

Cain-Likeness To Christ-Likeness

A Further Study in Living by Grace Through Faith

David Kuykendall

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Dedicated To

Those members of the Calvary Baptist Church, our youth group, my Sunday School class, seminar groups, and occasionally the entire congregation whose response to the presentation of these truths greatly assisted in the confirmation of the interpretation of Cain as a “picture” of our “old man” *and that living out of our union with Christ results in the dramatic change from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.*

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The Lord be praised for those He uses to assist in the making of a book. If this writing is in any sense typical of writings in general, the readers of books will never truly know the assistance given the author.

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DAVID KUYKENDALL

Foreword

This second volume from the pen of David Kuykendall, *Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness*, is a further study in living by grace through faith. This second work in his series continues the theme of his excellent first book, *Our Oneness With Christ*.

In the early chapters of this penetrating study Mr. Kuykendall writes of our victory in Christ in the broad, general sense - giving a thoroughly scriptural foundation for the theme of our "union with Christ"; however, he gives the larger portion of the work an extremely practical application of what it means to be in union with Christ. He points out the path to victory in the particular, detailed *specific* areas of our everyday lives. Depression, sinful anger, stubbornness, hate, malice, jealousy, deceit, self-pity and fear are some of the Cain-like traits in all of us - David Kuykendall deals with these sins, their "grip" over our lives, and our personal victory over them!

The author presents the Old Testament character of Cain - the first one in the human race to "inherit" the sin nature - as a striking illustration of our "old man." The author then clearly reveals that we may be *changed* from possessing the character traits of Cain to possessing the character traits of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Kuykendall's final conclusion is that because of our union with Christ every believer may be transformed from *Cainlikeness to Christ-likeness!*

All of us who are "in Christ" are indebted to David Kuykendall for another of this series of our union with our Lord.

R. Gene Reynolds

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Introduction

Thee life of Cain is probably an enigma to the casual reader of the Book of Genesis.

The Jewish Nation - the Covenant People of the Old Testament - is through the line of Seth, Adam's *third* son. Cradled between the accounts of Adam and Seth, however, is a very detailed narrative of Cain and his descendants. Almost all of the fourth chapter of Genesis is given to tell his story - then Cain and his line disappear from the biblical narrative.

Consequently, we conclude there is something vitally important about Cain. This is underscored by the fact that he is mentioned three times in the New Testament.

Why is Cain so important?

The answer may lie in the fact that Cain was the first person to inherit Adam's sin nature - and seemingly it went

unchecked. Cain is in one sense the prototype of what the New Testament calls “our old man.” In Cain we see what a life becomes when it remains unredeemed and unchanged by God’s grace. There is an amazing parallel between what we read about Cain and what we see in the lives of unbelievers.

We believers may see ourselves more in Cain than in any other biblical character - but we have been redeemed and are in the process of being changed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers possess traits that are both *Cain-like* and *Christ-like*. As we are changed by God’s grace, we are liberated from a “Cain-like” existence to a “Christ-like” existence.

I hope you will share these transforming truths with us. My purpose is to make clear how we may be changed by God’s grace - and what these changes may be.

The title comes from the heart of the book’s message ...
Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

part one

***Laying a Scriptural
Foundation for Change***

It is obvious from our title that this is a book about change -a change from Cainlikeness to Christ-likeness. As in Scripture itself, we intend to lay the doctrinal foundation for change before entering upon a discussion of the changes we may experience. In Part One we discuss the *need* for change in chapter one and the *means* for change in chapters two and three. We present in chapter one our Cainlikeness by natural birth; in chapters two and three we discuss how we may become Christ-like by God's grace through our union with Christ.

chapter one

Cain-Like by Natural Birth

Even non-Christians know about Cain. They want to know where he found his wife.

Had the Lord thought we needed all the details of Cain's marriage, He surely would have informed us. This appears most evident when we see the intricately thorough account of Cain and his descendants in the fourth chapter of Genesis.

Cain was Adam's firstborn, so he was the first person to receive by natural birth the sin nature which Adam infected upon the human race. In Cain then we are granted a glaring

revelation of what the sin problem is and what it is capable of producing when left unchecked.

In Cain we also see much of what we are ourselves, since we too are in the line of Adam

In Romans 5:12 the Apostle Paul teaches that sin invaded the entire human race through Adam. He states the same truth another way in Romans 5:19 - By the disobedience of one "the many were made sinners." These two verses make it patently clear that when Adam ate from the tree in the midst of the garden he himself became a sinner and so did all of us. We became sinners because the human race is a unity and Adam is the head of the race.

It is imperative that we understand the nature of the sin problem brought upon all of us by Adam - passed on to us by our natural birth into the human race. Our understanding of the sin problem - or the lack of it - will mean the difference between victory and defeat in our walk with the Lord.

It can mean the difference between *Cain-likeness* and *Christ-likeness*.

Biblical interpreters employ such terms as "the lower nature," "the fallen nature," "the sin principle" and "total depravity" when referring to man's sin problem. The New Testament utilizes the words "sin," "flesh" and "old man."

In the Genesis account of Adam we are given a more precise statement concerning the sin problem with which Adam infected himself and the entire human race, including Cain. We shall explore this explanation in Genesis.

It is common knowledge that Adam's act of transgression was that of eating fruit from the tree in the midst of the garden. The Lord named it "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

This fact is underlined with an abundance of verses in the second and third chapters of Genesis. An isolated look at these verses should prove informative.

Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die.

Genesis 3:2-3 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'"

Genesis 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she also gave to her husband, and he ate.

Genesis 3:11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

Genesis 3:12 And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate"

Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from

the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘you shall not eat from ...’”

Genesis 3:22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat and live forever ...”

From the first reference to the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” to the last reference, it is mentioned nine times-or once every four and one-half verses. This fact itself should alert us to focus our attention on the tree.

Had Adam eaten from a peach tree - he would have taken in *peach*. Had he eaten from a plum tree he would have taken in *plum*. The Lord is careful to explain in the written Word that Adam ate from a tree named “the knowledge of good and evil.”

It seems an obvious conclusion that when Adam partook of the fruit, he took into himself *the knowledge of good and evil*.

Consequently, we must also conclude that the sin problem with which Adam infected himself (and us!) is the knowledge of good and evil. A most convincing proof of this is Jehovah’s stated purpose for removing Adam and Eve from the garden- because they had become as God knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:22).

We may better understand the meaning of “the knowledge of good and evil” with a close scrutiny of the original Hebrew words. The word translated “good” is also translated as “best, bountiful, fair, pleasant.” Its meaning includes that which is “good” in the broadest sense and is not to be confined to that which is morally good.

The Hebrew word for “evil” also has the connotation of “adversity, affliction, calamity, hurtful.” Again, the word is quite broad in its significance, indicating that which is “bad” for people in a general sense.

So, the eating of the fruit resulted in Adam having the knowledge of what was generally good or generally bad for him.

As always, the Bible is its best interpreter. In the first chapter of Romans there is a sad description of the extent to which man has plunged into rebellion and sinfulness. The reason Paul gives for such depths of depravity is that “professing to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). There we have it! Man’s rebellion! And sinfulness has resulted from an underlying attitude that he is wise.

It may well be true that Paul’s statement - “Professing to be wise” - is an excellent paraphrase of the words “the knowledge of good and evil.”

A more definitive term for our sin problem is a “know-it-all attitude.” This attitude is both conscious and subconscious. In fact it is likely more subconscious than conscious. It should be noted that this “know-it-all attitude” is *at the point of decision making* at the point of determining what is good or bad. In other words, our sin problem is a conscious and subconscious attitude of knowing what is best - for ourselves, for others, even for the Lord God Himself. *We know* what is best.

There are other scriptures that reveal man’s sin problem is in his “thought life.” The famous proverb, as a man “thinketh in his heart so is he” (Prov. 23:7 KJV), clearly discloses this fact.

The well loved passage of Romans 12:1-2 teaches that we will! be changed into Christ-likeness when *our thinking* is changed Paul’s vivid description of the unsaved in Ephesians

4:17 begins with a statement concerning the futility of their minds.

It is common knowledge that the word “repent” comes from two Greek words which mean “to change the *mind*.” This attests to the fact that our very entrance into the Kingdom of God is the result of our “thinking.”

In the light of these statements of Scripture it is obvious that our sin problem is not some indefinable fallen nature or sin principle, but it is *a way of thinking*. Consciously or subconsciously, we think we know what is best for ourselves, for others and for the Kingdom of God. We have a know-it-all attitude. We “profess ourselves to be wise.

All of us have had experiences and observations, which provide illustrations for this know-it-all attitude - and to some extent this serves as a proof of our explanation of the sin problem. We have all known unbelievers whose lives were unusually exemplary for the entire community. A brief conversation, however, with these highly moral citizens soon reveals a most arrogant pride - a know-it-all attitude. If not, why have they not humbled themselves before a holy and righteous God in a spirit of deep humility?

We do not discover such repulsive thinking only in others. We find it within us. Our personal integrity will force each of us to confess ourselves guilty!

An incident laughingly related to me by a young husband (with whom I had shared this explanation of the sin problem) well illustrates the impact of the know-it-all attitude. The young man and his wife had returned from- a walk about their neighborhood one afternoon. “Do you realize what we have done?” he laughed to his wife. “As we walked, we made a judgment on the decisions of every person whose home we passed. We decided on improvements for every house. We suggested dif-

ferent colors, different locations for trees, and different types of shrubbery, different drapes. We did not leave one house untouched.”

They are no different from us. All of us do the same. We pass judgment on everyone - our nearest family members, people we hardly know, people we have never seen before, great leaders of the world, *everyone!* Certainly we are to have opinions of others and their decisions, but they are to be the opinions of the Lord and not our own.

The most *egoistic* and repulsive demonstration of our know-it-all attitude is when we pass judgment on the decisions of our all-wise and all-loving God.

It is also the most tragic.

The Bible teaches that even before the foundation of the earth the Lord planned our lives for us (Eph. 2:10). Think of it. The all-knowing and all-loving God planned our daily lives-and it is possible for us to miss much of the joy and excitement of those wonderful plans because we think we have a better idea for our lives than God does! And mark this: the fact that many of our plans and activities are within the framework of Christian service only adds to the tragedy of the situation.

The know-it-all attitude has a passion for setting goals, making plans and achieving outstanding feats. In fact, we have been taught to doggedly pursue these “admirable” accomplishments. Both the secular and Christian worlds have purposely inspired us to “believe in ourselves.” Both believers and unbelievers have told us if we do not believe in ourselves, no one else will believe in us. Of course “in Jesus Christ” we are somebody, but within ourselves we can be nothing. Our Lord said as much about Himself.

At this particular juncture you may think this is some type of heresy. If so, please answer for yourself this one question.

Does God have a point of view for each moment of your life?

Your answer to this question will largely determine whether you accept or reject what we share in these early chapters.

I have asked this question to many of God's children. They have all answered in the affirmative. All seem to understand that God has a will for each moment of our lives.

If your answer is affirmative, note the following - if God has a point of view for each moment of my life, it is the very height of arrogance for me to interject my point of view upon any moment of my life!

The statement above was written by me, yet I do interject my point of view daily upon many moments of that day. I do not want to do it. In fact, I choose not to do so.

I interject my point of view because it is my very nature to do so.

My know-it-all attitude is seeking ceaselessly to project itself. This projection is often from my subconscious existence, but it is present within me nevertheless.

Now, let us return to our study of Cain.

We have mentioned earlier that Cain is the first person to receive from Adam the infection of the sin nature. Just as he received his physical features from his parents, he was also the

recipient of their fallen nature - a know-it-all attitude and the devastation which accompanied it.

There is no indication that Cain was immoral as a result of his inherited sin problem. He certainly was not an irreligious person; in fact, his sin was a religious act. He brought an offering to the Lord from plant life rather than from animal life.

Cain is mentioned three times in the New Testament. One of the references is quite enlightening concerning the nature of his first recorded sin. His offering (Heb. 11:4) was not of faith as was Abel's. In what way was his offering not an act of faith? A glance at Hebrews eleven gives us adequate light.

Hebrews, chapter eleven, is the "roll call of faith." It reports great acts of faith by God's people. For the most part, these great acts of faith are in the form of faith responses to the revealed will of God.

The story of Noah is an example of this faith response. "By faith" Noah built the ark. The ark certainly was not Noah's idea - it was God's idea. Abraham's departure from the Land of Ur was not his idea - it was God's. As in the case of Noah, Abraham and others, Cain knew the will of God. He knew that God commanded an animal sacrifice.

But Cain had a better idea.

This is precisely the sin problem of all of us. The Lord God of the universe has a point of view for each moment of our lives; however, because of the knowledge of good and evil, we continuously *have a better idea!* It is not that our ideas are of immorality, or of an irreligious nature. Our "better ideas" are often like Cain's - they are at the point of worship or Christian service. Cain felt the Lord would be well pleased with his offering. He was - in short - a "know-it-all."

While the emphasis in this work is on Cain, it is appropriate for us to look for the know-it-all attitude in Adam - the one who infected Cain. It is not difficult to find. After the earth's first couple ate of the forbidden fruit, the narrative informs us that their eyes were opened and they realized their nakedness. While we shall wait until subsequent chapters to discuss the significance of these words, it is important to our

present study to understand the upshot of this revelation to Adam and Eve.

“And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7 KJV).

Adam and Eve had been presented with what they considered a problem. Since their creation they had walked with Jehovah God. Even though they realized their nakedness it seems they should have given some thought to *His* ideas—even in that state. *It seems evident that they themselves immediately concluded what should be the solution of the problem!*

The gravity of the problem for Adam, since he possessed the knowledge of good and evil, is reflected in the response of Jehovah. It was His decision that Adam and Eve be driven from the garden lest they would eat from the tree of life and live forever.

Jehovah knew that man had brought an inevitable devastation upon himself by infecting himself with the knowledge of good and evil. In an act of mercy the Lord did that which would spare man the painfulness of living forever in a world dominated by the pride of man.

We have already presented some ways that all of us are like Cain and Adam; and as we are honest with ourselves we see a manifestation of our own “know-it-all” attitude in almost every direction we turn.

We participate in church committee meetings and church business meetings and declare, “*I think,*” without any regard to God’s point of view - God’s will in the matter.

As ministers and teachers we come into some knowledge of our classes and organizations and “decide” what *we* should say or do - when all the time God has a point of view.

We confront an unsaved person “planning” our attack - when the Heavenly Father has a point of view.

We approach even the work of the Kingdom in such a manner because we are directed by our *Cain-like* know-it-all attitude.

We have previously mentioned that in Cain we see the prototype of the “old man” of the New Testament. We find in him a detailed account of those traits and factors which are created by the know-it-all attitude. The “old man” in each of us is the know-it-all attitude - plus all that attitude has produced in us.

The story of Cain is tragic. The story of any life untouched by the grace of God is tragic.

Beginning in chapter three of Genesis, we are able to see the grievous results created for Cain when Adam ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As we study these results in the life of Cain, we feel we are studying the story of our own lives. For the most part, we shall be. There is a great similarity between the “old man” found in Cain and the “old man” found in each of us.

The differences between Cain and us are not found in the presence or absence of certain traits. The differences are realized in the fact that in some people a certain set of Cain’s traits dominates, while in other people a completely different set of Cain-like traits is predominant.

In Cain we have a most visual demonstration of the “old man” of our own lives - an “old man” with which we must deal!

It would be horribly depressing if we studied the life of Cain, only to conclude that those Cain-like qualities we find within us are hopelessly imbedded into our characters and personalities.

They are not!

In Christ Jesus there is deliverance. Before we enter into a detailed study of the tragic life of Cain, let us look at how we may find deliverance from our Cain-like traits.

We will see, moreover, that in addition to being delivered *from* Cain-likeness, we may also be delivered *unto* Christ-likeness.

chapter two

Christ-Like By God's Grace-Part One

We now begin our pursuit of Christ-likeness.

Maybe some fellow Christian, frustrated in earlier attempts at being Christ-like, is thinking, "Why bother, it won't work!"

Another sincere believer lashes out in thought - "I have tried everything I know to be Christ-like and have failed miserably."

If you are one of those who has sought to be Christ-like with little success, please allow me to make this inquiry of you: Have you sought Christ-likeness by your own struggling - in your own strength - or by means of God's grace?

Only the Lord is able to produce the life of Christ in us. All of our struggling will be to no avail. In this chapter and the

next we will present how we may be delivered from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness by God's grace.

The "how" of the change is centered in the New Testament concept of our "oneness with Christ." There can be no real or lasting change from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness until we understand this New Testament teaching - then appropriate it for ourselves.

Our venture into Christ-likeness should begin with us mentally retracing the steps to our moment of entrance into the Kingdom of God. At that time, by God's grace, Christ entered into our lives.

Your "salvation prayer" was probably an invitation to the Lord Jesus to come into your life. Even if your prayer was not specifically such an invitation, Christ still came to live within you. He lives in all believers.

There is a companion truth to this one of Christ's entrance into our lives - it is the New Testament truth that we have been baptized "into" Him. This is the clear affirmation of Scripture - "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3 author's italics).

Amazing grace!

Our oneness with Christ is actually twofold - He is "in us," we are "in Him." We shall look at both perspectives of this twofold truth.

Our baptism into Jesus Christ was a spiritual transaction accomplished by the Holy Spirit, and not by some person who immersed us in water. Paul affirms to the Corinthians, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13). In the previous verse he clearly indicates the "body" he is referring to is Christ Himself.

Baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is pictured by immersion into water - the New Testament mode of baptism. When you were immersed into water, you were presenting a physical picture of your spiritual relationship to the Lord. When your body became one with the water, you were demonstrating that spiritually you had become “one with the Lord Jesus” - because you had come to be “in” Him.

In fact, you were physically demonstrating that you are now mission our Lord teaches us to baptize (immerse) in (“into”) the name (or “person”) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Because God is One, it is obvious that to be “in” one Person of the Trinity is to be “in” all three Persons.

In the previous chapter we saw that certain things are true of us because we were born “into” the race of Adam; there are also some things quite true of us because we have been baptized (by the Holy Spirit) “into” Jesus Christ.

Paul asserts to the Romans that: ... all who have been baptized into Jesus Christ have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:3b-5).

It is the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul that we have been made “one with Christ” in death, burial and resurrection.

Just as baptism in water portrays that we are “one with Christ” because we are in Him, it also demonstrates our oneness with Him in death, burial and resurrection. The physical burial in water depicts both a death and a burial. When a believer is raised from the water it visually demonstrates a resurrection.

Jesus Christ has been crucified, buried, raised. We are now one with Him; therefore, we have been crucified, buried, raised - and in baptism we visualize believer's union with Christ in death, burial, resurrection.

What is the meaning of our being one with Christ in death? The concept has dual significance. First, we are dead to (separated from) sin. Paul's comment in Romans 6:10 is, "For the death that He died, he died to sin, once for all." We are then dead to sin because we are united to Christ in death. Romans 6:2 simply informs us that believers are dead to sin. There is a command in Romans 6:11 that we are to "reckon" (KJV) ourselves (consider ourselves) dead to sin. The Greek word for "reckon" (and consider) can also be translated as "conclude, count, suppose, and "think." The connotation of the word is "to accept as fact" – to accept or believe a matter to be true.

We are to believe-accept as fact- that we are dead to sin because we are in Jesus Christ.

Another aspect of our oneness with Christ in death is that our "old man" was crucified with Him - "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6). It is a true expression that we are dead to sin *because* our "old man" has been crucified with Christ.

We have already seen how the "old man" is the underlying know-it-all attitude plus all that it has produced in us. As the first person to inherit the sin problem from Adam, Cain became the prototype of the "old man." He lived fully out of his "know-it-all" attitude and his story is told in detail that we may see the results of such a life.

Our "old man" may be likened unto a tree. The know-it-all attitude represents the roots. The branches are those traits and factors which are produced by the know-it-all attitude - the roots produce the branches.

The “tree” has been dealt with at the roots because our “old man” has been crucified with Christ. It is so because we are “one with Christ in His death.” We shall see more of the changes that come-from our union with Christ in death in the following chapters. Here we emphasize that union with Christ in His death means two things .for us: (1) we are dead to sin; (2) our “old man” has been crucified with Christ.

It is precisely because our “old man” has been crucified with Christ that our death to sin may be a personal experience for us - experiential - and not merely a doctrinal truth. Paul says in Romans 6:4 that we have been baptized into the “burial” of Christ. This truth is also portrayed by immersion in water. The burial of the “old man” vividly adds to our victory over sin. Not only has our “old man” been crucified, he has also been buried away!

Our “oneness” with Christ means we are one with him in death.

Finally, our baptism into oneness with Christ means that we are “one with Him in life.” As our oneness with the Lord in death has a dual significance, our oneness with Him in life has a twofold perspective.

In the first place, we are “alive to God.” Paul says of Christ that “the life He lives, He lives unto God” (Rom. 6:10). It is the very next verse in Romans 6 which commands that we continuously “reckon, consider” (believe, as true) ourselves alive unto God. When we are alive to someone, we are in union

The second aspect of our oneness with Christ in life is that we have been “raised with Him” - and this makes our “oneness with Christ in life” experiential in our daily living! This truth is beautifully presented in water baptism. It is true! We believers have already been raised with Christ!

In the Book of Ephesians Paul enlarges this concept of our resurrection with Christ by describing it as three transactions rather than just one. He attests that the Lord, “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved), and raised us up together with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6).

Glorious truth! *We have been made alive together with Christ* - we have been raised with Christ - we have been seated with Christ in heavenly places!

We have stated earlier that we are dead to sin because the “old man” has been crucified. Now we may say that we are alive to God because we have been vivified (made alive), raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father with Christ!

In this present discussion we have seen that several things are true concerning us - true because we have been “made one” with the Lord Jesus by means of our baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit.

These things are true of us ...

... we are dead to sin

... our “old man” has been crucified with Christ

... we are buried with Christ

... we are alive unto God

... we are made alive with Christ

... we are raised with Christ

... we are enthroned with Christ.

Next we shall discuss those passages which teach that when we believe these things to be true - and when we choose to make them true in our daily experience - we shall be changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

Grace so sufficient! Grace so divine!

chapter three

Christ-Like By God's Grace - Part Two

In our last study we were introduced to the message of “our oneness with Christ” - which is ours by God’s grace. An understanding of this New Testament teaching is absolutely essential if we are to be changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

In this study we shall see how our Lord of grace brings change in us as we express our faith in - and make choices in accordance with - those things which are true of us because of our oneness with Christ.

