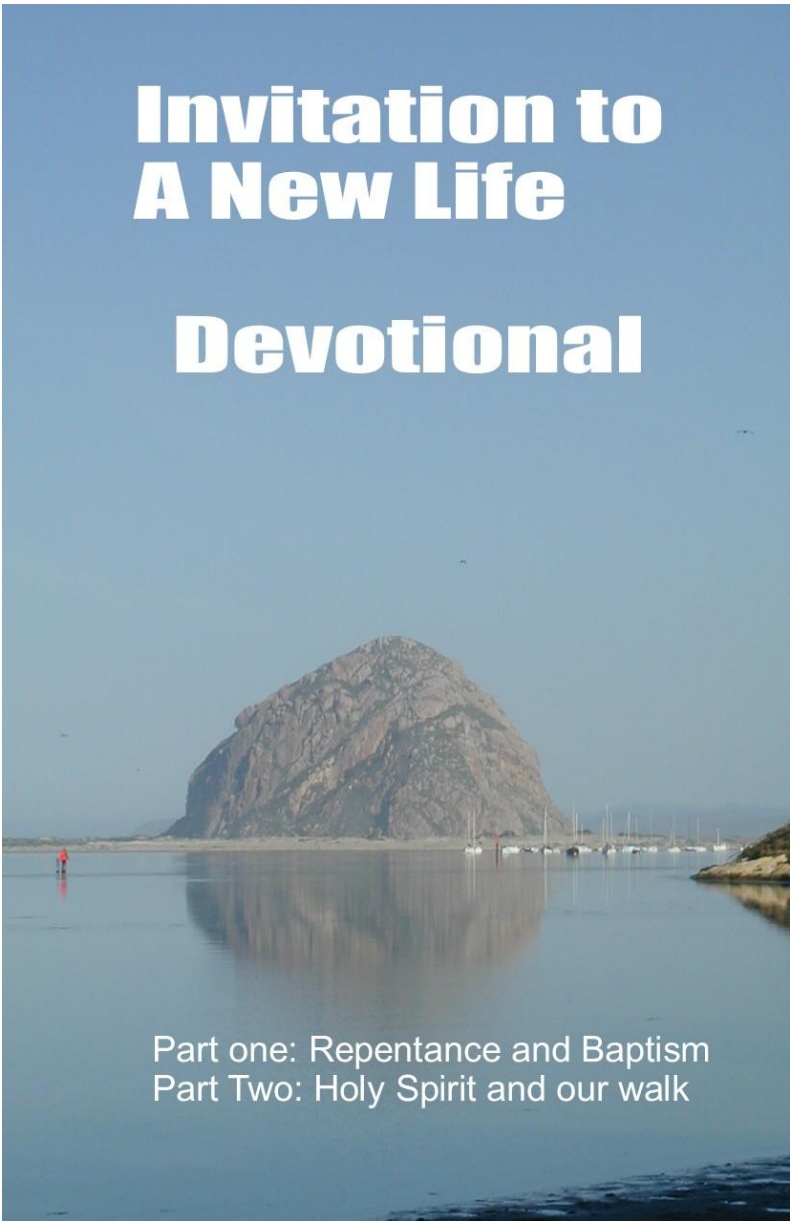
Invitation to
A New Life
Devotional
Part one: Repentance and Baptism
Part Two: Holy Spirit and our walk

Daily God Walk
The Christ Life
A Devotional on:

A New Life In Christ

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Scripture quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

Day One

Our New Life Begins With Repentance

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

– Matthew 4:17

Not long before Jesus made this statement John the Baptist came upon the scene preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2). John called them to repent and to even bring evidence of their repentance so he could baptize them into the hope of the coming kingdom.

Matthew quotes Isaiah in validating John's ministry: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'" (v3). John's preaching pointed toward Jesus as the Christ. He was literally a herald of the coming kingdom. When John's work as the herald of the kingdom of Christ om was finished he was put into prison.

It appears that the imprisonment of John was the catalyst which propelled Jesus into public ministry. Jesus followed John in calling people to repentance in order to be ready to receive the kingdom.

