Rom.12:11).

The Reward of Faithful Servants

As we are faithful in our servanthood as a son/daughter we Jesus returns, or we leave this earth to meet Him, there is a unique and special reward waiting. Notice the parallel between the great parable on servanthood in Matthew 25:21 and 1 Peter 1:7.

Mat 25:21 (After his master returns) "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

1Pe 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Praise - Well done

Honor - I will put you in charge of many things.

Glory - Enter into the joy of your Master.

See also: Matthew 25:35-40; 1 Peter 4:10-11 Hebrews 9:14; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19

15. Walking Carefully Before God

Eph 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly (carefully, exactly, the opposite of careless) not as fools, but as wise,

As God's people we have a call to live carefully, attentively, and circumspectly before the Lord. We are not to be careless but a responsible people. If we will walk carefully before the Lord in His design, we will truly become the "light of the world...a city set on a hill" that shows the earth God's alternative/better way of living.

Attentive to God

Act 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

Our first and foremost responsibility is to live before the Lord Himself (see 1 Cor.7:24; Rom.14:12; 3:19). When we realize that we are under "His gaze" it causes us to walk in a careful way to please Him. *Heb 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

- **As His redeemed** (Col.1:12-14; 2 Peter 1:3-4; Rom.12:1-2).
- **As His children**(1 Pet.1:14-17;Eph.5:1; 1Jn.3:1-3).
- **As His temple** (1 Cor.6:18-20)
- **As His representatives** (2 Cor.5:19-20; 1 John 4:17; 1 Peter 4:11)

Aware of His Governing Authorities

1Pe 2:13-14 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, (14) or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

When we are aware that governing authorities are from God we respond to them differently, "as unto the Lord. We are responsible to walk before them in four ways:

- **Submit** (Romans 13:1-7)
- **Pray** (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- **Do what is right** (Titus 3:1-2)
- **Respect and honor** (1 Peter 2:16-17; Ex.22:28)

The only time when we are to go against governing authorities is when they allowed to disobey authorities in government is when it violate and lead against the will of God. *Act 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.*

Responsibility Towards Employers

The principle of slaves before their masters applies to our situation today. There were many different forms of slavery in the Bible and much of it was more like employer and employee relationships rather than the ownership slavery of the 1800s. If we follow His design we will be the "light of the world" and a "city set on a hill" shining for His design to the world around us.

Eph 6:5-7 Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the real master, Christ. (6) Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. (7) And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God.

How God's servants are to walk with their employers:

- **Trustworthy** (Neh.13:13; 1 Cor4:1-2; 1 Tim.1:12; Heb.3:5; Dan.6:4; Prov.11:13; 25:13; 2 Tim.2:2)
- **Hardworking** (2 Thess.3:7-15; Acts 20:34-35; Prov.6:6; 12:11; 13:11; 10:4; 14:4)
- **Honest** (Titus 2 9-10; Prov.11:3; Lev.19:35-36; Prov.11:1)
- **Obedient, respectful and sincere** (Eph.6:5-6; 1Tim.6:1-2)}
- **Motivated to please** (Titus 2:9)}
- **Content with our wages** (Luke 3:14)

Employers Towards Employees

Eph 6:9 Masters, it's the same with you. No abuse, please, and no threats. You and your servants are both under the same Master in heaven. He makes no distinction between you and them.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of Christian employers as well as servants. As employers walk before the Lord they are to treat employees the way He wants them to.

- **Do not threaten** (Eph.6:9)
- **Provide them with what is right and fair** (Colossians 4:1)
- **Pay them promptly and consistently** (James 5:4; Deut.24:25; Lev.19:13; Jer.22:13; Mal.3:5)

Carefully With Church

The church is the body of Christ that He is always building. Christians are to walk with the church carefully in the manner He desires.