The New Testament employs a number of terms to explain our relationship with the Lord in salvation: justification, redemption, sanctification, rebirth, reconciliation, adoption, forgiveness.

Knowledge - even a superior knowledge - of these concepts will not result in the needed changes for our lives. Is it not strange that the Christian world in general has more knowledge of each of these concepts than it does of the message of our oneness with Christ - the one message which is necessary for change?

While our transformation from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness is a work of God's grace, it does not come unless we assume responsibility on our part.

Allow me to assist you in understanding our responsibility for change. I invite you to return mentally to the time of your translation from the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God. Three things happened in your life: (1) at some time you received the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; (2) you believed the message was true and that you could become a Christian; (3) you acted upon the message by repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Our transformation from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness is the result of the same threefold transaction: (1) we must have knowledge of the New Testament truth of our oneness with Christ; (2) we must believe the message; (3) we must exercise our wills to bring our lives into harmony with the teachings we have received and believed.

In the previous chapter we presented the message of our union with Christ. Since you have read that chapter, you have now received the message. It is altogether possible, of course, that you received the message long ago.

Do you believe the message? You must believe it if you are to experience the marvelous changes the Lord has in mind for you.

Some will not believe the message. They refuse to believe they are dead to sin. They refuse to believe they are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

We pray you will believe.

We return to Romans 6:11 - "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God" (KJV). When we *reckon* something to be true, we *believe* it is true. In the Greek New Testament this word "reckon" is a command of continuous action. Literally translated, it conveys, "You are commanded to continuously reckon yourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God." That is, we are commanded to believe continuously that we are dead to sin and alive to God.

The companion truth to Romans 6:11 is that our "old man" has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). We are to believe these two things are true of us right now - we are dead to sin and alive to God; our "old man" has been crucified with Christ - because we are "one" with a crucified Christ Who has died to sin.

It follows that we must believe we have been buried with Christ.

Finally, we are to reckon (believe) ourselves alive unto God. For us to be alive unto God means we are "in union with God." The companion truths we are to believe are the following: (1) we have been made alive with Christ; (2) we have been raised with Christ; (3) we have been enthroned with Christ.

So many Christians will not believe the events listed in the preceding paragraph are true of them because they have

not experienced them in their lives. Amazingly, it works just the opposite. We first believe they are true, and then we begin actually to experience them.

This order of faith-first and then reality should not seem strange to us. In one of the most famous New Testament statements our Lord says, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk. 11:24, KJV). The word translated "receive" is in the past tense grammatically and actually means "have received."

Faith always precedes reality.

Such faith is a gift of God's grace. If you desperately want to believe that you are one with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, but simply cannot - commit your unbelief to the Lord and ask Him for faith. He delights in granting such gifts! Keep looking unto Him until you receive!

Just as in your conversion experience, after you have received the message of God's grace and believed it, you must act upon it. There must be an exercise of your will.

The New Testament clearly tells us what we are to do. We are commanded to reckon (believe) ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God; we are further commanded not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies (Rom. 6:12) and to yield ourselves to God as those alive from the dead" (Rom. 6:13). In other words, we must choose to be dead to sin and alive to God; we must choose to experience the crucified, buried, vivified (made alive), raised and enthroned life with the Lord Jesus Christ. The will of the Christian must be exercised!

It has been my observation that most Christians who have not realized victory in their lives have failed either because they did not know of their oneness with Christ, or because they could not believe it to be so. There are, however, those who know and believe the message of their oneness with Christ,

but who simply have not chosen to be dead to sin and alive to God. They have not properly exercised the will.

But it has been my exciting privilege to know many of God's people who are continuously being changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness because they have received the message of their oneness with Christ; they are continuously believing all that the message means and are continuously choosing to make themselves dead to sin and alive to God.

Praise God!

I know we are sharing a great mystery - but it works. It will work for you.

Our transformation from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness results from the threefold transaction mentioned above because it produces a threefold experience.

First, we actually begin to experience the death of the "old man." It is a great mystery, but it actually happens.

For many years I exercised my will to be dead to sin, but victory over such things as anger, jealousy and fear never came. My life was such a failure that I began to ask the Lord to kill me if He could not change me. In this time of great despair He revealed to me the message of oneness with Christ and gave me the faith to believe I was dead to sin and alive to God.

I began to pray this prayer - "Father, I thank you that anger, fear, jealousy and resentment have been crucified and I do not have to be guilty of them; I am alive to You and You are free to live and love through me." Miraculously, the sins which I claimed to be crucified were progressively replaced with a divine love. The process is still going on.

A number of my friends have testified that they began to experience the death of the "old man" when they received, believed and acted upon the truth of their oneness with Christ.

There is a second perspective to this experience: we begin to experience the Spirit-filled life.

Many of God's children have longed and prayed to be Spirit-filled; they have done all they know to do - but they have not had the joy of being Spirit-filled believers. Some have enjoyed a few days of Spirit-filled existence, but have not known a continuous filling of God's Spirit. An end to such frustration and disappointment comes through our oneness with Christ.

We have defined our "old man" who has been crucified as our know-it-all attitude, plus all that attitude has produced in us. A part of our "old man" is what the scriptures call "the flesh."

We venture to offer a definition of the term "flesh" - it is "self confidence." Our flesh is the self confidence of our knowledge of good and evil, plus any other types of self confidence produced in us by our know-it-all attitude.

We are told in Galatians 5:17 that the flesh lusts against the Spirit. Our Lord teaches that the Holy Spirit is in us "a well of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:14). These New Testament statements inform us that the Holy Spirit has been passionately seeking to fill us since He entered our hearts - but He is hindered by the "flesh."

For some reason many of us have believed that the Lord is reluctant to fill us with His Spirit. This is a lie. We shall be continuously filled with the Spirit when the barrier of "the flesh" is continuously removed.

Picture this mentally. Imagine that the book you are reading is a small metal box with an air hose attached to one end, a water hose to the other - and imagine that both the water and air are turned on full force. The box will not be "filled" with air or water; to fill the box with one, we must remove the

opposition of the other. We will be Spirit-filled believers when we permit the Lord to remove the opposition of the “flesh.” It can be done.

I repeat, the flesh is part of the “old man.” The “old man” has been crucified because we are one with Christ in His death. We will, then, remove the opposition of the “flesh” to the Holy Spirit when we accept, believe and act upon our oneness with Christ.

It should be mentioned at this juncture that they that are Christ’s “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). This Galatian statement strengthens what we have just shared. We crucified our own flesh by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior; our acceptance of Him resulted in our being baptized into oneness with Him by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, we experience oneness with Christ in enthronement as a result of our choosing to be dead to sin and alive to God.

We previously mentioned that the Apostle Paul enlarges the concept of our oneness with Christ in resurrection (Eph. 2:5-6); he explains our oneness in resurrection with three steps instead of one: (1) we have been made alive with Christ; (2) we have been raised from among the dead; (3) we have been seated with Christ in heavenly places.

It is not difficult for us to know that we have been made alive with Christ. We know that a new dimension - a divine dimension - for living came into us when we were born again.

It is also a simple matter for us to understand we have been raised from among the dead because the Lord has drawn us away from the spiritually dead ones of the world - and has drawn us to the people of God.

Unfortunately, however, many Christians have refused to believe that they have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

We have not fully obeyed the command to reckon (believe) we are alive unto God until we believe we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. We are not to believe it because we have experienced it; we are to believe it because the Lord says it is so. It is when we believe the truth of our enthronement and choose to be alive unto God that the Lord in His mighty grace will grant us the *experience* of enthroned living.

Enthroned living should be experienced by all believers largely for two reasons: it enhances fellowship with God; it is a mighty weapon against Satan.

In this section we have shown that being in Christ may result in our deliverance from the “old man,” our continual filling with the Holy Spirit and our experiencing enthroned living. It is this threefold work of grace which opens the door for deliverance from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

In each of the succeeding chapters we will show how the truths presented in this first section may be applied to the various traits and actions of Cain - and us - resulting in change...

... from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

part two

*Spiritual Changes
We May Experience*

In each of the following chapters we will present one of the traits of Cain, then show that we may be set free from that trait and be given the opposite quality which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. In each chapter we will return to the theme of our union with Christ as the scriptural means for the change we may experience.

chapter four

Body-Consciousness to God-Consciousness

“A good looking woman has it made!”

I heard a man make that statement during a coffee break at the aircraft plant where I worked just after high school graduation. It was obvious that the remark had been prompted by the presence of an attractive young blonde standing nearby - the unquestioned center of attention in a mostly male group.

“Sure she does,” came the immediate and forceful reply of a second male voice.

My back was to the men who spoke and I never saw their faces; however, their brief remarks revealed much about them, and about our society.

We are a body-conscious people.

A consuming preoccupation with the body is found everywhere. It seems to permeate the air we breathe.

A classic illustration is found in the commercials we ingest from television. It seems that most products are advertised by a beautiful body, or the promise that the use of the product will make a more beautiful body.

Many people have pampered their bodies and now have serious problems with obesity; others enjoy the “slim and trim” look because they have glorified the body.

The medical profession has informed us that many physical illnesses stem from hypochondria, an undue concern for the body.

Our fear of dying is to a great extent an outgrowth of our dread of existing apart from our physical bodies.

Much of the soaring divorce rate in our nation is brought about by preoccupation with the body and its desires.

We could give enormous evidences of body-consciousness, but it is unnecessary; all of us are acutely aware of this national state of mind.

While the above statements may appear to be an indictment of materialistic America, they are not so intended. It seems that every society in every age has been preoccupied with the body. It began early. This malady of an over concern for the physical body entered the bloodstream through Adam - the head of the human race - and made its way into every member of the race, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, “The eyes of them both were opened” (Gen. 3:7 (KJV)). Earlier passages make it succinctly clear they were not blind. The statement in Genesis 3:7 does not mean they were unable to see previous to eating the fruit, but that the ability to see had now become prominent.

Following the revelation that the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened is the assertion “they knew that they were naked.” Regardless of what else the statement means, it unquestionably points to a preoccupation with the body, as does the prominence given to the ability to see.

Why has the attention of Adam and Eve suddenly gone to their bodies?

There is a satisfactory explanation.

Earlier we saw that when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit there came into them the knowledge of good and evil-the know-it-all attitude. Now they thought themselves to be as wise as God at the point of decision making.

Such an attitude evoked a twofold need: there must be an accumulation of facts with which to make the decisions; there must be a vehicle for carrying out those decisions. The body meets both needs. The eyes - along with the other senses and the brain - will provide the needed facts; the hands, feet, voice, etc. will be the vehicles for carrying out those decisions. Thus, the preoccupation with the body.

Did, however, that same concern for the body pass on to Cain? Scripture reveals that it did!

Since the basic sin problem of all of us is the knowledge of good and evil, it follows that all of us who are in the line of Adam have received from him the same preoccupation with our bodies - because we have received from him the know-it-

all attitude. Cain, then, was the first of mankind to have inherited such a consuming bodily interest.

There is another specific evidence that Cain was preoccupied.

When Jehovah created Adam and Eve, He gave them permission to eat only from plant life. He instructed, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you" (Gen. 1:29). Not until the days of Noah was man permitted animal flesh for food. Before that time animal sacrifice was the God-given means of worship.

In the light of such provision, we understand much about Cain when we are told that "Abel was a keeper of the flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (Gen. 4:2). Does this not suggest that Cain was a man preoccupied with his body and its needs?

Also, Cain's fear of dying points to a deep concern for his physical well being (Gen. 4).

We are not contending that Christians are to have no concern for their bodies - this would be as unchristian as "preoccupation" with the body. The New Testament forcefully reminds us that the body of the Christian is the very temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). In one of the most famous passages of the New Testament we are exhorted to present our bodies as "living sacrifices" to our Lord (Rom. 12:1). Paul prayed that the "bodies" of the Thessalonians would be kept blameless until the day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

It is obvious that the believer's body is important to the Lord. It is of vital import, however, that we believers realize we are to be preoccupied with the Lord and not with our bodies!

The fact that our preoccupation is to be with the Lord is vividly illustrated in one of our Lord's visits to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Martha had passionately provided for all of the physical things necessary in being a gracious hostess to the Lord Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, calmly disregarded the graces of hospitality - she sat with the Lord and listened with great intensity to His words. When Martha registered her displeasure with the situation, the Lord Jesus indicated, "Only one thing is needful." He then added, "Mary hath chosen that good part." The beautiful story from the Gospels clearly teaches us that our occupation should be with Him - not with things of the body.

The mind of Cain clearly was not occupied with the things of Jehovah. It is true he was a religious man. It is true he brought an offering to God; but it does not follow that his mind was occupied with God. Had it been, he would have brought an offering from the flock, in accordance with the Lord's command.

Our study of Cain leads to the conclusion that it is "Cain-like" to be preoccupied with the body rather than the Lord ... and to the contrary, it is "Christ-like" to be occupied with the Lord and not the body.

Our Lord's lack of emphasis on His body and its needs is reflected in his remarks to a prospective follower: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Mark informs us that on two occasions the Lord was so involved in ministering He did not have time to eat. A scene at the cross depicts our Lord's priorities: if all of His earthly belongings were those the soldiers gambled for at Calvary, Jesus had given the most scant attention to meeting His bodily needs.

Conversely, the New Testament is replete with statements which reveal His total preoccupation with the Father. The Gospel according to John repeatedly indicates that Jesus and the Father were in continuous communication. In John 5:19 we find a classic example of the fellowship between them - "Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

Just hours before His death on the cross our Lord said, "Do you not believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father' is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works (John 14:10). He later added, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, *because the Father is with me*" (John 16:32, author's italics).

Hopefully, we have shown that it is *Cain-like* to be occupied with the body - and *Christ-like* to be occupied with the Lord. It is God's will for us to be occupied with the Lord Himself, and not with our own bodies.

While the advantages of having our minds preoccupied with the Lord are many, we will content ourselves at this juncture to mention only two. The first is from Isaiah 26:3 - "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (KJV). The second is an exhortation from the writer of Hebrews to his readers who were undergoing severe persecution. They could face their sufferings by "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God" (12:3, KJV).

It is now our intention to share from God's Word how we may be delivered *from* a preoccupation with the body *unto* a preoccupation with the Lord.

From this point forward in the book, we shall be making application of what is presented in the first three chapters.

Cain is the prototype of what the New Testament calls the "old man" - which is the know-it-all attitude, plus all that attitude has produced in us.

The "old man" - which includes a preoccupation with the body - has been crucified. We can take God at His Word, that our preoccupation with our bodies has been taken to the cross with the Lord Jesus. We have that knowledge from the Scripture; now we can believe it! When we have knowledge and faith that we have been set free from such a way of thinking (because of our oneness with Christ in crucifixion), and that knowledge and faith is joined with our *choice* to have such freedom - it then becomes *actual reality* in our lives. Faith *precedes* reality! This is God's order, and we are not to question it! We are to live in the light of it!

The "flesh," which is the barrier to our being filled with the Holy Spirit, has also been crucified with Christ. When we choose to be delivered from the flesh and to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit and believe that the flesh has been crucified ...

... we will actually begin to walk in the Spirit!

When speaking of the Holy Spirit, our Lord iterates, "He shall bear witness of me" and "He shall glorify me: for He shall take of mine and declare it unto you."

There it is! When the barrier of the flesh is removed, and when the Holy Spirit has continuous access to our minds, He places our thoughts on the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Still further, in our oneness with Christ we are alive unto God; that is, spiritually, we have already been made alive - raised from the dead - seated at the right hand of the Father! According to the Book of Ephesians we are far above all other powers. We are far above our vicious enemy, Satan.

From this position of authority over Satan we are able to deal with him in victory. The Scripture teaches that he is a defeated enemy. Until we understand that he is defeated, and that we are in a position of authority over him, he will continue to torment and intimidate us. He will seek to continue control over our "thought life." He will seek to keep our minds on our bodies...

... and off of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may triumphantly deal with him by letting him know that we are aware of his defeat - and we are in fact in authority over him. Such an authority becomes reality when we believe we are enthroned with our Lord in a position of authority, and we choose to live from that position!

So we understand that ...

... receiving the message of our oneness with Christ

... believing the message

... choosing to be dead to sin and alive unto God

results in a deliverance from our preoccupation with our bodies to a preoccupation with the Lord! This can be actual reality in our lives because our preoccupation with the body has been crucified - we are victors over Satan who seeks to place our minds on our bodies - we are continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, Who is testifying to the Lord Jesus and glorifying Him!

chapter five

Initiation to Response

“If you don’t have goals you’ll never accomplish anything in life. If you’re not going anywhere that’s where you’ll end up!”

“Pastor, didn’t God give us a *mind* to figure out these things?”

“Oh, I don’t think we ought to bother the Lord with our little problems.”

“God helps those who help themselves!”

All of the above mentioned philosophies of life clearly mark us as being strong initiators.

Such philosophies of life undermine the decision of a person who has chosen to be a “follower” of Jesus Christ; when we live by such philosophies, we become leaders - not “followers.”

Even before He created the earth the Lord God designed a beautiful plan for our daily lives. This fact is clearly shown in Ephesians 2:10 - “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (author’s italics).

Yet, we find ourselves wanting to initiate some other plan.

Why?

Why do we display such arrogance? How could we dare willfully to follow our own ideas for our lives when we know that God already has planned that moment for us?

It is our very *nature* to so do!

It is “Cain-like” to so do. Cain inherited a nature from Adam which demanded that he initiate; and remember, he is the prototype of the “old man” in all of us.

The lives of Adam and Eve are lucid illustrations of the human desire to initiate, and that it resulted from the knowledge of good and evil. Notice the order of events:

They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Their eyes were opened.

They realized their nakedness.

They made aprons of fig leaves for themselves.

Regardless of what else the passage means, it is obvious that they never considered talking with Jehovah about the problem of their nakedness. Adam and Eve themselves initiated an immediate solution; they did so because of their know-it-all attitude - it filled them with a passion to *initiate!*

Cain's desire to initiate is seen in his offering. Cain clearly understood that he should bring an offering from the flock, but he chose to bring an offering of another kind. His eagerness to initiate was the direct result of his know-it-all attitude which he inherited from Adam.

Simply because we have been born in the line of Adam, we have all received this same desire to initiate - we are born with it; and it is never without its negative results.

Look once more at the lives of Adam and Eve. They illustrate the certainty of the negative results. Jehovah made coats of skin for them. In His opinion - God's opinion! - the aprons of fig leaves were inadequate. We have no way of knowing how much time and effort went into the planning and making of the aprons of fig leaves, but we do know that it was all a waste. Their time was wasted - mental and physical energies were wasted - fig leaves were wasted.

Cain's offering was a waste: he wasted plants and the physical and mental energy that it took to prepare and present them.

As the following chapters unfold, it will be seen that a "waste" was merely a small part of the negative results which came into the life of Cain because of his attitude of initiation. Whether or not Paul had Cain in mind when he wrote his letter to the Galatians, he certainly spoke to Cain's situation as he stated, "For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8).

We would have expected much tragedy if Cain's act had been one of immorality. It was not! It was an act of *worship!* He was thoroughly convinced his action would bring much pleasure to Jehovah. Employing New Testament terminology we would explain it in this manner: Cain was serving God in "the flesh." Flesh is self-confidence - confidence in one's self

- and it is obvious Cain believed *his* idea for the offering was superior to God's idea.

We do the same.

In our "Cain-likeness" we serve God in the flesh. Because of our own know-it-all attitude we think we have ideas for Christian service and ministry which are superior to God's. Such thoughts are likely more subconscious than conscious, but *any initiation* on our part in Christian service is an expression of our own self-confidence; and we can expect the spiritual corruption which follows.

We referred to Galatians 6:8 a few paragraphs earlier. The second half of the verse promises, "But the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life." It is obvious that Paul lays the phrases "sowing in the flesh" and "sowing in the Spirit" side by side for his readers to grasp the fact they are opposite, contrary the one to the other, contradictory. The conclusion is clear: any Christian service which has not been initiated by the Holy Spirit has been initiated by our own flesh, our own self-confident know-it-all attitude!

Some people feel that any "Christian" service is of necessity a work of the Holy Spirit, not the flesh. Such is not true. Even a casual study of the Book of Galatians will reveal that much Christian activity is nothing more than "flesh" activity.

Let us consider the two most basic activities that are ours in our walk with the Lord - Bible reading and prayer. Who makes the decision concerning "how" and "how long" we shall study our Bibles? Who decides when and how long we pray; where and with whom we pray? Who decides for *what* we should pray? Usually, *we* do. Unless we study our Bibles and pray under the direction of God's Spirit, we are serving God "in the flesh."

What of witnessing?

We are serving God “in the flesh” if we are seeking to make our own witnessing opportunities or attempting to “convince others to accept Christ out of our own wisdom.

Perhaps you have a responsibility in your church. Who initiated this? Unless the Lord has placed us in our church responsibilities, *we* have been - in some ways - a part in initiating the matter.

Our present state of Christian service evokes other questions.

Do we set goals for our group because everybody else does it?

Do we attempt to comfort some grieving person with a “thought” we read in a book?

Are we engaging in certain ministries because it will make our church group “look good?”

Are we involved in some of our Christian services only because we know others expect it of us?

There are countless examples of how we do the work of the Lord out of our own initiation - *rather than under the direction of the Holy Spirit!* We shall mention a few of the negative results which come from our initiating the work of the Lord.

Many, many times I have asked people how their “planned programs” of such things as prayer, Bible study and witnessing have succeeded. The inevitable answer has been - “I failed.”

What followed the failure?

The answer seems always to be the same: “Guilt, self-condemnation, depression.”

Actually, those who succeed for a brief time in such fleshly Christian service only compound their problem. The problem

is self-confidence, and success merely gives enlargement to it. But - ultimately - failure will come.

Recently, I heard a man speak who ministers to hundreds of pastors. He stated that he talks with more and more men who want out of the ministry. The depression which causes a minister to “want out” comes one way or another from the spirit of initiation. Either these men entered the ministry own their own initiation, or they have attempted to minister by their own initiation.