What was the kingdom they preached? It was not a new world order it was a new universal spiritual order. John came warning "the kingdom is coming;" Jesus came declaring that the kingdom had indeed come and was living among them.

In the flesh, Jesus was the kingdom of God on earth, but he was calling men and women to prepare for the fullness of the kingdom on earth. The fullness of the kingdom on earth is, "Christ in you which is the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

The kingdom of God is the Spirit of God and the mind of God living in men on earth. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ" (Colossians 2:9-10).

Our journey of faith leads us to being indwelt by the fullness of Christ which is the Holy Spirit. Jesus is calling us to repentance from our life in the flesh so the fullness of the life in the Spirit can dwell in us.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of repentance from a life in the flesh and fill me with the Kingdom Spirit. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The kingdom of God is the Spirit of God and the mind of God living in men on earth. "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ" (Colossians 2:9-10).

Affirmation: The fullness of the Christ is being built in me and I am being transformed into His likeness.

Reflection: It is a powerful thought that the kingdom of God on earth is His Spirit literally living in repented and transformed man. Can you see why both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed, "Repent" as a requirement for the kingdom of heaven to dwell with and in them?

My Thought

Day Two

Responding to The Call to Repentance

Now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance... Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.

– 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

There are only two groups of people who need to repent. Those who have never repented and those who need to repent again. In this passage Paul is referring to a previous letter he had written that had caused some sorrow among the church. He is telling them that the sorrow they had experienced was a good thing because it led them to repentance.

The kingdom of God to which Jesus referred as being near is not only near but is present on earth today. Those of us who are believers in Jesus as the Christ live in the kingdom, however, the benefits of being in the kingdom are available to us in direct proportion to the degree we are dominated by this world system.

What I mean by that is you can't be free in the kingdom of God while you are still serving this world system. Jesus told us, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24).

I'm afraid some folks who call themselves "Christian," and who still live according to this world system, have been deceived into believing that just reciting a magic prayer formula ushers them into the kingdom of God.

Becoming a Christian is not just a wise choice based upon rational thought. It is hearing the message of the grace of God, being convicted of the sin in our life, having godly sorrow for our sin, confessing our sin to Jesus and inviting him into our heart freeing us from the bondage of sin.

That kind of repentance leads us into the kingdom of God and releases all of the benefits of the kingdom to us. I've been serving God for over half a century and I still find myself in need of a time of repentance. You probably have the same need.

Prayer: Lord, give me a godly sorrow for my sins. Amen.

Message: Becoming a Christian is hearing the message of the grace of God, being convicted of the sin in our life, having godly sorrow for our sin, confessing our sin to Jesus and inviting him into our heart freeing us from the bondage of sin.

Affirmation: I have heard the message of the kingdom of God and I have believed the message. I responded to the message by repenting and inviting Jesus into my heart. Now I am in the kingdom of God and the kingdom is in me.

Reflection: Do you see how godly sorrow will lead us to repentance? Think about some circumstances which produce sorrow and which can lead us to repentance.

My Thought

Day Three

I Did Life My Way

You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

– Ephesians 4:22-24

The "old self" is the way we were before we came to Christ. The person that we were was ruled by the soulish nature - that part of us which drives us toward fulfilling the desires of our human nature. We were ruled by the axiom, "If it feels good I'll do it." That is the nature of sin which lives within all of us.

In Colossians Paul writes, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior" (1:21). That was the condition of our old self; we were enemies with God. I don't mean that we were enemies in the since of being out to destroy God, but we were enemies in that we were committed to doing life our way in complete disregard to what God had to say about it.

When we come to Christ we surrender that manner of thinking and we make an about face in regard to God and his way. In fact, that is what repentance is. It is making an about face, turning a 180. It is about walking in a new direction.

I have noticed that for some of us, even after we come to Christ, we are still holding on to some of the old self. As long as we are still trying to appease our human nature while trying to please God we will have a constant struggle.

The struggle we have with our human nature will lead to falling into the trap of answering its desires with the consequence of then having to deal with guilt and a sense of separation from the blessed peace which comes only from God.

It would be good to ask yourself this question: How does appeasing my human nature affect my peace with God? As one television personality asks his quests, "How is that working for you?" You may need to take your old self back to the cross.