- Leaders towards those they serve (1 Peter 5 2-3; Eph.4:11-13)
- God's people towards their leaders (Heb.13:17; 1 Thess.5:12-13)
- Towards one another (Rom.15:1-2; 14:13-15; 13:8-9; Gal.6:2)
- To extra local ministries (3 Jn.5-8; 1 Cor.9:9-11)

16. Walking Through Failure

2Co 11:30-33 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

Everyone, including Christians, experience failure in their life. How we respond to it says more about success in God more than positive circumstances. While God is at work in our failure the enemy also works to leave us condemned and disillusioned. We must recognize how "God is at work in us" Phil 2:13, in our failure to take confidence in His plan for our lives.

God Defends us

Romans 8:31-34;1 John 3:19-20

The enemy works to produce condemnation in us (no way out of our mistakes and failure). But God has committed Himself to us - and that means through good or bad, success or failure (2 Timothy 2:13). Our defense of failure isn't our perfection but God who is perfecting us.

We Have A Decision

Accept full responsibility

Failure is a product of human weakness, and it is only when we claim responsibility for our own failure that we allow God to work on our behalf. It is very easy to blame others - friends, enemies, family, the system - or even God. But no matter what may happen, God is *never* at fault (Zeph.3:5).

Repent and receive forgiveness

If we fail, God doesn't give up on us. Instead, the Lord Jesus acts like a defense attorney, defending us before the Father against all the accusations of the Enemy (1 John 1:9-2:2). Repentance opens the way for us to leave our failure behind.

God requires an involvement from us. We need to be as committed to His purposes as He is to us!

Learn the Valuable Things God Teachers Through our Failure

We learn not to trust ourselves and our own abilities. In failure we learn what is really important and how dependent we are on God's grace and providence over our lives

God's Plan for our Life Continues

It is impossible for God to fail, so when He commits Himself to do something, not even your worst failure can hinder Him from bringing it about (Job 42:2; Heb.6:16-19; Phil;1:6; 2:13).

Failure Plays a Part

Failures were never intended by God, but God actually has the ability to use failure to further His plan - not just "in spite of", but "because of".

- **He works in all things for our good** (Rom.8:28)

- **He reveals His glory in our weakness** (2 Cor. 12:7-10; 4:7-11; 2 Cor.4:7; 13:4; Phil.4:13)
- **He uses us to minister to others** (2 Cor.1:3-4).

Biblical Examples

The Bible doesn't hide the fact that great men of God experienced great failure. Some ran away, but received the call "a second time" and ultimately became some of the greatest heroes of faith recorded in the Word of God. Others like David were still considered being after God's heart, even though he failed miserably.

- **Moses** (Exodus 2:11-4:13; Hebrews 11:24-29)
- **Jonah** (Jonah 1-4)
- **Elijah** (1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2:1-12)
- **David** (2 Sam 11) whom God said was "a man after My own heart" Acts 13:22.

Continue Forward Believing God

We must remember that even though we are working out our salvation, God is also at work in us, even through our failures, maturing us, bring us closer to the full realization of God's plan (2 Cor. 3:18).

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

1 Cor.9:21- 27; Heb.12:1-13

17. Called To Grow Up - Maturity

Ephesians 4:13

God's ultimate goal for each of us as individuals - and as a corporate Church - is for us to become mature, reaching "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph.5:25-27; Col.1:28; Heb.6:1).

The Starting Point

John 3:1-7; 1 Peter 1:23

The first stage in the fulfillment of God's goal is the miracle that the Holy Spirit performs the moment we receive Christ as our Savior - we are *born again* (John 1:12-13; Gal.3:26).

An Imperishable Seed

1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:3-4

We were born again "of an imperishable seed". A seed contains all the life and likeness of the parent tree, but it is in seed form. In the same way, the moment we were born again, we received the fullness of God's life and salvation (Col.2:9-10). Now we are discovering everything we have in Christ (1 Cor.2:12) and "working out" the salvation we have already received (Phil.2:12-13).