The most conscientious of ministers who serve the Lord in the flesh have actually done damage to their health in their attempt to be fruitful for the Lord.

All of us, ministers and lay persons alike, should realize what a self-initiated Christian service does to those to whom we minister. At times we bless them with “bundles of nothingness”; at other times we share things with them which may be spiritually harmful. Our advice to them will certainly be harmful if, in our self-initiated ministries, we encourage them to “go and do likewise!”

Many of God’s choicest servants - again, both ministers and lay persons - in their self-initiated ministries have all but forsaken their wives and children “to do a good job for the Lord.”

There are many expressions of this self-initiation. Limitations of space prohibit our discussing those ways of life and resultant tragedies which come when our passion to initiate leads to a life of “out and out rebellion” against the Lord. Suffice it to say that a life and ministry of self-initiation is literally fraught with possibilities for sadness and tragedy, not to mention the wasted time and energy as shown in the instance of Adam and Eve.

If we wish to enjoy life at its best and Christian service at its best, we must cease to live the life of initiation! The elo-

quent pen of Isaiah scribes a powerful, poignant thought, inspired from Heaven: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isa. 55:8-9). If we are going to walk in the “high ways” of the Lord, we must cease to live a life of initiation out of our own thinking.

Praise God!

We can!

Jesus Christ did not live a life of initiation. In fact, He never initiated anything.

I am aware that it appears I am being blasphemous with such a remark; however, the New Testaments supports this strong statement. More than a few statements from His own mouth confirm our stated position.

John 5:19 - “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatsoever the Father does, these things the Son does in like manner.

John 5:30 - “I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent me.”

John 5:36 - “For the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.”

John 8:16 - “But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He Who sent Me.”

John 8:26 - “The things I heard from Him, these things I speak to the world.”

John 8:38 - "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father."

John 12:49 - "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself Who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak."

John 12:50 - "The things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me."

John 14:10 - "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works."

John 15:15 - "For all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

John 15:24 - "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin, but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well."

John 17:4 - "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do."

These words of personal testimony from the lips of our Lord give clear and convincing evidence that His life on earth was one of total response to the Father as opposed to a life of initiation!

For many years I was confused by His assertion in John 14:10 that the words which He spoke constituted the works of the Father. But think of this. During His earthly ministry, leading up to the cross, can you remember anything our Lord ever did for anyone except use His voice? Amazing, isn't it? Of course on a few occasions He placed His hands on someone, but it was never without the accompaniment of words from His lips.

In the light of this fact, please notice how frequently He mentioned that His words were from His Father. For us to

maintain that He said was from the Father is tantamount to saying that everything He did was from the Father.

The advantages of living by response rather than initiation are many and varied - we shall here mention only two.

When we approach each day in belief that the Lord is continually talking to us - and believing that we should be responding to Him - we shall live in greater intimacy of fellowship with Him; we shall be attracted, *driven* to a life of continuous fellowship with Him! It was so in the life of Christ when He walked on the earth. Just hours before His crucifixion He told His followers, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to His own home, and to leave Me alone; *and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me*" (John 16:32, author's italics). Close, intimate, continuous fellowship with the Lord is a wonderful advantage for the believer!

A second advantage we enjoy in a life of response is the pleasure of being a blessing to others. Another look at John 14:10 reveals that such was true in the life of our Lord: "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." His *words* - which issued forth in His works of blessing to others - were His because He was responding to the Father.

The discussion of this present chapter forcefully leads us to the conclusion that to live a life of initiation is "Cain-like," while a life of response is "Christ-like." We may also conclude that the fanner carries along with it much pain and failure - but the latter brings abundant blessings from the Lord!

I am aware there are believers who fear the life of response. They understand it as being *passive* - leading to laziness or a lack of development of their own potential in life.

I understand the fears. Those who possess such fears, however, should examine their own beliefs about the Lord they serve and the Lord to Whom we are to respond. Does their God have a “point of view” about each moment of their lives? Is their God mightily active in history? If the answers to these two questions are affirmative, there should be no problem of living a life of response rather than one of initiation!

Furthermore, when we respond to the thoughts and actions of our Heavenly Father, we shall in no way have an undeveloped mind or personality; on the contrary, we shall reach our highest potential by living in communion with the mind and personality of the One Who created all of life and all of history!

It is true that when we *begin* to live a life of response, we may feel for a while that we are lazy (or appear to others as being lazy), because it will probably lead to different types of activity. In most cases, we shall spend more time alone with the Lord in prayer and Bible study than we did earlier. We shall be more engaged in mental activity, and consequently will be less noticeable than before - but to conclude that these types of activity are *inactivity* is a misunderstanding.

It is my opinion that many draw away from a life of response because Satan has perverted their concept of God and has promoted the passion to “accomplish something great - some great thing - for God.”

For you who are weary of initiating the spiritual activities of your lives and are ready to begin a life of response to the One Who is the Mind of the universe, there is a way. It is found in our oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our old man - which includes the passion to initiate has been crucified with Christ. Our flesh, which stands in opposi-

tion to the full blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives, has been crucified with Christ. Because we are in Christ, we are seated with Him in the heavenlies far above the defeated enemy - Satan.

When we choose to be delivered from the old man (which includes deliverance from the power of the flesh!) and to experience life in the heavenlies - and when we *believe* the old man has been crucified and we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies - the Lord Himself begins to make such a life *experiential* for us. As we have said before, it is the plan of God that faith *precedes* reality.

Before we leave this section, we must briefly address a frequently asked question - "*How can I know when God is speaking to me so I can respond?*"

You can't every time.

The most important thing is not that we respond perfectly, but that we are *willing* to live a life of response! Important it is that we understand we are to live that life of response. It is because of our oneness with Christ that we *may* live a life of response. And we must *choose* to do that very thing. When these issues are settled, we should then just "go with what we get."

We are all still learning. None of us has ever lived one full day in perfect response. We are growing in that direction. The more we *choose* to live a life of response, the more we shall do so. The Lord will not be angry with us when we fail to interpret His leading - but He will be grieved if we fail to look to him for "moment by moment" leading.

chapter six

Competition to Compassion

I had graduated from high school only a few weeks before; more importantly, a few months earlier I had entered into a new and exciting walk with the Lord. We were engaged in a church league softball game and were suffering a humiliating defeat. Strangely, it didn't matter to me that we were losing. I was amazed at myself, because I had always been a hard loser.

The Lord was doing a remarkable thing. He was momentarily liberating me from a spirit of competition. I could sense, however, that the same work of grace was not taking place in

the team's catcher. It was obvious that he was embarrassed and angry, and my lack of concern added to his discomfort.

After that game I never saw him again. He obviously had no desire to play with a teammate who seemingly had lost his desire to win. Most of us would have felt the same way.

I relate the incident to illustrate the spirit of competition that abides in us all and also to show that God's grace can deliver us from such a spirit. I want to confess hurriedly that my deliverance from the desire to compete and win was only temporary. Only in recent years has a lasting deliverance come.

If we will take time to think about it, we will all realize how much we are affected by a spirit of competition. An enormous amount of what we do and feel is the result of living comparatively, competitively. We are driven by the desire to look better than others; to come out on top.

It is the nature of us all to do so.

All of our lives we have heard people being accused of trying to "keep up with the Joneses." The very accusation reveals a spirit of competition; it reveals comparative living.

Two or three small boys are happily playing and suddenly—and for no apparent reason they begin to wrestle. Each one wants to prove he can whip the others.

A teenage boy studies late into the night, not necessarily in order to be his best, but to make the best grade in the class.

A young couple plunges dangerously into debt for a house that has superior features or a superior location.

A mechanic told me that when he chose his profession he also intended to be "king."

A street sweeper admitted, "I want to be the best street-sweeper in my town."

Have you noticed how much of our free time is given over to competitive activities?

We have found an outlet for our passion to compete in the world of athletics. How much of our time is consumed with athletics either as a participant or a spectator? Who does not have his or her favorite team or teams? The involvement of the spectator sometimes seems to be greater than that of the participant.

Not only do we have a plethora of athletics in our schools, but we also have all types of community sports. Then there is the phenomenon of professional athletics. Almost all the larger cities of our nation have such teams as ice hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball, and football. They also sponsor special events for professional golf and tennis.

On and on we could go to show how much the spirit of competition is a part of our lives.

Sadly, the spirit of competition runs rampant within the realm of Christianity. Our Lord had to chide his followers for an argument concerning which of them was the greatest. Ever since those first days of the Christian movement, it has been permeated with the desire to come out on top; to look better than others.

Far too much of the activity in the Christian movement comes from the desire to have the largest or richest denomination, or church, or Sunday school class.

In casual conversation we give our opinions as to who is the best preacher, professor, or evangelist; which is the best church.

We have written, purchased, and studied books about the largest and fastest growing churches.

When we are honest, we will admit that there burns in our bosom a desire to come out on top; to look better than the

next person. We will also admit that far too much motivation and far too many of our negative emotions spring from a desire to look better than those around us.

The Scriptures reveal that to be competitive is to be “Cain-like.” He was a man consumed with a desire to be number one.

In explaining Cain’s motive for killing Abel, the Apostle John says, “And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” It is obvious that Cain was in competition with Abel, and he lost.

When we understand that the most basic sin problem of all is the know-it-all attitude, it is not difficult to see why we are so “eaten up” with a spirit of competition. If each of us consciously or subconsciously feels that we are as smart as God, we can’t wait until others agree with us. Hence, each of us is out to prove our own superiority. We *insist* on being “number one.”

In the case of Cain the desire to be number one led to such things as jealousy, covetousness, anger, depression, hate, and even murder. We will leave our discussion of these until later, but now we will share some of the other sad results of the spirit of competition. The reader will be aware of many more than we have the space to discuss here.

For several reasons we may gain clear insights into the negatives that issue from living comparatively by looking at the world of athletics: the very heart and soul of athletics is competition; the great majority of us are involved in athletics either as participants or spectators; the desires and preparation to win, and the emotional responses to winning and losing, have either been experienced or observed by all of us on numerous occasions. What we discover here will reveal the

damage done in any area of our lives given over to competition with others.

Often, one of the most frequent results from the competition of athletics is a great amount of dishonesty. Even as I write these words, I am thinking of a university football team which will probably win a championship this year, but will not be able to play in a post-season bowl game because of dishonesty in recruiting some of the players who have made the team a champion.

At the conclusion of each athletic event there are strong emotions - the winners feel good, the losers bad. However, those good feelings are sometimes accompanied with the feeling of superiority that can lead to such negatives as conceit and arrogance, and the bad feelings are sometimes accompanied with feelings of inferiority and even cowardliness which may lead to depression and fears of rejection.

The feelings of inferiority and cowardliness are oftentimes generated in an athletic setting where some young persons have neither the desire nor the ability to be a part of an athletic event or team.

Emotions have much to do with winning athletic events and the passion to be "number one" has caused some athletes to reach an emotional high through drugs. Only recently it was revealed that one of the most famous athletes in this nation participated the last few years of his athletic career with the aid of cocaine.

One of the most deadly results from the spirit of competition is the lack of respect athletes often develop for their opponents. Many coaches convince their players that in order to win they need to hate their opponents. Obediently, some of the players try to "work up" a hate for their opponents before each game.

We could mention many of the harmful effects of athletics, but we will confine ourselves to only one more. Competing against another person can become so important that it may totally absorb our thought life. We become totally “caught up” in the desires and preparation for winning. For a Christian, such absorption is devastating.

Many readers will have problems with what is being shared in this chapter. I have had problems in this area myself. Most of us could say, “I have seen much good come from competition.” Let us, however, evaluate some of the good we have seen come from competitive events.

“Competition is a means of building self confidence,” someone will say. We need to remember though that “self-confidence” is the basic sin problem. When we compete and do well, we are only increasing our sin problem.

Furthermore, when we compete and do well, what happens to the person we bested? How does he feel about himself? Is it the will of God that we intentionally leave our opponents with feelings of inferiority and failure along with possible anger and depression?

Another benefit of competition we are told is developing the ability to work with others. Here is something we can believe is a legitimate benefit. Is an atmosphere of competition, however, the only place we can learn to work with others? Could we not also learn teamwork in ministering to someone?

One could argue that the vigorous activity of sports is good for one’s health. Again, however, we could gain that benefit apart from competitive activity. Also, there are many documented cases that such rigorous activity in a tense competitive setting has lead to damaged health and even death.

As I have been writing this chapter, my mind has gone several times to the benefits which have come to us as a result

of our competition with Russia in our space program. I am one of those who has argued that the vast amounts of money necessary for sending men to the moon were not wasted because of the “spinoff advantages” that have come.

Yet, we must remember that only the Lord truly has the knowledge of good and evil. We humans only *think* we know what is best.

We will have questions concerning the contents of this chapter, but one thing is unquestionably certain - Jesus Christ did not set for us an example of competition, nor did He teach us to compete!

Should all Christians, then, immediately withdraw from all competitive endeavors, including athletics?

No! Not necessarily. Yes, probably.

A Christian should walk in the Spirit. We should do as the Lord leads. If His leading places us in a competitive setting we should engage in it only for the glory of God, not ourselves.

We will never be completely removed from a world of competitiveness. Just as our Lord did not compete but others competed with Him, those around us will compete with us even when we have no intention at all to best them. Because of the spirit of competition that dwells in them they will compare themselves with us and seek better cars, houses, salaries, clothes, positions, etc.

When it became obvious to the religious leaders of Jesus’ day that He had a large following, their spirit of competition spawned a vicious jealousy which ultimately placed our Lord on the cross. We must remember, however, that He was not competing with them.

Our Lord was not competitive, He was compassionate.

Clearly, He was constantly moved to compassion for those with obvious needs. He also was compassionate toward those whose spirit of competition took Him to His death.

On several occasions, as our Lord moved closer and closer to the cross, we are told that He remained silent. In the face of hatred, abuse and falsehoods He said not a word. It was the silence of love. It was as much for those who were in opposition to Him, as it was for anyone, that He was dying. I think if we could have stood nearby, we would have seen in His eyes a deep compassion for those responsible for His death.

Of course, His teachings are replete with encouragements of compassion on the part of His followers.

I trust we have shown that it is “Cain-like” to be competitive; it is “Christ-like” to be compassionate.

As we are sharing in every chapter, we may be changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness; from being competitive to being compassionate.

The change is in our threefold victory stemming from our union with Christ. Praise our Lord!

In the first place, our spirit of competition has been crucified because our old man has been crucified with Christ. Our spirit of competition is a very real part of our old man. Our “old man” is our know-it-all attitude, plus all it has produced in us. It is obvious that we want to prove our superiority because of our know-it-all attitude.

Let us *by faith* claim our freedom from the old man and our spirit of competition because of our oneness with Christ in death.

Because our old man has been crucified, the flesh - a part of the old man - has also been crucified. It is the “flesh” that stands in opposition to the Holy Spirit. When we accept the

crucifixion of the flesh and choose the Lordship of Christ, the flesh becomes inoperative, and the Holy Spirit is liberated to fill our lives. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we are filled with compassionate love.

In that we are in Christ” we are seated with Him in the heavenlies. From that position we are in authority over Satan and all the demons of competition that would seek to stir in us a spirit of competition.

We have this powerful threefold victory then...

... our “spirit of competition” has been crucified with Christ;

... our “flesh” - standing in opposition to the Holy Spirit -has been crucified;

... we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies - a position of authority over Satan.

Let us claim this threefold blessing with the attendant victory and permit the Lord to change us from a “spirit of competition” to a “spirit of compassion.”

chapter seven

Depression to Joy

“And his countenance fell” (Gen. 4:5).

Cain’s countenance fell because Jehovah rejected his offering.

Obviously, Cain’s countenance was lifted up as he approached the Lord. He came with full confidence that he and his offering would be accepted with many praises for his industriousness and ingenuity.

Everything about him - his walk, his speech, his spirit - belied an uncontrollable excitement because of the freshness, abundance, and perfection of the offering he presented.

We know the feeling. At least a few times in our lifetime we have given it our all; we have put all we had into something.

We also know the feeling of the fallen countenance. We have expected the complimentary statements and have received constructive criticism or, at best, an insincere compliment. Or, we have gone all out for someone and received little or no appreciation.

It hurts! Cain was hurt. “And his countenance fell.” Rejection always hurts.

Cain’s first response to the rejection unquestionably was disappointment. We who are of like nature with Cain know, however, that it takes the disappointment of rejection only a matter of seconds to turn to depression. Hence, the title of this chapter.

Jehovah’s statement immediately following His rejection of Cain and his offering indicates how deeply Cain felt the rejection. “And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” (Gen. 4:6-7a, KJV).

One dictionary definition of rejection is “a morbid condition of emotional dejection and withdrawal.” This is an excellent description of a person with a “fallen countenance.

All of us have been overcome by the sting of rejection, and in a matter of only seconds we had that feeling of emotional dejection and desire for withdrawal. It was inevitable. We may easily believe then that Cain’s rejection by Jehovah almost immediately resulted in an inner condition of depression.

However, rejection is not Cain’s only reason for being depressed. The words of Scripture add several other factors that can be a source of depression.

In an earlier chapter we have seen that the New Testament reveals Cain was in competition with Abel and had a passion to be “number one.” The Apostle John asserts that Cain killed Abel “Because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous” (I John 3:12). Cain failed as a competitor. *Failure* is one of our most common causes of depression. This is especially true when our efforts have been vigorous and our hopes have been high - as in the case of Cain.

Failure often results in depression because it frequently leads to another form of rejection - *self-rejection*. Surely we all know the experience and the attendant emotions.

Not only does the comment from First John reveal a spirit of competition in Cain, it also indicates the strong possibility of *jealousy*. There can be no doubt that Cain was operating from what the Apostle Paul calls “flesh,” and one of the works of the flesh is jealousy. There is such a short distance between jealousy and depression that to say people are suffering from jealousy is almost tantamount to saying they are suffering from depression.

Cain’s failure and rejection coupled with Abel’s (his competitor) success and acceptance doubtless gave rise to feelings of *inferiority* in Cain. Such feelings of inferiority have become so recognized in our modern society that the term “inferiority complex” is a household word. We know the feelings. We also know that our feelings of inferiority frequently lead to a state of depression.

We have evidence even in the New Testament that Cain was depressed. The Apostle John avers that Cain “was of the evil one” (I John 3:12). Satan is a master at using our emotions against us. This is clearly indicated in the Book of Job as he sought to use Job’s emotions to turn him against the Lord. He is called in Scripture “the accuser of the brethren.” He

accuses us to one another; he accuses us to ourselves. When he succeeds in getting us to be “down on ourselves,” he has succeeded in giving us a case of “the depressions.” I think he did exactly that with Cain.

There is at least one more factor in the biblical account that could indicate the “fallen countenance reveals depression in Cain. Our conclusions are largely conjectural, but lie within the scope of biblical truth.

As we have already pointed out, it is at least possible that Cain had put much energy into the preparation of the offering he brought. If so, it is also possible that he came in a state of *physical fatigue* when he brought his offering. We moderns know that often we have our deepest depression when we are in a state of fatigue.

The desire of Elijah to die when he was at a point of extreme fatigue shows that the marriage of physical fatigue and depression is not a modern development.

While I admit some drawing of conclusions in the above discussion, hopefully, we have given enough biblical content to give credence to the belief that Cain’s countenance had fallen partly because he was in a state of depression.

Those of us who are continuously working with people know that depression is a most common malady, one that is likely experienced by all those with whom we work. It seems to be as common as the “common cold,” regardless of the cause.

We all know people who are more quickly depressed than others. We know about such temperament that in a moment’s time can run from feelings of abundant joy to deep depression. While we may not always have all the insights we would like to possess about depression, we know it is a powerfully devastating force in our present-day world.

If our statements concerning Cain have been convincing, we have shown that Cain was depressed; therefore, our tendencies to be depressed are an evident demonstration of our own “Cain-like” nature.

Depression is always accompanied with devastating results. We shall mention a few of them.

Depression can paralyze our Christian service. It does so for several reasons. For one thing, a depressed person has little desire to do anything. He or she certainly has no strong desire to minister to others. How or why should we seek to convince others that we have found the abundant life when we know we have not. We feel like hypocrites at such a time, and none of us desires to be a hypocrite.

Also, *depression nullifies our ability to have a positive effect on those with whom we seek to have a ministry.* There is a famous story of a young man who was standing in front of a rescue mission inviting passersby to enter and worship with him. One who was invited looked into the young man’s face and replied, “No, thanks, son, I already have enough problems of my own.”

Perhaps the most tragic result of depression is its tendency to evoke thoughts of destruction. In the case of Cain it was partially responsible for the murder of his brother. Depression probably makes so many people critical. This is especially true when the depression is caused by jealousy and feelings of inferiority and failure. Depression is also probably one of the reasons that many - even Christians - become so critical of others in their old age.

Many of us have wondered for years why our society has had to endure such things as vandalism, especially when there is no reason for it. Depression can evoke thoughts of destruction.

The thoughts of destruction produced by our states of depression are not always pointed outwards. They often lead to self-destruction. Depression is unquestionably the cause of most suicides. Who has not been disturbed at the increasing number of suicides in the United States? Who has not been deeply saddened at the rise of suicides among the very young?

The reader has no doubt known depression and some of its sad results in a personal way. There are obviously more negative results than we have taken space to mention here. Our purpose, however, is not to outline the unhappy results of depression but to show why we get depressed and that there is a victory over the vicious enemy and over its tragic results.

Jesus Christ was never depressed.

He was rejected by mankind, but never depressed. He was tired, but never depressed. He was attacked by Satan, but never depressed. To those around Him He often appeared a failure, but he was never depressed.

It is never Christ-like to be depressed - only Cain-like.

On the contrary, Jesus Christ was radiantly joyful. The New Testament vividly makes known the joy of the Lord. Yes, He did weep. One of the most famous verses in the Bible states that Jesus wept. Two other verses in the New Testament make mention of the tears of our Lord.

The joy of the Lord, however, is mentioned a total of eight times in the New Testament, almost three times as often as the tears of our Lord.

Had we walked with our Lord during His earthly sojourn, we would have walked with One Who continuously exuded abundant joy. We would have thrilled to have been with Him.