Prayer: Lord, I have to deal with my old self far too often. Grant me the grace of full surrender to you and your will. Amen.

Message: When we come to Christ we surrender our old manner of thinking and we make an about face in regard to God and his way. In fact, that is what repentance is. It is making an about face, turning a 180. It is about walking in a new direction.

Affirmation: I am continually turning away from my old nature and turning toward the Christ nature so that the fullness of Christ may dwell freely in me.

Reflection: How does the "former way of life," Paul refers to contrast with the new self we are being told to put on? Are there any clues in this devotion as to how we can put on the new self?

My Thought

Day Four

Doing Life God's Way

God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness. – 2 Timothy 2:19

When we come to Christ we are doing more than just making a statement of faith; we are literally committing our life to the principles he taught and to God's revealed will. In writing to Timothy, Paul tells us, "The Lord knows those who are his." And how does he know them? He knows them because, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

God has called us to be separated from the world and that means we turn away from all that is wicked, or all that is opposed to the principles of life espoused by Jesus and that is very plain in the Scripture. Paul very clearly points this out :

"The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to

the sinful nature... The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"– Galatians 5:17-23

When we do life God's way we are influenced by the fruit of the Spirit and we leave a trail of love, joy and peace. That is the contrast of God's way as opposed to man's way. Man's way is all about "what I *feel* is best for me," but God's way is about what is ultimately best for me.

For many of us giving up our way and walking in God's way has not been easy, and we have not always been successful at it. But, because of the Spirit of Christ which lives in us, we get up when we fall and we get back on track because we are committed to doing life God's way.

Prayer: Help me to fully surrender my way to you and grant me the grace to fully embrace your way of doing life. Amen.

Message: God has called us to be separated from the world and that means we turn away from all that is promoted by this world system, or all that is opposed to the principles of life espoused by Jesus and that is very plain in the Scripture.

Affirmation: I am committed to the principles of life espoused by Jesus and to resisting the influences of this current world system.

Reflection: What does it mean to be separated from the world? Is he talking about become a hermit, or is he talking about something else?

My Thought

Day Five

What Is Sin?

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. – James 1:14-15

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. – James 4:17

When we ask, "What is sin?" we get many replies. Some will say, "It is not being true to yourself." Others might say, "It is breaking the 10 Commandments." I have come to the conclusion that sin is anything, whether passive or active, that comes between us and our relationship with God.

That idea seems to be expressed in these verses in James. First James identifies sin as yielding to our evil desire. Before you get all self-righteous and say something like, "why, I have never had an evil desire," you should understand that in this sense evil is not demonic, or even sinister. Evil here is simply

our own will which desires fulfillment outside the will of God.

Yielding to our human nature when it calls us away from the presence of God is sin. When our desire is not for God and his righteousness it is evil and is sin. Can you see that? Even a desire for something that of itself is not sin, if it is selfish and draws us away from God, it is sin.

The second issue regarding sin that James addresses is the sin of omission. He tells us that if we know to do good and don't do it then by that omission of doing good we have sinned.

With these ideas in mind I challenge you to examine your own life to see if you might be sinning and not even be aware of it. One of the most common sins today is failing to establish a regular place of worship and spiritual fellowship. We are instructed to continue meeting together and encouraging one another (Hebrews 10:25).

Prayer: Lord, I'm afraid I have fallen victim to my own selfish nature far too often. Help me to corral my evil desires and to not neglect to do the good I know to do. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: We are being called to love as Jesus loved and that means stepping away from our secure place in life, as Jesus did, and take risks that will lead to great sacrifice, and may even lead to a martyr's death.

Affirmation: I am committed to loving as Jesus loved regardless of the cost.

Reflection: There are many definitions of sin. The word "sin" in the original language literally means to miss the mark, like shooting at a target and missing. With that understanding, what can you identify as "sin" that would hinder you from reaching the target of being like Christ?

My Thought

Day Six

Faith and Repentance Justifies Us Before God

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. – Romans 5:1-2

All that we had done before coming to faith in Christ had served only to keep us separated from him. Not that we were necessarily involved in anything so terrible, but the things we did were driven by our own human desire. When we come to Christ we must submit our desire and our will to him and take upon ourselves his desire and his will.