The Growing Process

1 Peter 2:2; 1 Cor.3:1-4; Heb.5:11-14

Just as a new-born baby has the family likeness, so we too are born spiritually in the likeness of our Father. Now, like babies, we must begin to grow to spiritual maturity (Rom.8:29-30; Eph.4:14-15).

1Jo 2:12-14 NASB I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:12-14 describes Christians in different levels of maturity: Little children and children (**childhood**), young men (**adolescence**), and fathers (**adulthood**).

Path of Growth

- **Condemnation** (Rom.3:9) - our condition before we came to Christ.
- **Justification** (Rom.3:24-26) - our receiving of forgiveness and righteousness in Christ.
- **Reconciliation** (Rom.5:1-11) - our fellowship with the Father restored through Jesus' blood.

- **Identification**(Rom.6:8)-our realization of the totality of what Christ has done for us.
- **Sanctification** (Rom.8:10) -our walking in the reality of our new life in Christ.
- **Glorification** (Rom.8:38-39) - the crowning of it all when we enter eternity.

Agents for Growth

Three main agents to cause us to grow in Christ:

- **The Father's pruning as we abide in Christ through the Spirit** (Jn 15:1-8).
- **Circumstances** (Rom.8:28-30; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-7) - the *trials* we face become molding instruments in the hands of God.
- **Ministries and Leadership** (Eph.4:11-14, 1 Thes 5:12, Heb 13:17) - the vessels of God to minister to us through the *Word of God* (2 Tim.3:16-17) and *the Holy Spirit* (John 6:63).
- **Relationships in Christ Body** (Eph.4:15-16) - *relationships and ministry in the Body* are designed for our growth.

Trials of faith are a main mechanism for growth in our lives (1 Peter 1:6-7). As we respond with faith to the trials we face, God responds to our faith with His grace to meet the situation. That grace also works in our life, changing us into another dimension of glory (1 Cor.15:10). As we go from *trial to trial*, we also go from *faith to faith* (Rom.1:17) and thus from *grace to grace* (John 1:16), and through each trial we are being transformed *from glory to glory*(2 Cor.3:18) until we have been transformed INTO HIS IMAGE!

Prov.4:18; Rom.8:18; James 1:2-4; 1 Jn.3:1-3

18. A Life of Forgiveness

Proverbs 27:19

The condition of our heart is the key to our life in Christ (Prov.27:19; Matt.6:21). God searches our hearts, revealing areas that will block our relationship with Him (1 Sam.16:7; Rom.8:27).

Gifts of Forgiveness

- **The forgiveness God gives to us** (Isa.43:25; Ps.103:1-3; 13:38; Col.1:13-14).
- **The forgiveness we give to others**
 - *We must forgive to be forgiven* (Matt.6:14; Eph.4:2,32).
 - *It heals broken relationships* (Col.3:12-13; 2 Cor.2:5-8).
 - *It is a key to answered prayer* (Mk.11:24-25).
- **The forgiveness we give to ourselves**(Phil.3:13-14; 1 John 1:9).

These three gifts of forgiveness are important in our lives. We must understand God's gift of forgiveness to us, through the shed blood of Jesus (Col.1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2). But we must also learn to forgive ourselves - which simply means receiving God's gift of forgiveness and agreeing with it. Now we are obliged to forgive others. If we refuse, then unforgiveness will block the daily expression of God's forgiveness in our lives.

Stages of Bitterness

- **Initial hurt** - someone says or does something that wounds our hearts.
- **Resentment** - if we don't deal with it straight away, we begin to harbor resentment. Our hearts dwell on the hurt. We are filled with self-pity and a continuing anger against the person who hurt us (Eph.4:26-27; Col.3:8-10,12-14).
- **Retaliation** - we get back at that person, usually either by not speaking to them, or by slandering them to others (Rom.12:17-20).
- **Bitterness** - this is where we allow unforgiveness to defile our hearts (Heb.12:15; Eph.4:29-32).