He Himself said, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." He admitted that He had the reputation of One Who was

gluttonous and a winebibber. He was not - of course He was not! But the fact remains that His detractors found no dour and sour lifestyle as a basis for criticism, or we would certainly have heard about it!

It is inconceivable that our Lord could have said, "I am come that you might have life, and have it abundantly" without a gleam in His eye and a song of joy in His heart.

Christ lived each moment in the strength of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is joy.

In fact, He prayed that you and I might have His joy to the full.

Yes, it is Christ-like to be joyful, and it is possible for each of us to be joyfully Christ-like.

Since I have come to understand that I am now one with the Lord Jesus Christ, I have experienced a marvelous deliverance from depression. I have also experienced a mighty infusion of the deep, satisfying joy of the Lord.

I notice this also in others. In fact, it is one of the very first things we notice in those who have had the truth of oneness with Christ revealed to them.

About two or three years after the Lord opened my heart to the message of oneness with Christ, I had the privilege of sharing the message with a high school student who truly loved the Lord. We visited often in my study; we talked freely of the things of the Lord. We especially talked freely of the message of living by grace.

Several months after we met, he experientially entered into the life of oneness with Christ. He did not immediately tell me of the new life God had given him. For some reason he waited several weeks to inform me. When he did share with me that he had begun to live in union with Christ, he said,

“One day in your office you were explaining the message to another person; as you talked, the Lord revealed to me my union with Christ.” Then he added, “And I have not had one moment of depression since that day.”

What a victory!

Just as all the results of depression are bad, *all the results of joyfulness are good*. Joyfulness puts a spice in all we do. We seem to have more physical energy. We have more desire to serve others. We certainly have more desire to share the good news of the Lord Jesus. When we tell others of the love of the Lord with an obvious joy in our hearts, they will be more prone to listen to what we have to say.

At the risk of being boringly redundant, we want to share again how we may experience our oneness with Christ, and as a result, *be changed from depression to joyfulness*.

Because we have been placed into Christ by the Holy Spirit, we are now *one with Him* in being...

... crucified with Him

... dead to sin with Him

... buried with Him

... made alive with Him

... raised from the dead with Him enthroned with Him

... alive unto God with Him!

While these things are true of us in the eyes of the Lord, they do not become experiential in our own lives until we do three things: (1) *come into a knowledge* that these things are true of us, (2) *believe* they are now spiritually true of us, and (3) *choose* to make them true of us.

When we do these three things, and do them to the glory of God, then the Lord is able to change us from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

Depression is of the “old man.” It comes ultimately from the know-it-all attitude and is experienced by everyone. Our old man has been crucified with Christ. When we do the three things mentioned above, the crucifixion of the old man becomes an experience *in us*. We are gradually delivered from him and his power in our lives. As a result, we are delivered from depression along with all its causes.

When we continue to do the three things mentioned above, in time enthronement with Christ becomes an experience with us. It is from this position of enthronement that we understand our authority over Satan. We come to realize that he is a defeated foe and has no right to produce depression or anything else in us. From that place of authority over our defeated foe we stand against him in faith and experience deliverance from the depression he seeks to produce.

When we do the three things mentioned above, the flesh - which was crucified with the old man - is restrained in us and the Holy Spirit is freed to fill our lives. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with joy. To be filled with joy is to be Christ-like!

One thing we need to notice about the joy produced by the Holy Spirit is that it has nothing whatsoever to do with our circumstances. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with joy regardless of our situation or condition.

The Holy Spirit can continuously fill us only as we live out of our union with Christ.

May our dear Lord so give grace that *right now* we could claim all that our oneness with Him means, and *right now*

begin to experience a change from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness by experiencing change from *depression* to *joyfulness!*

chapter eight

Sinful Anger to Divine Patience

“Preacher!”

The young mother’s shout arrested my attention as I walked through the darkness to my automobile.

“Yes?” I responded as I turned. She was standing in a side door of the church building.

“I tried your thing today, and it *worked*,” she offered. The brief conversation took place following the Wednesday evening service of a revival meeting just north of Dallas, Texas.

Her words “your thing” were a reference to the message I had brought the previous evening. I had given testimony of

how the Lord was changing me after revealing to me the message of our oneness with Christ only a few weeks earlier. I had mentioned that the Lord was miraculously liberating me from anger.

After hearing my Tuesday evening message the young lady told me that anger was her biggest problem. In fact, she said she could not go through one day without losing her temper at work. I had briefly retold my testimony, then encouraged her to thank the Lord that she was “dead to anger.

Now, only twenty-four hours after hearing for the first time the message of victory over the power of sin, she was testifying to the truth of the message.

After the service Thursday evening I asked if she had enjoyed victory again that day. She had. Friday evening I made it a point to inquire again about her day. She placed her forefinger about a quarter of an inch from her thumb as she said, “I came that close, but it worked again!”

“Is that a record” I asked.

“Except for a week I spent in the hospital,” she admitted.

I have not seen that young lady since that week of revival services and do not know what has happened in her life. I do know, however, that for that period of time she discovered the way to victory over anger and all sin. *It is through our union with the Lord Jesus Christ!*

Cain became angry.

When Cain knew that Jehovah had rejected his offering he “became very angry and his countenance fell” (Gen. 4: 5b). The Hebrew word which is here translated “angry” also means “to burn.” We have all seen people so angry that a glowing

redness was evident on their countenance. This is conceivably what happened to Cain.

We have all had enough experiences with anger that we are able to visualize the scene; in our mind's eye we can see Cain's change of countenance - his face aglow with anger.

When we speak of anger, we speak truly of that which is *Cain-like*.

Anger seems to be the most prominent sin with many of God's people. I have noticed when a discussion arises concerning anger there is a "confessing" response from most of those present.

The reader will notice that the chapter title indicates we can be delivered from "sinful" anger. The adjective is necessary because there is such a thing as "righteous indignation." Often Jehovah is said to be angry. It is recorded in Mark 3:5 that the Lord Jesus became angry with the Pharisees because of their lack of compassion for one in need. We are commanded in Ephesians to be angry and sin not. Thus, it is necessary that we make a distinction between "sinful" anger and "righteous indignation."

Every act of anger should be placed under the searchlight of the Holy Spirit. When we become angry, we should ask the Lord to reveal to us if it is sinful or not. One might find himself hiding behind the words "righteous indignation" when he has actually sinned against the Lord and against some person. Any "covering over" of sin is spiritually devastating.

On an occasion when I had become very angry I did not know if I had sinned or not. In my confusion I went to those with whom I had been angry and told them I did not know if my anger was sin or not, but if I had sinned against them, I wanted to apologize. Later, the Lord confirmed that I had not sinned, but the anger was, indeed, "righteous indignation." I

was glad, however, that I had set things right while awaiting a clear word from the Lord.

Why do we experience sinful anger? Why was Cain angry?

The root cause is the *know-it-all attitude*. Had Cain never brought his wrong offering, he would never have become angry. Obviously, there were other immediate reasons for Cain's anger - the rejection by the Lord, the jealousy, the failure - but it still stands that the root problem was his know-it-all attitude. The same is true for us and our outbursts of anger.

The New Testament affirms that the works of the flesh are "anger ... wrath" (Gal. 5:19-20 KJV). We define the flesh as self-confidence, and the know-it-all attitude is confidence in our own wisdom. We conclude, then, that anger - sinful anger - comes from the root problem of the knowledge of good and evil - *the know-it-all attitude*.

Scriptures point to one other reason for Cain's anger. As we have mentioned earlier, "Cain was of the evil one" (I In. 3:12). Obviously, Satan stirred Cain to anger.

Probably every reader of these words has had the unfortunate experience of being in a Christian gathering where unchristian attitudes surfaced, and without warning, people were speaking "hot words" from "hot tempers." Strong Christian ties were damaged or broken. The experience was unexpected and unexplainable. It was clearly a work of the flesh; it also was obviously a work of Satan. He had initiated it all. He seems to have an amazing expertise in the realm of anger.

How tragic that some Christians even become angry with God, as did Cain. When we permit ourselves to become angry with the Lord, we invite tragedy into our lives.

In the first place, we no longer seek to walk with the Lord; we miss the only perfect plan for our lives. We do not draw upon His abundant resources for daily living and, therefore, seek to live out of our own resources.

I once met a lady who seemed compelled to tell me of her recent heart attack. This is the story she related.

“One day my doctor entered my hospital room, pulled a chair near my bed, sat down, and said, ‘Lady, what’s eating on you? We have taken every test possible and cannot find a physical reason for your heart attack.’”

She continued, “As I talked with the doctor, I discovered that my heart attack was the result of resentment toward God. My husband and I had retired a few months earlier, and in a matter of weeks after our retirement he died of cancer. I resented God for his death.”

Her resentment, of course, had its roots in anger.

We know that most anger is toward people; but even anger toward people is hazardous to our health. There is a famous story of a medical doctor who declared that the next person who made him angry would kill him. Later he stood in anger to speak at a medical convention and fell over dead.

We have already alluded to the contribution anger makes to broken fellowships. Those broken fellowships are in churches, homes, offices, campuses, Sunday school classes - anywhere there is more than one person. I am certain that all over this earth there are people who have not spoken to each other for years as a result of one moment of anger and some resultant word or action.

As we have mentioned above, anger can lead to resentment. This is probably what the Apostle Paul has in mind when he says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go

down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity” (Eph. 4:26-27). This shows that even “righteous indignation” can degenerate into resentment when it continues and when Satan has an opportunity to make suggestions during our time of being righteously indignant.

Anger, and especially anger that has degenerated into resentment, may lead to the harm of others.

Cain’s anger, and resultant resentment, led to murder.

I visited a man in the hospital who had been shot while attempting to visit his child at the home of the parents of his estranged wife. I could see where the bullet had gone through his chest, dangerously near the heart. As I talked with him, I was aware that he was full of anger and hate and the desire for revenge.

When sinful anger is at an extreme, it can affect our ability to think. Early in my ministry I became so angry at a church business meeting that I almost had a wreck on the way home, although I had no idea I was even close to the other automobile.

Perhaps the most disturbing statement in all the Bible concerning anger is found in the Sermon on the Mount in which our Lord says, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court” (Matt. 5 :21-22a). That passage teaches that anger toward another puts us under the judgment of God.

Anyone who reads these words knows of damage done by anger that is not even suggested here. *Anger is bad! Its results are bad!*

It is never Christ-like to be sinfully angry, only Cain-like.

It is Christ-like to have an abundance of patience.

In the Greek New Testament there are two words that are translated as “patience.” The one with which we are concerned here speaks primarily of patience with people. It is a combination of two words. One means “afar off,” the other means “anger. The word, then, means “afar off from anger.” It is often translated “long-suffering.” The word is never used to describe our Lord, but we know He possessed this quality.

We are told in Galatians 5:22 that the fruit of the Spirit is patience. Jesus Christ lived in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are assured that He was one of “long-suffering.” The narratives of the Gospels also give conclusive evidence of His longsuffering.

Time and again you and I would have been angered when Christ was not. At the raising of the daughter of Jairus He was laughed to scorn when He announced she was not dead. Who of us can remain without anger when people are making fun of us?

It was trickery when the Pharisees and Herodians questioned our Lord concerning the matter of paying taxes. Who of us could have faced such cunning without anger?

As the Lord stood before Pilate, His accusers said He was perverting the nation and forbidding the people to pay taxes to Caesar. These statements were lies. Who of us can be lied about and remain without anger?

The man whom our Lord healed at the pool of Bethesda showed his lack of appreciation by making it a point to tell the aroused Pharisees that it was Jesus who healed him on the Sabbath. Had we have been the Lord, could we have been patient with him?

Even as our Lord was only hours away from the cross, He remained silent at the unjust and vicious treatment given Him by the Jews. His silence is an indication of His patience

and compassion. Who of us could have remained silent and without anger in such circumstances?

There were other events in the life of our Lord that would have evoked many of us to anger. The rejection of His family and the disciples, the constant fear and doubting on the part of the disciples, and the betrayal by Judas are examples.

Without question, our Lord was longsuffering. He was a “long way away” from anger.

It is Christ-like to be patient.

The benefits of longsuffering are many. Our Lord had occasion to break His relationship with His family, lose the follow-ship and fellowship of His disciples, alienate those who later would come to salvation, and destroy His influence and opportunity to be our substitute on the cross; but He did not.

Good things happen when the grace of God gives us patience. We keep friends we would otherwise lose; we maintain Christian influence that would have been destroyed; we keep intact an opportunity for ministry to others that anger would have destroyed; we are a testimony to the grace of God that may result in others seeking the same grace God has given us.

Thank God! There is the possibility of victory over anger; there is the possibility of having the spirit of longsuffering.

One of the saddest attitudes toward anger I have encountered is the attitude which says, “I know it’s wrong, but that’s just the way I am.” Such a person seems to enjoy “fits of anger” and the attention they bring. That person will never know the joy of deliverance from anger. He or she *is* that way, truly. Everyone knows that person is fully aware of his or her problem. It is not, however, necessary for a believer to go on unchanged.

Before discussing our victory over anger, we need to discuss our means of victory over those times of anger we have already experienced.

It is conceivable that the reading of these words concerning anger and patience have stirred deep feelings of guilt.

“I can’t think of seeking victory over anger for the future before I do something about outbursts of the past,” you may be saying.

If you are having guilt feelings about bursts of anger in the past, God’s grace is adequate.

The first step to freedom from the guilt feelings is confession. Any unconfessed sins of anger should be brought to the Lord with a repentant heart. He will not be surprised. He will be delighted! After we confess our sins, the Father wants us to receive His forgiveness. We dishonor the Lord when we confess sin and then do not believe He has forgiven us, because it shows a lack of faith in His abundant grace.

When we confess sin and receive forgiveness, but still do not have peace, it is most likely that our anger provoked us to some sinful word or deed against the person with whom we were angry. In that case we need to ask the Lord to show us the true nature of the situation - that is, if we have actually sinned. If He makes known to us that we have sinned, we need to apologize to the persons involved.

Suppose you become angry with someone but the anger never provokes you to some sinful word or deed? I think it is not necessary to confess to that person in such instances. On the other hand when we do speak or act rudely we need to make confession.

Confessing sin to another person is one of the most painful things we are called on to do. However, we must endure

the pain and make the confession if we are to continue in an unhindered walk with the Lord.

On several occasions I have asked forgiveness for something I have said in anger. I knew that I must if I was to continue in fellowship with the Lord.

At this point, permit me to wave a red flag of warning.

Do not try to delve into your past attempting to dig up forgotten sins. Such inner searchings only cause us to focus attention on ourselves. The Holy Spirit is well able to convict us of sin. When we remember sins *without* trying to remember them, we may be assured that the remembrance is the work of the Lord. Any other approach is not spiritually healthy. Of course, Satan will attempt to cause us to have false guilt for sins we have already confessed. In such cases we must take God at His word that we are in fact *forgiven of the sin* - and believe God instead of Satan's false accusations!

Our confessions and apologies may come in the form of face-to-face confrontation, telephone calls, or in some written form. The important thing is that we set things right with others.

We need now to look at God's provision for our transformation from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness - sinful anger to patience - as taught in the Word of God. We need to understand the way to victory over acts of anger in the future.

The answer is found in our union with Christ.

The message here is the same as presented in the earlier chapters. Once we know of our union with Christ, we are to believe all that it means and we are then to make choices in harmony with all it means.

In our oneness with Christ we are dead to sin with Him and we have been crucified with Him. We are, then, dead to

anger; anger has been crucified because it is from the old man who has been crucified.

In our oneness with Christ we are seated far above Satan, crowded our defeated enemy. From that position of authority over Satan we are enabled to withstand his temptations to become angry.

Because, the crucifixion of the old man includes the crucifixion of the flesh, the force that stands against our being filled with the Spirit, our oneness with Christ opens the way for us to be filled continuously with the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering.

In our union with Christ, then, we may be changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness. We may be delivered from sinful anger to divine longsuffering.

chapter nine

Stubbornness to Compliance

Cain had ample opportunity to repent.

“If you do well, you will be accepted,” Jehovah had said following Cain’s anger and fallen countenance.

Cain, it seems, never considered for even a brief moment the possibility of repentance. He adamantly rejected Jehovah’s merciful offer.

Cain was as “stubborn as they come.” He refused to admit even to the God of the universe that he was wrong.

We all know people who are stubborn like Cain. The truth is, some of us would fit this category. Often we know we would be better off if we would yield to the ideas and desires of others. We are just too proud to admit they are right.

Cain was too proud to admit he had made a mistake and that Jehovah's idea was correct. His know-it-all attitude was playing havoc with his life.

There are other Biblical narratives which indicate that stubbornness is a result of the knowledge of good and evil. The refusal of the children of Israel to enter the promised land at Kadesh Barnea reveals they thought it was better not to enter the land of giants as Jehovah had commanded. Forty years later Moses referred to their refusal to go in as an act of stubbornness (Deut. 9:27).

The Book of Judges relates some of the darkest hours in the history of the nation of Israel. The sins of the people recorded in the book are said to be the result of stubbornness (2:19). The author of the book refers to the time as one in which each person did that which was right in his own eyes - and each person was living out of his own idea of good and evil.

Nabal, a relatively well-known character of the Old Testament is described as "churlish." The Hebrew word for "churlish" is also translated "stubborn." The story of Nabal is the story of one who was exceedingly stubborn. Nabal was contemporary with David. And he was as rich as he was stubborn. From his life we learn of some of the tragedies which result from stubbornness.

While David was living in the wilderness and in caves, his servants had protected the servants and flocks of Nabal. On an occasion when David learned that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent a delegation to request a gift from Nabal. Be-

cause of his deep-rooted stubbornness, Nabal refused the request. He would yield to the desires of no one.

When David received Nabal's reply he prepared for attack. One of Nabal's servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, of the critical situation. In the heat of the conversation he blurted out that Nabal was worthless and that no one could talk with him. Without Nabal's knowledge Abigail quickly went to David with gifts of appeasement and with a request that he not attack, telling David that Nabal was worthless and a fool. David, unlike Nabal, yielded to the request.

When Abigail informed Nabal the next day of the events, he went into a coma and died ten days later without regaining consciousness. Later, David married Abigail.

Nabal's story reveals that when we sow stubbornness, we reap an abundant harvest of grief.

Stubbornness alienated Nabal from all those around him. It even alienated his family. It is true that David married Abigail after the death of Nabal, but he had lost her respect and affection long before his death. Stubbornness always alienates. No one wants to be with a person who is always right - one who will never give consideration to the thoughts and desires of others.

Often, as in the case of Nabal, alienation is not physical or geographical. It is a matter of the heart. This type of alienation at times is the worst kind because of the continuing intimidation that must be endured.

One can only imagine the number of problems which are centered in feelings of inferiority which have been created through forced contact with a person of arrogant stubbornness. How sad that those strong, know-it-all personalities leave

with those around them feelings of incapability and self condemnation. Surely we do not desire to leave such negative feelings with those around us.

Those cases of alienation caused by arrogant stubbornness which are not geographical also create fear for those who are forced to remain under the intimidating dominance of the stubborn one. We all know those cases in which family members are always waiting for “just the right moment” to make suggestions or requests.

Nabal’s stubbornness not only alienated those around him, it also made him appear as a fool. Neither his servants nor his family had respect for him.

When we Christians lose the respect of those around us, we lose the opportunity for ministry. We even lose the privilege of leading the unsaved to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Abigail secretly sought to undo the damage Nabal had brought on himself and those around him. What a sad picture! Pity the wife or child who must endure the pain and enslavement of continuously making excuses for the foolish words and actions of a stubborn husband or father. Pity the husband who has to “fix up” the mistakes of a stubborn and arrogant wife. Pity anyone who must try to undo the reputation of a fool.

Nabal’s stubbornness placed his family and servants in danger. David was planning to kill them all. While we probably have not ever known of a situation as severe as Nabal’s, it is obvious that stubbornness that is severe enough does create enemies who may retaliate in some form. If such retaliation brings suffering to the stubborn one, that one’s family will hurt with him or her.

We are also told that the Lord smote Nabal and he died (I Sam. 25:8). His sins placed him under the judgment of God.

We are taught in the Book of Hebrews that the Lord will discipline His children that He might produce in them holiness and righteousness. When God sends sufferings, it is in love, but He sends them that we might be changed. Surely stubbornness is one of the characteristics we need taken from our lives.

When Abigail returned from talking with David, she found Nabal very drunken at a party he was giving. One may easily conclude that such actions were in accordance with a developed life style. In Deuteronomy we read “And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and drunkard.” This Old Testament passage dealing with stubbornness clearly indicates that one who is stubborn may end up a drunkard.

That stubbornness leads to such gross sins as drunkenness is underlined in Proverbs 7:10-12, which says, “And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot, and subtle of heart. She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner” (KJV). These verses indicate clearly that harlotry is the result of stubbornness.

Above all, there is no indication in the story of Nabal that he had any type of relationship with the Lord. *Surely, the most tragic result of stubbornness is a refusal to walk with God!*

Cain’s stubbornness resulted in a refusal to walk with God.

On several occasions the Bible places the words “stubborn” and “rebellious” together. “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father (Deut. 21:18). “And they shall say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious” (Deut. 21:20). “And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation (Ps. 78:8).

It is clear that the rebellion spoken of in the first two verses quoted refer to rebellion against parents. However, the spirit of rebellion will always extend to a rebellion against the Lord.

As a pastor I have given a call to salvation and Christian service literally thousands of times. I have no doubt in my mind that on hundreds of occasions I have seen those who would not respond to the call of the Lord simply out of *proud stubbornness*. A man will not let his wife believe he thinks she is right about him and his need of a walk with the Lord; a son will not for a moment consent to that which would admit to his mother and father that he has been wrong about life. So, in their stubbornness, they go on in their ways of transgression and sin.

Stubbornness against God results in a life of emptiness and uselessness. The Book of Second Kings speaks of Judah thusly: "However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain (II Kings 17: 14-1Sam).

To be stubborn is to be Cain-like.

Jesus Christ was not stubborn. He was not a "Casper Milk-toast," but He was not stubborn. A study of His life reveals Him as the most compliant of all human beings.

The spirit of compliance is stated beautifully in a description of "the wisdom from above" (James 3:17). It is said to be "reasonable." The variant reading for "reasonable" is "willing to yield." Surely, our Lord possesses the wisdom that is from above.

A study of the four Gospels indicates clearly that time after time requests were made of our Lord and He yielded to the desires of others.

Over and over He was asked to heal someone and He responded positively.

When the Pharisees and Herodians came to trick Him by asking about the matter of giving taxes to Caesar, He answered their question. He was anything but stubborn.

On two different occasions he responded to the requests of Pharisees to dine with him.

On and on we could go indicating the many ways which indicate that our Lord was compliant, not stubborn.

The deepest relationship He had was that with His Father. He made it quite clear that He came to walk with the Father. He had no plans of His own. He initiated nothing on His own. He was here to respond, even if it meant dying on the cross.

In the accounts of Christ's experience in the garden of Gethsemane the Scripture shares insights into the deeper thoughts and emotions of our Lord. He stated to three of the disciples, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death" (Mark 14:34). The grief itself was enough to kill Him. However, He told the Father that it was His desire to go on to the cross if that should be the will of the Father. It was the will of the Father, and He continued on to the cross.

In my early Christian life I read of the boldness with which some of the Christian martyrs faced death. I could not understand the contrast between their approach to death and that of Jesus. In time, of course, I came to understand that when He died He was separated from the Father. When He died He took our sins and guilt upon Himself.

He knew what He was facing. He knew it would be the greatest of all possible sufferings. But He did not turn from

the will of the Father. He walked that road right up to the agonizing death on Calvary's cross.

Praise God! Jesus Christ was not stubborn.

We have earlier stated, however, that He also was not a "Casper Milktoast" type. He could refuse. He did refuse. His refusals, though, were for the right reasons; they were because He knew that to yield to any and every desire was dangerous, for "He knew what was in man."

An examination of some of the refusals will make known His healthy reasons for refusing.

Repeatedly Satan made suggestions to Christ that would have turned Him away from the will of the Father. He was certainly anything but "clay" in the hands of the evil one. He was not refusing the suggestions of the devil simply to be stubborn; He was refusing because He knew He must not be turned aside from the substitutionary death on the cross.

There were those occasions when He was requested to do a miracle just to satisfy the curiosity of someone. He always responded negatively to such foolish requests. It was not His purpose to do "fantastic things." He was here to walk with the Father for the Father's glory. When His walk with the Father called for a miracle, the miracle came. Otherwise, there was no miracle.

The mother of James and John wanted her sons to have places of great importance and authority in His Kingdom. He refused the request. He told her such places were for those for whom they had been prepared. To have answered such a request would have caused much jealousy and confusion among the disciples.

One of the most famous incidents of refusal was in the case of Martha and Mary. Martha wanted our Lord to tell

Mary to help her serve. He would not. He could not, for in His response He gave us one of the most cogent statements concerning the Christian life. He said that only one thing was needful and Mary had chosen that good part. Out of His refusal and answer we all know that we need to live continuously face to face with Him.

On another occasion He was requested to call down the fires of heaven on those who were opposed to Him and His kingdom. He refused. His very nature would not have permitted it.

The Pharisees wanted an explanation for His authority concerning the cleansing of the temple. He refused an answer. He would not engage in conversation only to satisfy the curiosity of His enemies.

He refused a request to aid two brothers in dividing an inheritance. It was a matter to which He felt He should not respond.

Our Lord refused others. He did so for reasons that were in the best interests of those involved; He was not being stubborn.

He desires that we be as He was and is. He is not interested in our being as waves of the sea or clouds of the air, nudged by the slightest request or suggestion. At the same time He does not want us to be immovable out of stubbornness.

If we are among those who have a problem with stubbornness, we may also know the Lord has made a way for change.

A passage in Deuteronomy from which we have already quoted indicates how deeply-rooted stubbornness may be in us. It states:

“If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him,

he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out of his city at the gateway of his home town. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear of it and fear" (Deut. 21:18-21).

We need not despair that death was the only way for deliverance from stubbornness. By our union with Christ we have the same solution available to us.

We will again briefly review our means of change from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness - and in this case change from stubbornness to compliance.

When we were immersed into the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit at the time of our conversion experience, we became one with Him in death and in life. In our death with Him we became dead to sin and we became one with Him in crucifixion - our old man was crucified with Him. In our life with Him we became alive unto God and we became one with Him in resurrection. Our resurrection with Him is threefold: we became alive with Him, we were raised from among the dead with Him, and we are enthroned in the heavenlies with Him.

When any believer, *hears, believes, and acts* upon the message of union with Christ, the Lord brings about a tremendous change in that believer's life.

Our belief that we are one with Him in crucifixion and our choosing deliverance from the old man causes our crucifixion with Him to become experiential for us. Thus, there comes a liberation from stubbornness which is a part of the old man.

When the crucifixion of the old man becomes experiential for us, there comes a restriction of the flesh which re-

moves the only barrier hindering our being filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with the compliant - *Christ Himself*. We then have the spirit of compliance.

When we choose and claim our oneness with Christ in enthronement, enthronement becomes experiential. It is from this position that we may deal with Satan who prompts us to stubbornness.

This threefold victory is adequate for any of us to have the power to change from stubbornness to compliance - from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

chapter ten

Hate and Malice to Forgiveness

“Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother” (I John 3:12).

“Every one who hates his brother is a murderer” (I John 3:15).

It is obvious that hatred drove Cain to the murder of Abel. We can almost “feel” the hatred in Cain when we meditate on the passage. He had brought his offering with high expectancy of acceptance and praise. When he was rejected and his younger brother accepted, he first reacted with furious anger; the anger in time became hate. Then with calm, deliberate

hatred and cunning Cain tricked Abel into going into the privacy of the field with him where he murdered Abel.

I have used the term “hate and malice” in the title because a Christian cannot hate. “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15). We shall see later that a Christian can, however, have malice, which is the desire to see harm come to another.

The basic cause of Cain’s hatred was again his know-it-all attitude. We see a progression from this attitude to his problem with hatred. Because of Cain’s know-it-all attitude he wanted to be “number one.” When it became obvious that he had been relegated to a place below his brother, he responded with anger and jealousy. In time the anger and jealousy produced hatred.

The potential for malice is in all of us until we have found victory over our own problem of the knowledge of good and evil.

There is an accompanying cause for Cain’s hatred. Cain was “of the evil one” (I John 3:12). On an occasion when our Lord was conversing with the Pharisees he exposed Satan as a liar and a murderer. Just before the murder of Abel, Cain talked with him. One cannot doubt that he talked with cunning deceit. Thus, our Lord’s exposé of Satan fits with the murder of Cain as closely as a “hand in a glove.”

The two chief reasons for the hate in Cain were his know-it-all attitude and the influence of Satan. The two chief causes of malice, then, in the heart of the believer are the know-it-all attitude and the influence of Satan!

There are many reasons we Christians should desire continuous victory over malice. A few of those reasons will be presented.

Simon Peter admonished the readers of his first epistle to put away malice that they may desire the sincere milk of the Word as newborn babes (See I Pet. 2:1-2 KJV). Such a desire for the Word would ultimately result in spiritual growth.

Malice, then, stands in the way of desire for the Word of God. What a tragedy! We have all seen the truth of Peter's statement worked out in churches we have known. We have seen professing Christians so full of desire to see others hurt that it consumed them. They had no place left in their hearts for a desire for God and His Word.

Often such malice leads to division in the church as people begin to take sides. A minister friend told of preaching in a church where the factions had become so serious the people sat "only" with their own group during worship service. The middle aisle of the sanctuary was the dividing point. One wonders how many of them actually "worshipped" during the worship service.

The following event will perhaps underscore the degree to which there is malice in modern-day churches.

I was in attendance at a meeting of pastors, and we had knelt to pray. As we prayed, it seemed the Lord was speaking in a powerful way to us all. One would pray and then another. In time, one began to sob as he prayed. I recognized the voice. It was the voice of the man who was the leader of the group of churches represented by the pastors in attendance. The group of churches he led was about 150 in number.

He sobbed, "Oh, God, be with our churches! When we hear of one church that is doing well, we hear of ten that are having trouble!"

Anyone who has been involved closely in church life for even a brief period of time knows that those troubles stemmed from a spirit of malice.

While those who were leaders in the divisiveness should have been longing to know God and His Word, they were filled with malice toward their fellow believers who had been made in the image of God.

When one realizes the thrill and excitement that could have been in their lives, stemming from a longing to know God and His Word, it only adds to the grief that comes from acquaintance with such churches.

In Simon Peter's appeal to put away malice (I Pet. 2:1-2 KJV) he indicated that malice stands in the way of spiritual growth. It is obvious that a longing for the Word is essential to spiritual growth.

What pastor has not grieved over the lack of maturity among his members? What serious-minded Christian has not been brokenhearted over the tragic immaturity of his fellow believers? Think, then, how our carnality must grieve the very heart of God!

Pastors have tried every new program they can find in order to disciple their members. Such programs failed for some pastors. Even outstanding Bible teachers have not made a dent in our lack of growth as Christians.

According to Simon Peter, we must deal with the sin of malice if we are going to have enough desire for God's Word that we might grow.

The Apostle Paul shares with us reasons for putting away malice. In Ephesians, chapter four, Paul tells us to put away malice. Such admonition follows immediately the instruction not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

He is stating that malice in our hearts brings grief to the Holy Spirit. We must all understand that the Holy Spirit, because He is a person, has emotions just as we do. He can

grieve. If you and I grieve when we see malice in the hearts of our fellow believers, how much more does He? If fathers and mothers grieve when they see sin in the lives of their children, how much more does He?

His grief is greater than ours because He is the holy God; His grief is greater because of His superior hatred of sin and love for people.

Malice quenches the Holy Spirit. We have shown how malice brings divisiveness, and divisiveness always quenches the Holy Spirit. Time and again some of us have been in worship services when we knew something was wrong. There was no joy in the music; the pastor had no power when he preached; the invitation was totally void of convicting power. When you have been in the work of the Lord for a while, you know there is a strong possibility the “quenching of the Spirit” may be the result of malice in the church.

In Ephesians four the Apostle Paul admonishes the putting away of malice and other sins that we might be filled with such virtues as a kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. It is obvious he is pointing out that the Holy Spirit cannot fill us with the virtues of Christ so long as we will not put away such sins as malice.

Therefore, we conclude that another result of malice is a life with a paucity of Christian virtues.

Because malice is the desire to see another person hurt in some way, we confidently conclude that malice inevitably produces in us a spirit of criticism. It is not the only cause of a spirit of criticism, but it is one of the “prominent” causes.

Our Lord is speaking of a spirit of criticism when He says, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” (Matt.

7:3). The “log” is the spirit of criticism. That spirit in us causes us to continue to look at the speck in our brother’s eye.

Jesus continues, “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly enough to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5). Please notice. He does not say we will see the speck clearly when we get the log of criticism out of our own eyes - He says we will see clearly how to get the speck out of the brother’s eye. What a glorious thought!

What motivation to deal with malice!

Closely akin to the spirit of criticism is the use of the tongue. God’s Word speaks in powerful ways concerning the sinful use of the tongue. One of the classic passages on the use of the tongue is found in James 3:5-12. James introduces his statement concerning the tongue with reference to the fact that the bits in horses’ mouths and the rudders on ships are small but they do mighty things. He then adds:

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed, by the human race. But no man can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be

this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.

One can only imagine the damage that has been done through the years by those who have murdered the character of some serious minded child of God, even though they have not actually committed murder as that term is defined by our penal laws.

When I became pastor of one of my first churches, the former pastor had not yet moved to his new church field. One Sunday his wife remained at home and attended our services. After the services I offered her a ride home. On the way home she said over and over, “What a marvelous sermon.”

I should have been thrilled at her comments, but I was actually more confused than elated. “What on earth did I say that made such an impact on her?” I kept asking myself. Finally, an answer came that I have always felt is the correct explanation of her response.

The message was from the Sermon on the Mount. Much of what I had said came from these words from our Lord. “Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me” (Matt. 5:11). In subsequent days I learned that the things mentioned by our Lord in this verse had happened to her and her husband while they served that church.

While the reader is mindful of many results of malice I have not mentioned, I will point out only one other. When a believer lives with malice, he will inevitably be plagued with deep feelings of self-condemnation and guilt. This is especially true of those conscientious believers who are the vic-

tims of malice and grieve every day because there seems to be no deliverance.

Praise the Lord! There is deliverance, and we are joyfully presenting the way to freedom in this book!

In the Person of the Lord Jesus there was no malice.

No person ever lived who was more exposed to circumstances to cause malice than was He, but He was always characterized by a spirit of forgiveness - never a spirit of malice.

One of the most famous passages in the entire Bible is the statement of our Lord as he was hanging unjustly on the cross saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus always had a spirit of forgiveness. He faced seemingly every indignity a person could face, even the indignity of a shameful, undeserved death on the cross, but He never knew malice.

His spirit of forgiveness stands for all time as a challenge for us to forgive the Indignities we face and to hope by God's grace we may forgive as He did!

Another tremendous example of His spirit of forgiveness came only days before His crucifixion. He came near the city of Jerusalem. "And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes'" (Luke 19:41-42).

Later He said to the same wicked city that put Him on the cross, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. 23:37).

We could continue indicating those times we likely would have responded with malice when He responded with a spirit of forgiveness.

We will, however, call attention to one of the passages in which our Lord teaches forgiveness.

“Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven’” (Matt. 18:21-22).

There follows the story of a man who was forgiven by one to whom he was indebted, but in turn he would not forgive one who was indebted to him. Concerning such a spirit our Lord then says, “So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Matt. 18:35). The man who was not forgiving after being forgiven was given to torture by the one who had at first forgiven him.

Christ Jesus both set the example for forgiveness and gave very clear teachings concerning it. Blessings abound when we can be forgiving to others for their sins against us. We will mention only a few of those blessings because of the limitation of space.

One of the most obvious blessings that comes from a spirit of forgiveness is the continuing relationships and fellowships that are maintained because the offended party will forgive. A spirit of forgiveness is foundational for any strong marriage.

One of the most famous quotations of our day is the one that says, “All good marriages are made up of two great forgivers.” Our divorce courts would be busier than they are if there were not a great deal of forgiveness going on in our homes.

In an earlier part of this chapter we have discussed the tragedy of broken relationships in churches. These could have been avoided by a spirit of forgiveness.

It is conceivable the leader is a member of a church torn by strife. Perhaps if you take the lead in forgiveness, you could begin a healing work in your church.

A pastor friend told of preaching a revival meeting in a church torn by strife. In one service he preached on forgiveness. During the time of decision making he asked if someone would lead the way in forgiveness. After a time, a person came forward. Soon others came to publicly declare their desire to forgive other members of the church.

When we live with a spirit of forgiveness, the factions that divide our churches will not have a place to begin!

All other fellowships and relationships are kept healthy and strong when we live daily with a spirit of forgiveness.

In Second Corinthians the Apostle Paul indicates some blessings that result from a spirit of forgiveness. The church had, under Paul's guidance, disciplined one of its members. When Paul wrote Second Corinthians he encouraged forgiveness, stating, "You should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" (II Cor. 2:7).

The intent of the Apostle is that we protect the offending one from excessive sorrow. When we have the love of Christ in our hearts for others, we understand that this is no insignificant blessing from the Lord. We do not know all that is involved in the "excessive sorrow," but we do not need to know. We only need to understand that we bless others when we forgive them.

In the same passage the Apostle encourages forgiveness "in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan" (II Cor.

2:11). Coupled with what we have already shared about Satan's involvement in our malice, we see that we open the door for Satan to cause our angers and jealousies to degenerate into more serious problems when we do not quickly forgive those who sin against us.

The most important reason that we soon forgive those who sin against us is found in the comment of Jesus following the record of the Lord's Prayer. One petition of the prayer is, "Forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). It is the only part of the entire prayer upon which He comments.

His comment is, "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not, forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matt. 6:14-15). The message is loud and clear. When we live without a spirit of forgiveness, we live without a walk with the Lord.

How needful it is that we find God's grace to forgive any who sin against us!

Thank the Lord! There is a way to that grace for "forgiving living."

Our way to victory over malice - our way to "forgiving living" - is through the truth of our oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must hear, believe, and act upon the message of our oneness with Christ in being dead to sin and alive to God; we must hear, believe, and act upon the truth that we have been crucified, buried, vivified (made alive), raised, and enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ!

When we hear, believe, and act upon the message of our union with Christ and all it means, the Lord does a tremendous

work in us. The fact of our crucifixion with Christ and our death to sin becomes “experiential.”

It is the old man who has been crucified with Him and a part of the old man is a malicious spirit. *When we claim by faith that the old man has been crucified and that we are dead to sin, God does a work of deliverance in us from the malicious spirit.*

A part of the old man is also what the Bible calls “flesh,” and the intrusion of the flesh is what hinders us from being filled with the Holy Spirit. When we hear, believe, and act upon the truth of our union with Christ, there comes a restriction to the power of the flesh, permitting the Holy Spirit to fill our lives. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we are filled with love, and when we are filled with love we are filled with a spirit of forgiveness.

When we hear, believe, and act upon our union with Christ, enthroned living becomes experiential for us. From our position of enthronement in the heavenlies with Christ, far above our defeated enemy, we are able to have power over him and his promptings to maliciousness.

Praise God! It is not necessary that any of us continue in a spirit of maliciousness. We may be given the wonderful spirit of forgiveness we see in our Lord Jesus.

Let us believe in our union with Christ and the change it can make in us from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness.

Before bringing this chapter to a close it seems appropriate that consideration be given to that group of people who has been hurt so deeply that our words seem almost like mockery. They have been hurt so deeply that it ap-

pears the solution seems superficial; we have unwittingly “made light” of the severity of their pain.

I have talked to many people whose hurt has been so grievous that it seemed impossible they could forgive. On occasions I have thought to myself in counseling sessions, “Apart from the grace of God there is no way I could forgive if I were this person whom I am counseling.”

It was only months ago that I went to the home of grandparents whose grandson had been snuffed from this life because of another young man who chose to imbibe in intoxicating beverage. His moments of “fun” led to the needless death of their grandson. Is it possible to be forgiving in such circumstances?

It is! And they had! Praise the Lord for such amazing grace!

I have heard of negligent physicians whose lack of integrity resulted in unnecessary deaths.

I know only too well the stories of unfaithful husbands and wives who have brought indescribable pain to their companions to whom they had promised faithfulness.

I have heard the unbelievable stories of the way church members have treated their pastors when they didn’t like them and wanted them to move on.

I know the cruelty of young people and how they can be vicious in their words and attitudes toward their peers when it can help them advance their own causes.

I know the unfair employers who have “jerked the rug” from under the faithful employees, inserting someone above them because they think it will help the company.

I know those who have not understood the ways of God and of the people of God and are left with serious misunderstandings toward God and His people.

I know these stories and many more, but I also am acutely aware of the teachings of the New Testament. God's love is without qualification and it is available to us when we live in the light of our oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, yes, I also know by experience that "amazing grace" which enables us to warmly forgive those who have sinned against us.

It can be yours!

chapter eleven

Deceit to Honesty

“I said in my alarm, ‘All men are liars,’” declares the psalmist.

Perhaps in a less emotional time he would soften his accusation. But we can identify with his feeling. It usually comes when we have suffered at the expense of another’s cunning.

Jeremiah declares, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). He is obviously making an indictment which includes us all.

The Apostle Paul quotes a prophet of Crete as saying, “Cretans are always liars” (Titus 1:12).

It is conceivable that prophets of other countries could make the same accusation of their fellow citizens.

We of the United States are well aware of the stench of dishonesty now pervading our nation in both high places and low. It is exposed in nationwide scandals; it is detected in our own little groups.

On a national scale we have just trudged through the dark tunnel known as Watergate. We have been amazed, angered, terrified, embarrassed, and grieved. But we know those responsible for Watergate are no different from the rest of us. We have heard it said of our own acquaintances, "He will tell a lie when the truth would be better!"

It will be good for each of us to take a long look at ourselves as we read this chapter. It is possible that we are "Masters of Deceit" and do not even know it. I recently read a question we might ask ourselves - "Would I buy a used car from a person such as myself?"

I would encourage the reader to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of deceitfulness. We all have open doors for dishonesty. Are we permitting ourselves to walk through those doors?

There is a well-known story of a pastor who was given too much change upon boarding a city bus. When he returned the change to the driver, the driver said, "I knew I gave you too much change. But I heard your sermon on honesty last Sunday and I wanted to see if you practice what you preach." The minister probably trembled when he returned to his seat and wondered what would have happened had he kept the money. What would we have done in such a circumstance?

It is obvious that television has been one of Satan's chief weapons for filling our homes with the odious poison of deceitfulness. We are made to believe there is something virtu-

ous about “putting something over” on someone. According to television, one is to be applauded who cleverly deceives others.

Several years of such damaging and hurtful brainwashing has had its effect. By now we have an entire generation of adults who have ingested the philosophy that “dishonesty is the best policy” over so long a period of time. Their spiritual nerves have been so mesmerized they can no longer hear that inner voice say, “Dishonesty is wrong.”

That dishonesty goes all the way back to Eve’s encounter with Satan, and to Satan himself, is clearly evident to the most casual reader of the Bible. Jehovah told Adam and Eve they would die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and - evil. In conversation with Eve, Satan lied, “You surely shall not die” (Gen. 3:4).

Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lie and tasted the fruit; soon they themselves were practicing deceit. They attempted to hide from Jehovah.

Our own early infection with the dread disease of dishonesty is reflected in the words of the psalmist. “These who speak lies go astray from birth” (Ps. 58:3b).

When in the fourth chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul gives a long and terrifying list of the sins of the human race, he writes that we are “full. of deceit” (Rom. 1:29).

Our Lord says, “From within, out of the heart of men proceed deceit” (Mark 7:21,22). Surely man’s “throat is an open grave” (Rom. 3:13), breathing forth the putrefaction of a deceitful heart.

The Psalms also attest that there are those who “delight in falsehood” (Ps. 62:4). For some, lying is like some *delightful delicacy* to the taste.

The Bible abounds with innumerable accounts of acts of dishonesty. The reading of some of them almost causes us to stand back in horror.

An example is found in the lives of Ananias and Sapphira. They were members of that first Christian community, a community of believers who lived together in sweet fellowship and interdependence. As they were sharing their material goods, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and Ananias brought some of the money to the common treasury. He claimed that he brought it all. Simon Peter asked him, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5:3). Ananias stood exposed before Peter and anyone else who heard Peter’s voice. Peter’s words must have pounded in Ananias’ brain in that split second between the time he heard them and then dropped dead.