A Continuing Debt

Romans 13:8-10

The person who hurt you does not deserve forgiveness, but then neither do you. When Jesus died for you, he took the judgment you deserved. Now you owe the Lord a massive debt which you have no ability to repay. But the Lord doesn't require you to repay it in any way - except one. *God transfers this debt you have to Him to your neighbor*. We are now indebted to others - the only way we repay this continuing debt is by forgiving one another. So, when we forgive others, we acknowledge several things:

- **God's love for us** (Matt.18:21-35; Luke 6:26; John 13:34-35; Psalm 103:7-14).
- **Our love for God** (Luke 7:47; 1 John 4:20).
- **Our trust in God's justice** (2 Thess.1:3-7).

- **Our readiness to suffer abuse** (Matt.5:11-12).
- **Our fight is not against people** (Eph. 6:12).
- **Our secure position in Christ** (Col.1:1-4).

Process of Forgetting

Many Christians ask: If I forgive, will the hurt I feel go away? Probably not immediately. But we must understand that forgiveness has nothing to do with feelings. ***Forgiveness is a decision. Forgetting is a process.*** If we decide not to forgive, the hurt becomes like an open, festering wound, which is very difficult to heal. When we make the decision to forgive, however, the hurt is cleaned up, and the healing process is then very quick.

19. Family Relationships

God designed marriage and the family to work - and with His life flowing into it, it does! Love (God's kind of love) is the all-important key to a family's success. Let us first see the contrast of family life without God's love working in it:

The Cycle of Self-Centeredness

God gave Adam and Eve joint authority over His creation (Genesis 1-3). After they had sinned, the Lord told them the consequences of their sin. For Eve it would be: "Your husband...will *rule* over you" (Gen.3:16). Mankind brought upon itself a vicious circle. Love was replaced by self-centeredness. The husband begins to "rule" his wife in a spirit of *tyranny* - the wife reacts with a spirit of *independence* - and the children react with *rebellion* - which in turn makes the man react in *tyranny* - and so the cycle goes on.

The Cycle of Love

The Lord Himself provides the proper pattern for the family (Eph.3:14-15). The cycle of love means that love is expressed through each family member (Rom.5:5). Eph 5:21-6:4 reveals the all-important principles for a happy and successful family:

- The husband's expression of love is **GIVING**
- The wife's expression of love is **SUBMITTING**
- The children's expression of love is **OBEYING**

The Husband

Eph.5:23,25; 1 Peter 3:7; Col.3:19

The husband is not a dictator over his wife, any more than Jesus is a dictator over us (Luke 22:24-27; John 13:12-17). Rather, he is the head in the same way Jesus is the Head - he is to lead, protect and provide. . .always with her good in mind, not just his own. He is to love her as Jesus loves the Church, giving himself unselfishly for her to bring her full potential as a person to fulfilment.

The Wife

Eph.5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:16; Col.3:18

Submission is not subservience. It means to "fit in with" or "adjust yourself to" the husband. Adam needed someone of like-kind to fellowship and work with, in order to fulfill God's call and design. The husband and wife are a complement to each other (Gen. 2:18-25). Together they make one complete whole - "one flesh" . The wife expresses her love to her husband by "submitting" to him - fitting herself to his side! That way they walk together *as one unit*, not separate individuals.

(Note how the Bible personally addresses "wives" - it is not for the husband to tell his wife to submit to him, it is written to the wife alone.)

Parents

Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6

Children learn what the Fatherhood of God is like through their parents and so we see in God the essential principles for the raising of our children:

- **Keeping our word** (Jeremiah 1:12).
- **Being consistent** (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6).
- **Loving discipline** (Heb.12:4-13; Prov.13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13).
- **Expressing love** (1 John 3:1).
- **Providing good things** (Matthew 7:9-11).
- **Setting a focus for living** (Rom.8:28-29).

The family is very important and precious to the Lord. His great desire is for "godly offspring".

Malachi 2:15