Another case of deceitfulness recorded in the Bible which indicates the indescribable depths to which men will go in acts of dishonesty is found in the account of the crucifixion of our Lord. “And they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill him” (Matt. 26:4).

In the light of these and other stories of deceitfulness found in God’s Word, we do not wonder that the Bible also declares that “God hates ... a lying tongue ... and a false witness who utters lies” (Prov. 7:16-19).

Jehovah’s opposition to guile is seen in the fact that it is one of the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments. Also, Jewish law provided a penalty for those who deceived others. In Leviticus 6:2-5 we find:

When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the Lord, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through

robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn false, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do; then it shall be when he sins and becomes guilty that he shall restore what he took by robbery, or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him, or lost things which he found, or anything about which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full, and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering.

Our man Cain certainly did not escape the trap of dishonesty when he was born into the human race. It was deeply imbedded in him.

In Cain we find dishonesty on two occasions; we find it in two different forms. He was guilty of both *cunning subtlety* and *blatant dishonesty*.

His subtlety is seen in his successful attempt to isolate Abel in the field. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4:8 KJV). Earlier Cain had been exceedingly angry. It seems clear that when Cain's anger and jealousy degenerated into hate, he very slyly concocted a plan to seduce Abel into the field where he killed him.

Those of us who have been victimized by such coyness have no problem visualizing the scene. We can almost hear the mock kindness in the voice and almost see the half-smile as Cain executed his disgusting and devious plot.

Cain's blatant dishonesty is seen in his out and out lie to God. "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?'"

“And he said, ‘I do not know’” (Gen. 4:9). There is nothing subtle in that.

Certainly we ourselves are tempted to the same kinds of deceitfulness. At one time or other we have all probably been guilty of both sinning subtly and in blatant dishonesty. If deceitfulness is a way of life with us, we need to give close attention to some corrective measures!

The sin problem of dishonesty, as in the case of the other sin problems we have discussed, is the result of a twofold cause. In the first place, like some tributary of the mighty Mississippi, deceitfulness flows from our knowledge of good and evil. If Cain had not presented a wrong offering, he would not have found himself in the position of desiring to kill Abel. He brought the wrong offering because his know-it-all attitude made him think he had a better idea than Jehovah.

Satan himself is the second underlying cause for Cain’s deceit.

It is not difficult to understand the involvement of Satan in Cain’s dishonesty. Over and again we have quoted I John 3:12, which teaches that Cain was being agitated by Satan. *Satan was prompting him to dishonesty.* We remember our Lord said that Satan is a liar and there is no truth in him. Satan cannot tell the truth! His total being is soaked with the poison of dishonesty!

We have already been exposed to the close relationship between Satan and dishonesty in the account of Ananias and Sapphira.

Elymas the magician sought to hinder the spread of the gospel in Cyprus. He must have been dreadfully shocked when Paul said, “You are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil” (Acts 13:10). Paul then struck him with blindness.

Because of these evil forces of Satan and our own know-it-all attitude, we may be tempted often to be dishonest; we might be tempted to be deceitful for many different types of reasons.

A little boy was asked the definition of a lie.

“A very present help in the time of trouble,” he responded. At least, he seems to have been raised in Sunday school as indicated by his biblical type of phraseology. And he said it well for us. A lie can be, *it seems*, one of our most convenient tools.

Untruths have been used for the accumulation of money, securing promotions in the firm, protection of ourselves from embarrassment, protection of others, and a multitude of other things.

Whatever the immediate cause, the real reason for our words or deeds of dishonesty is twofold: *the knowledge of good and evil and the influence of Satan in our lives*.

The results of our deceitfulness are most disastrous. It would be impossible to discuss them thoroughly here, but we will mention a few of the bad things that come because we succumb to the temptation to deceive others.

Dishonesty grieves the Holy Spirit!

We have mentioned earlier that the Holy Spirit is a Person and may be grieved. We are admonished by the Apostle Paul not to grieve Him (Eph. 4:30). In verse twenty-five of the same passage Paul says, “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.” Clearly, when we lie, we bring grief to the Spirit of God Who lives within us.

A spirit of subtlety can cause us to seek to hide our sins from God.

David says, “How blessed is he ... in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Ps. 32:1-2). It is obvious that King David primarily is speaking of deceitfulness about our sins, because in the following verses he says:

“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever-heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin” (Ps. 32:3-5).

One can see immediately that attempting to be deceitful with the Lord concerning our sin can be devastating. The negative results are many. *We lose fellowship with the Lord; we are affected in our souls; we are even affected physically.*

Lying leads to great waste and tragedy. “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death” (Prov. 21:6). Proverbs 19:22 says, “It is better to be a poor man than a liar.

Dishonesty alienates others from us. In Psalms 101:7, King David testifies, “He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house.”

Simon Peter testifies that those guilty of dishonesty forfeit the right to a happy life. “For let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile” (1 Peter 3:10).

Finally, deceitfulness brings on us the judgment of God. This fact is presented most vividly by the following passage from Zechariah 5:1-4.

Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold there was a flying scroll. And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits." Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. I will make it go forth," declares the Lord of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones.

Before leaving this section of our discussion of deceitfulness, we must give attention to one other matter. If you perceive yourself as one so imprisoned to a life of deceit that you would characterize yourself as a "liar," it is altogether possible that you have never yet had the born again experience. In the Revelation, when John gives one of his descriptions of heaven he says, "And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

In the light of the negative results of dishonesty, we should all be motivated to leave behind the Cain-like cloak of sin!

When we turn our attention from Cain to the Lord Jesus, we find one who was the complete opposite. Jesus Christ never deceived anyone.

We find our affirmation of this spelled out clearly in Scripture. "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ

also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth” (I Pet. 2:21-22).

Our Lord certainly lived in perfect honesty.

When we imagine ourselves in His circumstances, what would we have done? Time and again He was placed into a pressure situation which would have caused most people to be dishonest. We would have found a lie to be “a very present help.” *Jesus never lied!* He always faced the consequences produced by His actions and His teachings.

That our Lord lived a life of honesty is seen in His relationship with the Holy Spirit Whom He called the Spirit of truth. On one occasion He told His disciples that the Spirit of truth was abiding with them, meaning that He was abiding in Himself. On another occasion, the Scriptures testify that Jesus speaks the words of God, “For He gives the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34). Jesus always spoke the words given by the Holy Spirit Who is the Spirit of truth.

Our Lord’s teachings certainly indicate a life of honesty as He urged his followers to refrain from making false vows and to refrain from giving oaths. He admonishes us to let our statements be, “Yes, yes or no, no,” and not to go beyond that. When we begin to desire to “swear on a stack of Bibles” we have probably reflected dishonesty.

May the Lord work in each of us a burning desire to be Christ-like in this area of our lives. Many good things will come our way when we permit the Lord to make us the honest people He desires us to be.

An honest person does not have to live with the guilt problems with which a dishonest person must live. I heard a man say, “I would love to send the Internal Revenue Service an extra thousand dollars and hope that would settle things

with them.” His statement came from feelings of guilt prompted by past dealings with the Internal Revenue Service.

An honest person will be respected by others. Dishonesty has a way of being “discovered.” People want to know they are dealing with an honest person. In our day when people are truly amazed when they find someone they feel will be honest with them, *we Christians need to add ourselves to the group that creates these feelings of astonishment!*

According to the passage we have quoted from I Peter 3:10, an honest person will be a happier person. If we are honest, we will have good days.

There are many other reasons that serve to motivate us to a life of honesty. We will mention only one other. It is “Christ-like” to be honest. When we are honest, our lives bring glory to the Lord.

We may feel we are so enmeshed in a life of dishonesty there is no hope for us. We may feel as much addiction to *dishonesty* as an addict does to *drugs!* You do not have the conviction that you are unsaved, but maybe you are afraid the dishonesty of your heart cannot be rooted out.

It can be! God’s grace is adequate.

The Psalmist says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). God is good and God is able. In Him is victory.

The victory is in our union with Christ.

In our oneness with Christ in crucifixion we have crucified the flesh, which is the only barrier to a Spirit filled life. When we in faith exercise our wills in rejecting the

flesh, restricting the power of flesh, we open the flood-gates of our hearts to being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. When *He* fills us, the passion for truth will fill the vacuum left by the absence of the dishonesty.

In our oneness with Christ in resurrection we are enthroned with Christ in the heavenlies. In that position we are in authority over Satan and all his powers. We have the right to deal with him and his temptation to make us dishonest.

We must *know* the message of oneness, *believe* the message of our oneness with our Lord and all it means, and *exercise* the will to be delivered from the power of the old man and to live as though alive to God.

When we do these three things we will be delivered from a life of falsehood to a life of truth.

May God work in each of us a desire to “stand against the tide” of dishonesty that is sweeping away the integrity of our nation.

I add one other word.

You may feel impelled by the Holy Spirit to confess some act of dishonesty. You may feel impelled to return money or some other thing that is not rightfully yours. You must follow these impressions of the Holy Spirit. To do so will be one of the most painful and distasteful things you have ever done, but *the final result will be a sweet peace within and the joy of knowing you are “right” with your fellow man!*

chapter twelve

Irresponsibility to Faithfulness

“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

These strong words from our Lord indicate the kind of person for which He is looking to build His kingdom.

Another such uncompromising assertion is recorded in Luke 14:25-33. He teaches that anyone who would be a disciple of His must place Him above every other relationship, every possession, and every personal desire. Within the bosom of the passage we find:

For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish," or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.

This passage has suffered much misinterpretation.

In my opinion, our Lord is not suggesting that *we* count the cost, but He is saying, "*I* have counted the cost and I know what it will take to build my kingdom and to defeat the enemy. It will take those who are utterly available to me and who will not turn back to other relationships-to possessions-to personal desires."

With divorce rates soaring, churches dying, businessmen crying for trustworthy employees, parents abusing their children, we might well ask, "In a society like ours, where will the Lord find even a handful who will be faithful?"

Irresponsibility is not something new. Cain, the first person born into the human race and the prototype of our old man, was clearly irresponsible.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain had responded when approached by Jehovah following his murder of Abel.

Cain's cry was one of guilt!

Certainly Cain was his brother's keeper. Cain had always been the keeper of Abel. He was the older of the two. From

Abel's infancy Cain had felt responsibility for him and now he had murdered him.

Cain was a guilty man pleading, "*not guilty.*"

We have already seen that Cain acted irresponsibly when he brought an offering from plant life rather than animal life. He knew he should bring a blood offering but he refused to do so.

The irresponsibility of our day is, then, nothing new.

"Unfaithfulness" seems to come in different sizes and forms. While some people seem only to be mildly irresponsible, others give the impression of being almost totally undependable. We may be totally responsible in some of our relationships and we may be lax in others.

The reasons for our irresponsibility are not always the same: laziness, dishonesty, resentment, revenge, self-centeredness, and fear are some of the causes for our lack of dependability.

Cain's lack of responsibility for Abel came from his bitter hatred of Abel following the younger brother's acceptance and his own rejection by Jehovah.

Cain's earlier irresponsibility in bringing the wrong kind of offering evolved from his know-it-all attitude. He knew better than God what he should bring.

His first act of irresponsibility brought forth his second act of irresponsibility: so, we may confidently conclude that Cain's irresponsibility - whatever the surface cause - resulted from the knowledge of good and evil.

Also, we must never forget that Satan was involved! We are told clearly that Cain was of the evil one (I John 3:12).

We get the impression that Cain in his cry, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” was possibly attempting to shun responsibility for his act of murder. Refusing to accept responsibility for our sins is one of mankind’s most common practices.

Adam and Eve, Cain’s father and mother, surely attempted to avoid responsibility for their sin. Adam wanted to blame Eve -and possibly even Jehovah Himself - and Eve said, “The devil made me do it!”

In whatever form and to whatever degree irresponsibility shows itself in us, *it is always repugnant!*

I have talked to many unsaved men who had taken much notice of Christians who were unfaithful - to their church, to their Lord, to their wives, to their children, to their employers, etc., and they were thoroughly disgusted with such Christians!

Irresponsibility is damaging to the Kingdom of God and to all relationships. We should avoid it with a passion.

The Bible is not without its disappointing stories of unfaithfulness. On the first missionary journey of the Apostle Paul, he and Barnabas were deserted by John Mark. Later John Mark became an effective minister, but Paul was so disappointed in this first experience that he refused to go with him on a second journey.

An equally distressing account of unfaithfulness is that of Gomer. In his faithfulness to our Lord, Hosea had taken Gomer, a harlot, as his wife. After bearing two children, she returned to a life of harlotry.

Gomer’s unfaithfulness portrays the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel to Jehovah.

Unfaithfulness is never pretty. If, however, the rigidly faithful person who reads this is feeling much disgust with irre-

sponsible people, I want to share an experience I had a few years back.

I was reading of the healing of the lady with the issue of blood who was healed by touching the hem of our Lord's garment. The passage states that the Lord stopped abruptly in his tracks and inquired, "Who touched me?" There follows a brief conversation between the Lord and the lady. I had read the passage hundreds of times. That day I realized for the first time that I would not have taken time for that lady.

You remember, Jesus was *hurrying* with Jairus to his home because Jairus' daughter had just died. Jairus had pled with Jesus to raise the girl from the dead.

Those of us who have that "stick-to-itiveness" find it most difficult to bend to any *sudden* and *immediate* changes of direction which the Lord sends! When we have our minds set on doing something, *we are going to do it, and nothing is going to stop us!*

As I read of our Lord's patient and tender mercy to the lady and knew I would not have taken time for her, the Lord impressed me that those of us who are characterized by our "bulldog tenacity" have as great a problem as do those who find it difficult to be dependable.

While unfaithfulness is not less disgusting to me than it has always been, I have since that day been graced with more patience and understanding with those who find it difficult "to hang in there."

We have all tasted the bitter cup of disappointment in another's unfaithfulness. We know, then, what we do to others when we are unfaithful to them. Memory of our own disappointments is a constant motivating force toward a life of faithfulness.

We have many kinds of relationships. In all of them we should be found faithful. We should be responsible in our relationship with the Lord, our church, Sunday school class, parents, brothers and sisters, friends, employees, employers, neighbors, students, teachers, etc., etc.

Memories of *our* times of irresponsibility should also motivate us to a life of faithfulness because of the feelings of guilt we remember.

Our Lord was always faithful.

It is, therefore, Christ-like for us to be faithful.

There is no greater revelation of the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus than that which glistens on the words of His Gethsemane prayer. "If it be thy will let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done," His heart poured out. Regardless of the agony He must endure, the Lord Jesus would not cringe back from the cross.

In another prayer just hours before Gethsemane Christ's complete dependability shines forth. "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou has given Me to do," He uttered to the Father (John 17:4).

Jesus was faithful to His followers. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

In one of the well known stories of the Bible our Lord's faithfulness to Mary, His mother, is proven by His command to John the Apostle, *even as He hanged on the cross*, to treat His mother as if he were her own son.

What a peace it is to know that the Lord was faithful always in order that we may be faithful!

Faithfulness by a believer brings great delight to our Lord. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

Our Lord told the parable of a man who parcelled out money to three of his servants. Two of them used the money to make more money for their master; one did not. The first two were highly commended for their work and were referred to as being “faithful.” They were not only commended for their work but were also rewarded. By this our Lord was teaching that faithfulness on our part brings great delight to Him and brings rewards to us.

How can anyone be as faithful as the Lord desires?

It is the Lord who makes them so!

He Himself was determinedly faithful, and He is able to produce in us the same quality of faithfulness which resided - and still resides - in Himself.

Our Lord will never find those who have the resources within themselves to be the faithful persons He wants them to be. This must be a result of the Lord’s work of grace.

I know by personal knowledge, by knowledge of people in general, and by knowledge of the Word of God that we do not

possess within ourselves that which is necessary to be the faithful ones the Lord desires and needs to build His Kingdom and to defeat the enemy.

When we consider our faithfulness, we must always remember that we have different “callings.” Our faithfulness will not always produce the same types of fruitfulness. Some of us are called to a very open type of life: one that others can see and evaluate. Most of us are not so called. Consequently, the visible results of our lives may not be true indicators of our faithfulness.

If the outward results of the ministry of some outstanding evangelist or pastor be compared with the results of the

ministry of a mother and housewife, more outward fruits from the ministry of the one with the public life will be seen. We all know, however, that the quiet mother and housewife may be far more faithful to her calling than the preacher.

Ephesians 2:10 teaches that the Lord planned our lives before He breathed the universe into existence. *Think of it!* If you are a Christian the Lord knew your name before the stars were hung in the skies, before the sun was set in its course, before Adam was breathed into being!

Yes, God has a plan for you.

It is to the plan to which He has called you that you must be faithful.

Your calling may mean that you will never stand before a group to speak. Your calling may mean that you will spend much time alone. Your divine vocation may keep you at home the majority of the time. *God* knows your calling. He wants *you* to know it. The Lord desires to so work in you that your calling will be fulfilled regardless of how much grace it takes.

We should never, ever conclude that faithfulness to our calling is dependent on our own strength. It is not. As a matter of fact the Bible clearly teaches that from the time we are saved the Lord sets out to destroy our own strength that He might be strong in us.

That is what He wants to do in you! He wants to be *strong* in you! He wants your life always to be explained in the light of supernatural power!

It is common that aging persons whose physical strength is ebbing away feel that they are not being faithful as they should be. They should not have such feelings. Certainly, our loving Lord has not called a bedfast person to go door-to-door with the gospel of Christ.

Let the aging be free to permit the Lord to have their lives; to live in them as He sees fit, and not conclude they must be as physically vigorous as they once were.

The important thing is for us to be faithful in whatever circumstances the Lord has placed us.

As before stated, the Lord can change us - regardless of how feeble we may seem to ourselves or to others - to be strong and firm in our faithfulness.

I have talked to numbers of God's people who were in deep guilt because of their inability to remain faithful. I have seen them in the depths of despair because they had "let down the Lord" and the church with their unfaithfulness.

One of the saddest of all things is to talk to someone who has been unfaithful to a companion. *Oh!* The *grief* caused by this form of unfaithfulness!

More and more we are hearing of parents who have been unfaithful to their children. In their passion to make a name for themselves some have all but forgotten their children. *Guilt* is the result of such irresponsibility.

In the face of all the sadness and guilt caused by irresponsibility, we rejoice to know we may be changed. The brittle clay of our personalities may be replaced with the steel of God's sufficiency!

We turn again to the theme of our union with Christ. Upon this truth we stand to strongly proclaim the assurance for victory over our disgusting instability. It is when we reckon on our oneness with Christ and choose to live in harmony with that oneness with Him that we experience God's delightful grace for change.

When we reckon on our oneness with Christ in death, we may praise God that our old man, *which includes our irresponsibility*, has been crucified with Christ.

When we reckon on our oneness with Christ in death, we may praise God that the flesh, that force which hinders us from being filled with the Holy Spirit, has been crucified.

When we reckon on our oneness with Christ in life, we may look upon ourselves as reigning with Christ in the heavenlies.

When we engage in such reckoning and choose to live in the light of all it means, we shall see a transformation of our irresponsibility, we shall experience the continual filling of the Holy Spirit, and we shall be in a position of dealing victoriously with Satan and his attempts to make us unfaithful.

Galatians 5:22 teaches us that the fruit of the Spirit is “faithfulness.” We see, then, that faithfulness is not something we produce in ourselves. It is the gift of God. What a thrill and joy it is to know that in all our relationships we shall be able to be faithful when we “walk in the Spirit.”

When Satan brings the demons of unfaithfulness against us, we shall be able to have victory over them because we reign with Christ in the heavenlies over every authority and every power!

As Jesus Christ reigns in the heavenlies, *so shall we - victoriously!*

Even over our unfaithfulness!

chapter thirteen

Self-Pity to Peace

“I’m going to kill myself!” he emphatically announced.

I had been on the receiving end of such threats before, but this one seemed certain, final.

The call had come as I waited for a friend who arrived only moments after I hung up the phone. Quickly, I told him of the caller’s intentions. He knew the man who had made the threat. He also knew he was an alcoholic. To my surprise his response was a casual laugh and the reassurance, “He’s just feeling sorry for himself.”

He was right.

I became totally convinced it was a case of self-pity a few minutes after we arrived at the home of the middle-aged man and engaged him in conversation.

In another city and another time, I conversed with a much younger man.

The room seemed permeated with negative emotions. Words were not coming easy - for either of us. His deep depression was of long duration. His facial expression betrayed grief, a grief he had carried for the entire three years following the separation from his wife.

His was more than the grief of losing a wife, however, because he had been in school preparing to become a minister of the gospel when she left. In his opinion he had lost both his wife and his life's calling.

While pouring out his heart to me, he said the usual things; he was depressed - he had good times that would occasionally last for as long as three weeks before the depression returned -he had bitterness in his heart, not only toward her, but also toward the Lord

We did not know each other well. I had talked to him only one time before - shortly after the marital problems had begun and shortly before the separation. But, for some reason, he was being quite candid with me.

Finally, out of his hurting and out of his frankness, he burst forth, "Well, I am experiencing self-pity."

"Great," I thought. "He is admitting what many people are experiencing but are afraid to admit."

When I began my research for the writing of this chapter, I made the remarkable discovery that not only are people reluctant to admit their self-pity, but very little has ever been written about it.

Perhaps our reluctance to admit our self-pity is due to the fact that it seems selfish. But I am so convinced of its almost universal presence that I am confident most of the readers of this book will admit to a problem in this area.

One well-known writer and counselor has stated he has never known of an incident of depression that did not come from self-pity.

Helen Keller has called self-pity our worst enemy!

Some of us have experienced self-pity without realizing it. I must admit that the Lord gave me a shocking revelation several years ago. It came as a bolt from the blue. I was in prayer and the Lord's message burst upon my consciousness, "You have self-pity!"

It will be beneficial for you to invite the Lord to expose self-pity if it exists in you.

Cain was a victim of self-pity.

When the Lord spoke words of judgment to Cain following his murder of Abel, Cain responded, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Self-pity could be no more vividly displayed than that. One can hear the whining, high-pitched voice with which he must have registered his complaint.

There are other cases of self-pity in the Bible. The prophet Jonah, and Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, are two well-known examples.

Perhaps the most vivid case of self-pity recorded in the Bible is that of Hannah. Until I began to study the Bible for cases of self-pity, I always felt sorry for Hannah. I still do. But a study of her life before the conception of Samuel reveals that Hannah also felt sorry for Hannah.

Admittedly, Hannah was in a situation that could easily cause all of us to feel sorry for ourselves. In a day when children were considered a sign of the blessings of God, she was childless. Because of her childlessness, her husband's "other" wife tormented her. It seems doubtless that Hannah's problems infected her with a classic case of the self-pities which is obvious from several statements she made.

"And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret, because Jehovah had shut up her womb" (I Sam. 1:6). "So she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat" (I Sam. 1:7). "And Elkanah her husband said unto her, 'Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved?'" (I Sam 1:8). "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto Jehovah, and wept sore" (I Sam. 1:11). "And Hannah answered and said, 'No, my Lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit'" (I Sam. 1:15). "For out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken" (I Sam. 1:16).

Hannah, as much disturbed by her tormentor as she was by her condition of childlessness, clearly suffered from self-pity.

Insight into the life of the mother of Samuel will give us insight into what self-pity can do - and may be doing - to us.

'And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret, because Jehovah had shut up her womb" (I Sam. 1:6). *Self-pity evokes tormentors.*

Obviously Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, continued her tactics of intimidation because of Hannah's responses to her. One more opportunity to torment Hannah was like the enjoyment of a "delicious feast."

Hannah was reacting with self-pity.

If the world were full of spiritually minded Christians, our self-pity would evoke concern and help. The world, however, is filled with immature and insecure people who get a strange sense of satisfaction in seeing others suffer.

I have in my memory the sad experience of hearing a small boy “torment” another boy who was grieving over the death of his little brother. It was one of the most cruel things I have ever witnessed. While the grief was likely not self-pity in this instance, the experience well illustrates the point.

Adults are no different. I have known adults who delighted in an opportunity to make another suffer.

Teenagers are the same. Some insecure teenagers gleefully intimidate a peer who is suffering from self-pity because of some setback.

When, by the grace of God, our problems are taken in stride, our “tormentors” will be fewer in number. When, however, we indicate that our tormentors are only increasing our frustrations, we spur them on. Then we often respond with more self-pity.

As seen in the case of Hannah, self-pity interferes with our walk with the Lord. “Therefore she wept and did not eat” (I Sam. 1:7).

This was not an ordinary meal Hannah was refusing to eat. The refusal was at the house of Jehovah! The meal was a part of the worship at the tabernacle! Self-pity!

It is likely that Hannah did not eat because of a loss of appetite. That in no way, however, diminishes the fact that her self-pity hindered her walk with the Lord, because her loss of appetite was probably from her emotional state created by her self-pity.

Our own walk with God may be stumbling because we misunderstood when He sent us some painful experience. He meant it for good, but we interpreted it as bad, and as a result have responded with feeling sorry for ourselves and being bitter toward God. He meant the circumstance as a means to bring us to a place of total dependence on him, but we took it as a failure of God to be faithful to His promises.

How are we interpreting our circumstances?

Do we see them as cause for questioning the goodness of God; are they inciting us to question His love?

If our misinterpretation of our circumstances evokes self-pity, our interest in following His will for our daily lives may wane to the point of indifference.

On the other hand, we may understand very well that our God-given circumstances are for the purpose of destroying our self-confidence, and as a result, may decide that we do not choose to live a life with so much pain.

The point is that self-pity can hinder our walk with the Lord as it hindered Hannah's walk with the Lord.

While it is true that we may interpret as "bad" some of the circumstances the Lord means for "good," many of our circumstances from the Lord are clearly "good." Self-pity, however, can have such a "death grip" on us, we may not appreciate even the obvious blessings the Lord has given.

Self-pity can destroy our appreciation for the many obvious blessings of life. It happened to Hannah.

"Elkanah her husband said unto her, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons? So Hannah rose up ... (I Sam. 1: 8b-9a).

It saddens one even after hundreds of years to think of the treatment given to Elkanah by his wife Hannah. She was so preoccupied with herself and what she considered her own

unfortunate lot in life that she could not appreciate his consuming attention to her.

Elkanah loved Hannah dearly.

Elkanah was partial to Hannah. But she cared not. At least, she did not seem to care. There was no response from Hannah to indicate appreciation for Elkanah.

Nothing seemed to matter to Hannah but the fact that life had been hard for her. And it was all because our loving Lord chose to delay the birth of her first child, a child who was destined to be one of the most important men in all of history.

If we are prone to have feelings of self-pity because things have not gone well for us in some areas of our lives, let us look around and praise God for the obviously good things. Also, let us realize that often what we think are the bad things are in fact good for us because they have come to us from the hand of God. When we understand the ways of God, we can appreciate all things. However, anyone is capable of appreciating those things that are obviously “good” - and we should!

Our self-pity not only can make life miserable for ourselves, but it can make life miserable for those around us.

One can only imagine the inner pain experienced by Elkanah. Time after time Hannah had rejected his loving attention. She made life utterly miserable for him. But she did not care. Hannah was concerned about “Hannah.” She felt that life had been bad to her and that was all that mattered.

We all know the agony of rejection. We have experienced it time after time. We fear rejection. We run from it. It is deeply painful. Many have vowed they will never love again because they cannot bear the thought of being rejected again.

Hannah was forcing her loving husband into the slough of despondency without pity or remorse. The stench of her self-pity reached to “high heaven”.

Hannah was so full of pity for herself that she had none for Elkanah. You and I may be no different from Hannah. We may be so consumed with ourselves that we are mercilessly rejecting others and their needs.

Wives may be refusing to meet the needs of their husbands as a result of their being eaten up with self-pity. Husbands, mothers, fathers, children, brothers and sisters, and friends may be living very self-centeredly because of self-pity, and as a result, making life unbearable for those around them.

Another sad result of self-pity is a hardness of heart. In I Samuel 1:15 it is recorded that Hannah confessed to Eli that she was a woman of a “sorrowful spirit.” The Hebrew word that is translated “sorrowful” is also translated “churlish,” “hard,” “obstinate,” “rough,” “stiff,” and “stubborn.”

One certainly would not go astray in concluding that Hannah was confessing a hardness which had made its way into her heart. If so, it had entered through the wide open door of self-pity.

It is not difficult for us to detect hardness in others. It shows itself in attitudes; it is revealed by a lack of concern for those who are in obvious need - it is indicated by a strong spirit of criticism - it shows itself in a spirit of vindictiveness.

When the world is dying for a little bit of love, we Christians need to be delivered from our hardness of heart.

Self-pity is not the only cause of hardness of heart, but *it is one of the causes.*

Another of the sad results of self-pity is the exaggeration of our problems. To Eli, Hannah had blurted, “Out of the abun-

dance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken hitherto” (I Sam. 1:16). As we have earlier indicated, Hannah had many assets. But she had interpreted her lot in life through one fact only - her inability to have children.

It is a clear case of exaggeration. One area of life was magnified out of proportion. We likely have done the same. We surely know people who have done so. In our *weaker* moments, perhaps, we think we are the only ones who have ever had the particular “hard knocks” we are experiencing. In our opinion, we think no one has ever had such problems.

When we are guilty of exaggerating our circumstances, we actually become a joke to those who know of our self-pity. They themselves may not be experiencing anything quite so bad as we, but they surely know many whose lot in life is far worse than ours.

One of the most common results of self-pity is a spirit of complaint. No one enjoys being around a complainer. But notice the spirit of Hannah. “And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret” (I Sam. 1:6). One of the Hebrew lexicons indicates that the word “fret” has in it the idea of complaining. Hannah had become a complainer.

When we are with certain people, we know that if we do not control the conversation, we will be bombarded with complaints. The conversation may go from politics, to teenagers, to church, to music, to sports and a dozen other subjects, but it seems easy and natural for them to find something about which to complain.

Complainers usually do not have many friends - with the exception of other complainers. Complainers may have many “acquaintances” who have a variety of excuses for not being with them, but ordinarily they do not have many friends.

If the complainer is fortunate, he or she will have Christian friends who are spiritual and who will seek to help. They will even spend time with the complainer. They will not, however, enjoy being over-run with continual grumbling. They will desire to be of help to the complainer, but will possibly experience a “shiver of despair” at the thought of his or her continual whining.

If it should be revealed to us that we are complainers, we may discover that we also are “self-pitiers.” Feeling sorry for ourselves may not be the only reason we have become complainers, but it is a cause - and an important one!

One of the most devastating results of self-pity is depression. “And why is thy heart grieved,” inquired Elkanah of Hannah (I Sam. 1:8). The word translated “grieved” means “sad.” We have already seen that the refusal of Hannah to eat could have been emotionally induced. It is easily conceivable that self-pity had given rise to depression which resulted in loss of appetite.

Depression is one of the most common of present-day maladies. It abounds everywhere. We know person after person who is enslaved by its grip. Some hide their depression, but it is present nevertheless.

Depression robs us of joy. It roots out a spirit of continual praise. Depression destroys our Christian testimony. The world looks at our long faces and declares that it will never catch “whatever it is we have.”

If you are subject to times of depression, you are also likely residing on the street called “self-pity.” Why not ask the Lord for a word about that?

Recently I talked with a lady who was experiencing deep depression. I knew of her painful situation and knew that it lent itself to self-pity. I said, “Sometimes we need to be careful that we not begin to feel sorry for ourselves.”

“That is what is happening to me,” she immediately responded. Thank God she knew self-pity was a cause of her depression.

Self-pity may be a perverted way to call attention to ourselves. “And it came to pass, as she continued praying before Jehovah, that Eli marked her mouth” (I Sam. 1:12). The strange way Hannah was acting was calling attention to herself. While our self-pity may not express itself in some peculiar way in which we pray, it does call attention to itself.

It is conceivable that some derive a strange sense of satisfaction from the attention they get by their continual but odious murmuring about their “sad” lot in life.

We can be sure, however, that any notice we get by our continual whining about ourselves and our problems will not result in gaining the respect of others.

While we have seen a number of negative things that enter our lives by self-pity as they are noted in the life of Hannah, we are certain many more exist. We shall not, however, seek to give a full discussion of the matter. We hopefully have already shown enough to drive us away from any form of self-pity.

It seems that it would be spiritually beneficial for anyone reading these lines to ask the Lord for a revelation of any trace of self-pity that has found its way into your life.

In most cases self-pity seems to be far more prominent in us at some times than at other times. There is an ebb and flow

to it. But if there is any indication of its presence, we should find victory over it.

When we return to the chief personality of our discussion, Cain, we discover the basic causes of self-pity. They are the same that caused Cain all his other problems-his “know-it-all” attitude and Satan’s influence!

If the Lord shows us the presence of self-pity in our own lives, we shall find the victory over it as we find the victory over Satan and our own knowledge of good and evil.

The opposite of self-pity is “inner peace.” That is precisely what we discover in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus lived always with an inner peace, never with self-pity.

If ever a person lived who had circumstances that could cause one to be in a state of self-pity, Jesus Christ was that Person. However, we find no trace of self-pity in Him.

Think of the things in His life that would very likely have produced in us a state of self-pity. His call to leave the comforts and joys of heaven and enter into this fallen scene would have prompted self-pity in most of us.

Even in the agony of Gethsemane there is no indication that our Lord experienced self-pity. He could pray, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” without it being an indication that He was suffering from self-pity.

Praise God! We can be delivered from our self-pity. We may live with the peace our Lord enjoyed. We can do so only by the grace of God but, thank God, that grace is ours in Christ.

In order to be delivered from our self-pity we must first of all *reject it*. We must seek victory over it. Some seem to

enjoy it. In that case there is no hope of victory. But if the desire is there, and the person is a Christian, victory may be ours.

The victory - the change - is ours through our *union with Christ*.

“Self-pity” is a part of the old man who has been crucified. It is not necessary for me to have self-pity because it has been crucified and I am dead to it.

Also, because of our union with Christ, we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh” (Gal. 5:24). It is the flesh that stands in opposition to the Holy Spirit. When we reject the flesh - our self-confidence - and accept by faith that it has been crucified, the barrier to the filling of the Holy Spirit is removed. As a result, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with the same quality of peace that resided in our Lord Jesus Christ, and, I am convinced, resides in Him even now. The peace with which we are filled is the opposite of the self-pity we have been discussing.

We have victory also over self-pity in our union with Christ, because in our union with Him, we are seated in the heavenlies which is a position of authority over Satan who seeks to promote self-pity and seeks to inspire us to live out of the know-it-all attitude.

Why not begin your deliverance from this dreadful habit of self-pity *right-now* by rejecting it and living out of all the resources that are now yours because you are “one” with the Lord Jesus Christ?

It is a thrill to think of the testimony that would come to the person who has been victimized by this dreadful disease of self-pity when that person enters into the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Observance of our lives would cause others to wonder what it is we possess. Doors of opportunity for sharing the message of union with Christ would open for us. In time we could lead many of God's children into the life of grace.

May it be so!

chapter fourteen

Fear to Faith

It has been said that *anger* and *fear* are the two “sins” with which psychology is most concerned.

Our present discussion is of *deadly fear*. When we truly know ourselves, we admit that fear has been one of our merciless taskmasters. The author of a magazine article writes that he has found over 300 words in the English dictionary that end in *phobia*. In other words, over 300 distinct types of human fears have been isolated and defined.

Obviously, we shall not attempt to deal individually with all these fears. Our approach will be quite general except for the particular fears which are so obvious in Cain.

The devastating force of fear is implied in the teachings of our Lord. While He taught on many themes and indicated there were a number of things we should not do, He repeatedly gave negative emphasis only to fear. He knows how much our lives are dominated and paralyzed by fear in some form, and He would have us liberated from its fiendish mastery.

Prevalent in Cain are two of our most common fears. Surely Cain had other fears, but we shall limit our discussion to the two most obvious ones. They are found in his response to the Lord's spoken judgment upon him after the murder of Abel - the judgment that he was to be a wanderer.

"And it will come to pass, that whosoever findeth me will slay me," Cain cried. Two common fears leap out at us from this painful response: *the exposure of a fear of people; the fear of dying.*

Cain's fear of people rises from two sources - self-consciousness and paranoia. Cain's assertion, "Whosoever findeth me," is an unmistakable indication that he felt the earth's entire population would be searching for him. This is the epitome of self-consciousness!

But wait! Have you ever walked into a room and felt that everyone in the room was looking at you? I make it a practice to ask that question to groups with whom I share the message of God's grace. Invariably there is confessing laughter; not everyone laughs, but enough do so to indicate a "sensitive spot" has been touched.

Years ago I read a statement on self-consciousness which in essence declared. "When you walk into a room full of people, do not be afraid everyone is looking at you. They are not, because they all think everyone is looking at *them!*"

Cain was terribly self-conscious. Surely, guilt was much of the cause and may be the source of much of our own self-consciousness.

Cain, however, was afraid of others for another reason. Cain was paranoid; he had an imaginary fear that others were out to get him. He complained, “Whosoever findeth me will slay me.”

It is likely that many of us are paranoid to one degree or another. Recently I spent a week teaching a group of teenagers at a Bible camp how we may be changed from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness. We discussed how utterly Cain-like we are; we discussed our paranoia. We discovered that few things were true of Cain that are more prominent in us than in paranoia.

Most of us have heard the amusing story of the lady who bolted from the football game because she thought the players were getting into huddles to talk about her. Of course, not any of us thinks that we are the object of discussion in the huddles of football players, but we do think we are the object of discussion in the huddles of our friends and acquaintances.

In the Scriptures King Saul is exposed as having a pronounced case of paranoia. On one, occasion when young David was being praised as he returned from a great victory over the Philistines, Saul became viciously angry. He also became suspiciously fearful of David and asked, “And what can he have more but the kingdom?” (I Sam. 18:8, KJV).

“And Saul eyed David from that day forward” (I Sam. 18:9, KJV).

David had absolutely no ambitions for the kingdom. Repeatedly we are informed that David had no intentions of harming Saul.

A study of Saul, then, is enlightening concerning the tragic results of paranoia.

In the first place, the story of Saul shows us that paranoia results in the suffering of innocent people. On one occasion Jonathan, Saul's son, said to his father, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he has not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good" (I Sam. 19:46, KJV). Because Ahimelech the priest had aided David, Saul ordered Doeg the Edomite to slay Ahimelech and the priests.

And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword (I Sam. 22:18b-19, KJV).

Second, the story of Saul vividly illustrates the discomfort that comes to the paranoid person as well as to those whom he suspects and attacks. "Now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him" (I Sam. 22:6, KJV). "And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day" (I Sam. 23:14). "But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness" (I Sam. 26: 3b, KJV).

All the above verses indicate much pain and suffering for the person who is paranoid and for those he imagines are after him. Of course, the pain will not often be a physical suffering

as it was with Saul and David, but internal suffering can be far greater than any physical pain we might endure.

Third, a paranoid person will inevitably enlist others in his attempts to retaliate against 'his supposed attacker. The more influential a person he is, the more help he can enlist in his campaign of vengeance. This fact is clearly indicated in the story of Saul. "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David" (I Sam. 19:1, KJV).

A fourth tragic result of paranoia as revealed in the life of Saul is that it will turn those against us who have been close friends. Soon after Saul ordered Jonathan and the servants to kill David, both Michal, Saul's daughter, and Jonathan, Saul's son, helped David to escape from Saul.

Fifth, the paranoid person not only thinks certain ones are out to get him, he also feels there are conspiracies. "Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait as at this day?" (I Sam. 22:7-8, KJV).

A sixth result of paranoia as indicated in Saul's story is that it brings dishonor to the Lord. While Saul pursued David, the Philistines invaded Israel. Such conditions ultimately led to defeat before the hands of the enemy. Obviously, when the Lord's people go down in defeat, the name of their Lord is dishonored.

Finally, we see that Saul's paranoia led to guilt. Following an incident in which David spared the life of the pursuing

king, “Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, ‘Thou art more righteous than I: for thou has rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.’” Of course, it can also result in guilt for us.

The other fear we see in Cain is the *fear of dying*. There is probably no statement in the Bible or in all of literature that more powerfully portrays our fear of dying than we find in Hebrews 2:14. In referring to the incarnation of our Lord the author states, “He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (KJV). Fear of death is a *bondage* in which we are bound as if in slavery!

For some, the fear of death may not be the greatest fear, but it is among the greatest. For others it is the greatest fear of all.

Perhaps the greatest confession of the fear of dying is the cry of Hezekiah. After his assurance of fifteen more years of life on earth, he composed a statement, the first part of which makes known his feelings about dying. He indicates that while he was still under the judgment of God that he would soon die, his complaint was:

*I said, “In the middle of life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years.”
I said, “I shall not see the Lord, the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. Like a shepherd’s tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; As a weaver I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom; from day until night Thou dost make an end*

of me. I composed my soul until morning. Like a lion - so He breaks all my bones. From day until night Thou dost make an end of me. Like a swallow, like a crane, so I twitter; I moan like a dove; my eyes look wistfully to the heights; O Lord I am oppressed, by my security” (Isa. 38:10-14).

Of course, Hezekiah lived in pre-Christian days and did not have the assurance of life after death. For him death would end all.

It is easy to see how even in Christian times - especially in Christian times - how the *unbeliever* would have such fears of death. The Lord Jesus teaches that all those who do not trust in Him are destined for “hell,” “the lake of fire,” “outer darkness,” etc.

What is not simple to understand is how believers can also have fears of death. We know that to leave this earth and enter into heaven is far, far superior; yet, many saints do not seem to have victory over the fear of death. Such a mental state is very “Cain-like.”

As we have indicated earlier, we have many fears - certainly far more than the two we have discussed, but the Lord would have us delivered from all of them!

Our fears have a paralyzing effect on us. They hinder the release of our God-given personalities that they might blossom forth as the Lord desires.

Our fears also place great limits on the Lord. Just as the Lord could not soon take Israel into the promised Land as He desired because of their fears. He is limited in accomplishing what He desires to do in and through us because of our fears.

Consequently, the Lord is hindered in His intentions to glorify Himself through us.

From whence come these paralyzing and devastating fears? Where did Cain get his fearfulness? The answer to both questions is the same. Our fears flow into our lives from a two-headed river: our fears come from Satan's influence and from our know-it-all attitude.

For the world, the opposite of fear is *courage*.

For the Christian, however, the opposite of fear is *faith*. While there is very little in the Bible - and practically nothing in the New Testament - about courage, the entire Bible abounds with an emphasis on *faith*.

So what we are looking for in the life of the Lord Jesus as an opposite to Cain's fearfulness is not courage, but faith. Surely many of His acts of faith would be described by the world as courage, but He would have explained his seeming courage as nothing other than His trust in the Father. In fact, there is no statement in the Scriptures concerning the courage of the Lord Jesus Christ, but any honest man of the world will admit that no one ever lived Who had more courage than our Lord.

I have often marvelled at how our Lord was so bold in circumstances where many of us would have been cowardly. His calmness with the man of Gadara is thrilling. Others thought of this demon-possessed person as a "wild man." He had strength enough to shatter chains, but our Lord fearlessly dealt with him.

The ultimate test of His calmness was in facing the death of the cross. Admittedly, He did not face the cross without emotion, but it was not the emotion of fear. His emotion was that of the agony of bearing the burden and guilt of our sins and of being separated from the Father. The King James ver-

sion indicates Christ was afraid (See Hebrews 5:7), but the word translated “fear” here means “piety.”

We must now turn our discussion to the believer and show how fear may be replaced by faith. As we have already shown in earlier chapters, we shall set forth the truth that this exchange is possible because of our union with Christ.

Our “sinful” fears - as opposed to the fear of God - are a part of our old man and have been crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our know-it-all attitude, which is one of the two sources of our fears, has been crucified with Christ. Satan, the second source of our fears, has been defeated at the cross and from our position in the heavenlies we are in authority over him. The flesh, which stands as the barrier to the Holy Spirit Who produces faith, has been crucified with Christ.

When we by faith accept the above truths as real in our own lives because we are in union with Christ, and when we choose to be dead to sin and alive to God, and choose to be free from fear and the know-it-all attitude and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, *our loving Father will begin a process of exchanging our fears with faith!*

Surely the thought of having our *fears* exchanged for *faith* sends a glow of excitement through us all. If we are enslaved by no more fears than those of Cain - the fear of people and the fear of dying - we shall surely hasten to appropriate all it means to be in union with Christ.

Recently, a man who has been living in the light of his oneness with Christ for over ten years, spoke for several days in a church whose pastor had known him for thirty years. The pastor, in encouraging his members to accept the teachings of union with Christ, told them how the Lord had changed the

guest speaker. He then added, “The biggest change I see in him is his deliverance from a fear of people.”

That is a beautiful testimony to the grace of God. It shows that union with Christ works! Our *fear of people* is exchanged for a *Spirit-produced faith* that our Lord “will never leave us or forsake us.”

We also will be delivered from our fear of dying when we appropriate our union with Christ. Remember, it was when Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree of the “knowledge of good and evil” that they became preoccupied with their bodies. You and I will be set free from our preoccupation with our bodies and our fear of dying when we begin to live in the light of our union with Christ; and the inevitable filling of the Holy Spirit will result in our being filled with faith. “The fruit of the Spirit is ... faith” (Gal. 5:22, KJV).

The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” Who will teach us all things. He will make heaven *real* to us. He will enable us to say with Paul, “My desire is to depart and be with the Lord.” In His grace, the heavenly Father will be able to change us when we can say with John Jacob Jasper, the famous black preacher, “I am no more afraid of death than I am a horsefly.”

chapter fifteen

Ambition to Meekness

“And he built a city” (Gen. 4: 17b).

Cain built a city partially out of kindness for his family. He did not want his wife and son to experience a life of wandering as he had.

Cain, it seems, was also motivated to build the city by undiluted ambition.

Cain was anything but apathetic or lazy. His ecstasy before Jehovah’s rejection of his offering and his deep depres-

sion following that rejection indicate that he came before the Lord extremely well prepared. His offering had reflected expenditure of ingenuity and energy.

Cain was a “go-getter.” All the accompanying characteristics are there - the know-it-all attitude, stubbornness, covetousness, jealousy, vengefulness and many others.

“You can’t keep a good man down” is a phrase that could have been coined by those who knew Cain. Somewhere along the way Cain is going to break out and prove to others what he is made of. For years Cain had “not sold for what he was worth,” and he knew it.

If only he could do something great, something that would cause others “to sit up and take notice,” Cain knew he could show what he was made of. Building a city was the solution to Cain’s dilemma.

In fact, Cain was going to “kill two birds with one stone.” By building a city he could provide a permanent residence for his wife and son, and he could vividly demonstrate to the rest of the world he was meant to do more than wander in circles.

Admittedly, these conclusions are based on conjecture, but it is not “wild” conjecture. There is good evidence Cain was *consumed* with ambition.

Those who have been extreme in their ambition have provided abundant evidence of the tragic results attending the labors and struggles born in the passion to excel, to do something which will be noticed.

One classic instance of unbridled ambition is that of Korah which is recorded in the Book of Numbers. Korah burned with a passion to be noticed. He needed attention equal to that which Moses received.

In Korah, then, we have a model of the ambitious person and a vivid portrayal of the corner into which ambition drives a person.

In the first place, that person who desires to make a name for himself must experience the pain and frustration that jealousy produces. One can almost feel the agonizing feverishness of Korah and his companions as they sought to unseat Moses and Aaron as the leaders of Israel.

Second, the person of ambition will inevitably “step on people on the way up.” Read one of the incidents in the life of Korah:

Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, Sons of Reuben, took action, and they rose up before Moses together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. And they assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, “You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in the midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?” (Num. 16:1-3).

What a shameful thing to do to the “meekest man in all the earth.” Moses had not sought his position of leadership. God had placed him there. And now, because of the sinful ambition of one man, Moses and Aaron had to go through the embarrassment of such accusations.

In our day Korah would have succeeded as a politician. He was “made to order” as the perfect candidate who could “unseat the incumbent.”

Our generation has become uncomfortably familiar with the phenomenon known as “dirty politics” in which almost anything seems to go. “Mud slinging” is the order of the day.

We are not to conclude, however, that politicians are the only ones whose passionately ambitious desires have driven them to the abuse of others. It happens wherever people are found.

As bad as the discrediting of others is, it is not the only way in which the ambitious person steps on others. When one’s ambitions have to do with the accumulation of money or possessions, he often causes hurt to others by taking the devious pathway of dishonesty.

The particular manner in which the ambitious person hurts those who are in the way is not the most important factor. The most important truth for our discussion here is that ambition drives one to abuse anyone who seems to be in the way.

Someone has said that we must remember that those we meet on the way up are the same ones we shall meet on the way down. Good advice for the ambitious!

Third, the person of ambition brings hurt into the world by influencing others to join with him in his endeavors to deal with those who seem to be in the way. I think we can safely conclude that not any of the 250 who joined with Korah had a desire the equal of his to unseat Moses and Aaron.

Woe be unto us for the way we have influenced those around us! The Lord forgive any and all of us who have incited others to support us in our efforts to remove those who were standing in our ambitious pathway.

Fourth, the ambitious person brings himself under the judgment of Almighty God. Korah, you remember, is the man who, along with his jealous companions, was swallowed up by the earth. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord,” *is no idle saying*. All through the Scriptures we are told that the Lord will take care of His own. In the case of Moses and Korah we have a vivid display of the revenging hand of God taking care of His own.

Fifth, the ambitious person brings suffering to innocent people. We have already seen the hurt brought to Moses and Aaron. We have suggested that Korah likely had incited others in the discredit of Moses and Aaron who were not nearly so ambitious as he. But the story of Korah indicates that other innocents suffered. When the Lord caused the earth to swallow up Korah and his cohorts, the earth also swallowed up their families (including all their possessions) and even other innocents around them were destroyed by the resulting plague, to bring the total list of the dead to 14,700 persons.

Sixth, the story of Korah indicates that the ambitious person takes the risk of bringing dishonor on himself. There is no good word about Korah in all Scripture. Everywhere the Bible is read and taught, the dishonor of Korah is known. It is all because of his sinful ambition. Jesus says:

When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, Give place to this man, and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may

say to you, Friend, move up higher; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted (Lk. 14:8-11).

Finally, we see in the example of Korah that the ambitious person finds himself rebelling against the will of God. Jude, in writing of those who have turned from God to a life of sin, says they have “perished in the rebellion of Korah” (Jude 11). Of course, we know he was in rebellion against God in seeking to have a place in the Kingdom of Israel to which Moses and Aaron alone had been called.

Rebellion is the way of the ambitious person. Even the ambitious person who is doing the work of God will not be content in responding to the continual leadership of the Holy Spirit. He picks his *own* way, his *own* time, his *own* place for doing the work of the Lord. Many have awakened to the tact that they have degenerated to the low level of using God to advance their own ambitious desires.

What causes some of us to be so sinfully ambitious?

Why was Korah so “eaten up” with the desire to get ahead?

Why was Cain plagued with such vicious ambition?

When we turn again to Cain as our model of the old man, we discover that ambition flows from a two-headed source: *it comes from Satan himself and from our know-it-all attitude.*

The opposite of ambition is meekness.

As is commonly known, the word that is translated “meek” in the New Testament is also used to describe animals that

have been tamed. A *meek* person is one upon whom a bridle may be placed. A *meek* person is one who does not “break over the traces.”

Our Lord was meek. He said He was.

Our Lord testified that He was meek and lowly in heart.

Over and over again the Word of God testifies to the fact that our Lord had no ambition of His own. He came only to do the will of the Father. Perhaps the most prominent passage in the entire Bible concerning His availability to the expressed will of the Father is the experience in Gethsemane. “Father, if it be thy will let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done,” He prayed.

Another time He prayed, “Now my soul has become troubled, and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

The Gospel of John records statement after statement of our Lord in which He indicates that He was here not to do His own will, but the will of the Father. At the risk of being unnecessarily redundant, we shall list a number of these quotations which have not received the attention they deserve.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19).

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 5:30).

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

“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things

as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (John 8:28-29).

“If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me” (John 8:42).

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself Who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me” (John 12:49-50).

“The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” (John 14:10).

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

“I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do” (John 17:4).

All of the above passages show beyond question the meekness of the Lord Jesus as they indicate He was totally available to the will of the Father.

Our meekness - our availability to the Father - is of utmost significance.

In the first place, meekness will keep us free from that feverishness which plagues so many of our fellow men; freedom from ambition is freedom from frustrations!

Jesus says that meekness brings rest to the soul. He told us that because He was meek and lowly in heart, His yoke is

easy and His burden is light. He indicates that those of us in the yoke with

Him would find rest; *our* yoke will be easy and *our* burden light because we will learn from Him to live our lives in meekness and in lowliness of heart. To be lowly of heart is to be without confidence in ourselves; it is to be totally dependent on the Father.

Life is easy and restful, then, when we are completely dependent on the Father.

Our Lord also teaches that the meek will inherit the earth. We must remember that the Scriptures teach “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” We may conclude that when we are totally available to the Lord, whatever of this earth’s goods we may need, He is able to provide them for us.

Finally, when we lead a life of meekness we will not be stepping on people. A young lady who had just achieved stardom was being interviewed on a television talk show. The host asked what it was like to be on top.

“When you finally reach the top you can have compassion,” she responded.

Her answer spoke volumes. It implied that until you do reach the top, you can’t have compassion; you find it necessary to step on people on the way up.

Further, meekness at times is the way to greatness. It seems a paradox that when we give up our ambitions to do some great thing, in the end some great thing is accomplished by the Lord through our lives. Such things have happened.

Just as Korah is an example of how a person’s ambitions for greatness result in total failure and even in shame, Moses, the man he was seeking to supplant, is a vivid example of a

person who had lost his ambition and ultimately became one of the greatest men of all history.

We are told in Scripture that “Moses was the meekest man in all the earth.” It was not always that way. The biblical records indicate that at one point in his life Moses passionately was committed to leading the children of Israel from Egypt. Just as Korah’s ambition brought failure, so did Moses’ ambition.

After forty years in the backside of the desert, however, Moses was completely drained of ambition and had no desire whatsoever to do some great thing when Jehovah gave him the call at the burning bush.

Without ambition blazing in his heart, Moses had become a usable vessel. Jehovah took “the meekest man in all the earth” and used him to perform one of the greatest of all miracles.

This is not to suggest that all people without ambition will end up doing something great. Our place in the Kingdom is determined by the sovereign will of God.

It is to suggest, however, that when we by victory over ambition become available to the Lord, we open the door for the Lord to do mighty works in and through us.

Praise God! We believers may be delivered from our strong desires to do some great thing; we may live a life of meekness.

How may we make the change?

It comes in the manner we have repeatedly set forth in this writing. It comes because of our union with Christ.

When we live in the light of our oneness with Christ, we shall be in authority over Satan, the passion to accomplish

some great thing will be rendered inoperative and we shall be filled with the Holy Spirit continuously.

What we must do is *choose* to be delivered and to walk in the Spirit and to abide in the heavenlies. Then we must *reckon* on our union with Christ. We must reckon on the fact that in Christ we are dead to sin and alive to God. We must reckon on the crucifixion of the old man. We must reckon on our being filled with the Holy Spirit. We must reckon on our being in Christ in the heavenlies in authority over Satan. We must *stand* against Satan and all his kingdom in the authority of and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There we have it once more! *Choose! Reckon! Stand!*

chapter sixteen

Natural Virtues to Supernatural Virtues

“Among the atheists are some who are humane and sympathetic.”

The above words, found in *The Siberian Seven*, originally were written by Lida Vashchenko, one of the seven. They are in the context of a passage in which she told of the surprise with which one Russian prison official received the news of the severe treatment given her father during one of his imprisonments.

The fact that an atheist is humane and sympathetic is a clear indication we do not find *only* bad in unredeemed human nature.

When the theologians write of man being totally depraved, they mean he is helpless to save himself; they do not mean that man is as bad as he can be.

No one is as bad as he could be. Even Hitler could have been worse.

Soon after I first realized that the crucifixion of our old man included the crucifixion of our natural virtues, I conducted an experiment with the members of my Sunday school class. First, I asked each member to turn to Galatians 5:22 which lists nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. After naming each fruit I asked, "If you had never been saved, would at least a trace of this quality be in your life?"

To my amazement no less than one or two hands were raised each time the question was asked.

Probably each of us possesses *naturally* at least traces of a few of the qualities which are produced by the Holy Spirit *supernaturally*.

We may, however, be getting ahead of ourselves. Where do we find in Cain a basis for our discussion of this chapter?

"And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son" (Gen. 4:17).

It is my opinion that Cain built the city partially out of kindness, out of concern for his wife and son. Two reasons form the basis for this conclusion.

First, the fact that he gave the town the name of his son shows that he was thinking about the boy when he built it.

Second, Cain had been a wanderer. Surely, he did not want his wife and his son to live the kind of life he had lived. So, in kindness he provided a permanent place of residence.

Admittedly, these conclusions are somewhat conjectural, but I believe the conclusions and conjectures to be reasonably inferable from the Scriptures.

Recently I taught these truths about change from Cain-likeness to Christ-likeness to a group of young people. As a visual aid we presented the characteristics of Cain in the form of a tree. We made the know-it-all attitude (which was Cain's "root" problem) as the root system of the tree. Then we spelled out the other characteristics of Cain where the limbs of the tree would have been.

When we placed on the tree the branch representing *kindness* as one of the qualities in Cain - and, thus, one of the qualities in our old man that has been crucified - we were only seconds away from the close of our Bible study time. Just before the closing prayer one of the teenagers said in a voice loud enough for us all to hear, "What is bugging me is why our kindness had to be crucified."

Perhaps that is disturbing you also. *Just why does our kindness have to be crucified?*

I faithfully promised the group that we would not leave camp before talking about the crucifixion of our kindness and all our natural virtues.

That night we had a campfire around which we stood and roasted marshmallows. One fifteen year old boy and I, while engaged in conversation, gradually walked a few feet away from the rest of the group. Just as I was about to leave him and the campfire he said, "I have a question I want to ask you."

"Okay," I replied as I turned again to him.

"Why does our kindness have to be crucified?" he asked sincerely.

I had planned to answer the question for all the group at the same time because there seemed to be so much interest in it. However, I believed that I should respond to him right then.

He held a marshmallow in his hand.

I asked, “What would that marshmallow be, compared to a delicious banquet for two thousand people?”

He admitted the marshmallow would be as nothing in such a comparison.

“That is how our natural kindness compares to the kindness of God,” I explained to him.

I further explained that we all have a tendency to trust ourselves where and when we can do so. If we feel we are strong in one area, we usually feel we do not need the Lord’s grace there. Thus the apostle declares, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul knew by experience that he turned to the Lord when he was helpless and always found the Lord’s grace sufficient.

The next day I explained to the entire group why our natural kindness had to be crucified. Then I told them of an event that had occurred the year before during a week in which I was conducting a revival for a pastor who had read my book, *Our Oneness With Christ*. He had invited me to conduct the revival because he wanted me to teach the message of “our oneness with Christ” to his members.

One afternoon I was teaching the message to a group of teenagers. I told them of the crucifixion of our natural virtues and why they needed to be taken to the cross. When I finished the explanation he said, “I have never thought of such a thing before, but as you talked I realized why my kindness needed to be crucified. I am so kind by nature that it is most difficult for me to rebuke people for their sins.”

I was amazed at what that pastor said. Of course, I had never heard or thought of such an application before. But I know he was exactly right. There are times when every pastor must rebuke sin. It must be done in love and it must be done as the Holy Spirit leads, *but it must be done*.

Hopefully, by now we are all convinced of the necessity of the crucifixion of our natural virtues. Now let us look at a few of them for perhaps a further illustration of the point.

We are told in Galatians 5:22 that the fruit of the Spirit is love. The word is *agape* and means the “God-kind of love.” Obviously, none of us has *agape* love by nature, but we all have known some unsaved people who truly were invested with a love that had the quality of unselfishness in it. Many unsaved parents have loved their children with an unselfish love. And that is just the point; it is *their “children” they love*. At times the love of unsaved persons extends to those beyond their own family, but even at its best the unselfish love that one has by nature will not compare with the divine love produced by the Holy Spirit.

The very best of natural love, then, must be crucified to make way for supernatural love. Our Father has made the way for all of us to be filled with *agape* love by crucifying our natural love. We must agree with Him and reject our natural love and reckon on its crucifixion.

Galatians 5:22 teaches that the fruit of the Spirit is “long-suffering.” Many unsaved and carnal people have been endowed by nature with patience. They sometimes amaze us with their patience. But we can be sure it has its limits. It will not be extended to a large number of people and it will have stringent limits in its duration. Natural patience is far from

supernatural patience - the kind of patience the Holy Spirit will produce in us.

We are told also in Galatians 5:22 that the fruit of the Spirit is goodness. Most likely there is more need for us to understand the crucifixion of the natural virtue of goodness than any of the other natural virtues. It is truly amazing how many times we have told others that a certain person was "good." We truly meant it. They seemed very good to us.

Jesus, however, said, "Only one is good, that is God." In the light of the statement of the Lord Jesus we make a grave error in thinking that anyone (including *ourselves*) is good naturally. What we imagine are traces of goodness in ourselves and in others are not goodness at all.

Each day millions of mothers send their children to school with the admonition, "Be good." Such suggestions are laying on the children burdens too heavy to bear. They are unable to be what they are not, and Jesus says, "There is only one that is good, that is God."

What disappointments have come to parents who have reared their children to be good, only to have their hearts broken by sin - and sometimes deep, deep sin - by the child who seemed to be so very good. Surely, we all have seen enough of this type of behavior to be convinced that we must not put our faith in natural goodness.

When our old man was crucified our so-called natural goodness was crucified with him. May the Lord prompt us to understand that God's verdict on our natural goodness is "death," and may He prompt us to agree with Him in the rejection of it.

A believer can only rejoice to realize what the Lord will produce in his life when he or she agrees with the Lord in the rejection and crucifixion of the old man and chooses to re-

ceive the filling of the Holy Spirit and all the Holy Spirit will produce in him.

We will not seek to give a full treatment of the virtues produced by the Holy Spirit, but will only quote Galatians 5:22-23a in full. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.”

For several reasons we can know that the Lord Jesus lived out these supernatural virtues. A study of His life reveals that these qualities were in Him without limitation.

Furthermore, He is God! Those virtues that are supernatural for us are natural for Him because deity is His very essence. However, He also states that what was seen in His life was the Father living in and through Him (John 14:10).

What a thrill it is when we realize that the Lord is actually creating in us all the fruits of the Spirit! The difference these qualities make in our lives and in the lives of others is indescribable. The fact that they are produced in us surely results in the glory of God.

Think of the difference that would come into the homes of the land if the father, mother and children suddenly began to exude these supernatural virtues!

Think of all the pain that would have been spared churches through the years if the members had trusted the Lord to fill them with *Supernatural virtues*.

Throughout this work we have been saying that the qualities found in the life of Cain stemmed from his know-

it-all attitude and from Satan. Can the same be said of his kindness? It can.

As Cain thought of his past - the wandering and fears -his know-it-all attitude concluded that it would be best to build a city.

Is there a Scripture anywhere that could lay something as good and fine as kindness at the feet of Satan? There is.

One of the most famous stories told by our Lord is that of a man who was inhabited by an unclean spirit which left him and later returned. Our Lord says, "And when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

Whatever interpretation we may want to place on the passage, one thing seems clear: Satan will help a person *re-form* his life if that reformation will keep the person from receiving Christ into his life.

We must always remember that Satan's primary purpose is not to make us immoral. His primary purpose is to take us away from the will of God for our lives. He cares not if we are decent people, if such decency will keep us from being in the will of God - *and the will of God for us is that we live totally by faith in God!*

If Satan can help us to remain satisfied with ourselves by being kind, patient, and good in the natural virtues and thus hinder our trusting God for the supernatural virtues, he will be delighted to oblige us.

What is our means, then, of deliverance from our natural virtues that we might live out of the supernatural?

It is the same as we have seen in earlier chapters. It is in *experiencing* what it means to be in union with Jesus Christ.

Because we are in Him, we have been crucified with Him - that is, our old man has been crucified with Him - and we have been enthroned with Him.

Because of that crucifixion and resurrection and enthronement, we have all we need. The flesh may be rendered inoperative by our faith in its crucifixion with Christ and because of our rejection of it. Consequently, we may be filled with the Spirit Who will fill us with the supernatural virtues. Our natural virtues may be rendered inoperative as we reckon on their crucifixion with Christ and reject them in our lives. We may live in a position of authority over Satan as we reckon on our oneness with Christ in enthronement and choose to be alive to God. When we deal with Satan from our position of authority over him, we will have victory over the natural virtues.

May the Lord help us all to respond to the possibility of being characterized by *supernatural* virtues rather than our *natural* virtues.

One last word concerning your virtues. Lay aside *all* of your natural virtues - even the best, the choicest of them. Consider them dead! Then, reckon on your oneness with Christ and all of *His* virtues - even His choicest ones - will be obvious both in your inner self and in your outer personality. The difference in you will be wonderful, amazing...

... *and deeply satisfying.*

Conclusion

Our intention has been to show that in Cain we see the picture of the “old man” is each of us from which we need deliverance. Every part of his - and our - old man is not evil, but every part of our old man has been taken to the cross by our Lord.

It has also been our intention to show that in Christ Jesus we see the opposite of the qualities we find in Cain and then to indicate that we may be changed from *Cain-likeness* to *Christ-likeness*. The change is gloriously possible as we understand the New Testament truth of our oneness with Christ and as we believe its message and choose to live out of our oneness with Him.

Surely, when you study for yourself the life of Cain you will discover qualities about his old man we have not mentioned. When you do so, the Lord is showing you one more facet of our old man from which we need to be set free. We make no pretension of being exhaustive in this study. If our work has been used of the Lord to bring change and lay a foundation for *more* study and for *more* change in our lives, it will be considered a success.

We joyfully want to admit that this work does not contain the “last word” on what it means to be in union with Christ. In fact, there is such a gold mine of truth in this New Testament teaching that we believe we have only shared the bare minimum of its totality. There is more - and in the years to come may our hearts be open to continued revelations of who we are and what we have in Christ Jesus.