In Romans 3:23 Paul calls all of mankind sinners when he wrote, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He was putting the truly evil and sinister people in the same group as those of us who have led pretty good, but self-directed, lives. We have all sinned and have fallen short of God's expectation.

In the next verse he tells the effect of faith and repentance. "And you (believers) are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:9-11).

That's it! Nothing more to be said. Faith in Christ leads to repentance which reconciles us to God and justifies us in his sight. As we live in faith, continuing in a state of repentance we stand justified before God.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the blood of Christ which gives us opportunity to be reconciled to you through faith in Him. It is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Message: Faith in Christ leads to repentance which reconciles us to God and justifies us in his sight. As we live in faith, continuing in a state of repentance we stand justified before God.

Affirmation: Through faith in Christ, and the grace of God for repentance, I have been reconciled to God and justified in his sight.

Reflection: No other religion teaches a redeemer who gives himself a ransom to redeem believers from judgment, Reconcile them to God and Justify them before their Lord. Christianity stands alone in that teaching.

My Thought

Day Seven

How We Get to Repentance

"I am sending you to [the gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." – Acts 26:18

Paul was standing before King Agrippa giving his testimony in our verse today. He is telling of his conversion and quoting what Jesus spoke to him when he appeared to him on the road to Damascus. The message he was given to preach was the light and life of Christ and turning away from Satan.

He explained what he preached: "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (v20). Paul's message was very simple, so simple that the Jews who had converted felt that he was not being strong enough because he was not requiring people to obey the law.

Today he would be accused of "easy believism" because he did not stress

circumcision, keeping the Sabbath or eating only the proscribed foods. He had been given a message of grace and forgiveness by Jesus himself and he stayed true to his message.

This is the message of faith which leads to salvation that we read about in Romans 10. He declares in verse 9, "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." He is speaking of a confession of faith which leads one to a life of repentance from his old way of living.

How does a person get to the place of faith which leads to repentance? Paul goes on to explain in verses 14-17 that the process includes someone called of God to preach the gospel, those who will hear the gospel, and those who believe what they hear. Then, when they believe they call upon the name of the Lord and are saved.

We preach the message, they hear the message and the Holy Spirit brings conviction. They receive faith and confess their faith which leads to repentance. That's it. It is just that simple.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the simple yet effective gospel. Amen.

Message: Someone preaches the message, we hear the message and the Holy Spirit brings conviction. We receive faith and confess our faith which leads to repentance. That's it. It is just that simple.

Affirmation: I heard; I believed; I received; I repented; I am born again.

Reflection: Is our hope the result of "easy believism" or is it based in the truth of the message Paul preached? How was the message Paul preached different than the apostles first preached? Or was it different at all?

My Thought

Day Eight

Just-as-if-i'd Never Sinned

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. – Romans 5:1-2

The door to being reconciled to God was opened when Christ paid the supreme sacrifice for our sins. There had never been an open door to heaven before, except for specific occasions and for specific purposes. But now, Christ opened the door once, and for all of mankind, so that we all might have the opportunity to be right with God.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, "All this if from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (v18-19).

What does it mean to be reconciled? The word comes from the Latin word, "*reconciliare*" and means to make good again or to repair. When we say that we are reconciled to God we are saying that our

relationship with him has been repaired and it is good again.

We are reconciled to God, that is, everything is made right between us and him. But how do we get from "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," to reconciled? That happens as we begin our journey of faith in Christ and through our faith are justified by grace giving us right standing with God.

Justified simply means that I have been declared innocent. There is nothing that God is holding against me. It is truly just-as-if-i'd never sinned. Christ paid mine and your debt of sin and when we come to God through faith in Christ God's grace is given us and suddenly we are declared innocent and we stand before God as pure as if we had never sinned. We are Justified.

We who have believed upon the name of Christ and have by faith committed our life to him have tasted the sweetness of his salvation. Rejoice with me today as we celebrate the that because we have been justified we are now reconciled to God.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for Jesus the great reconciler. Amen.

Message: Justified simply means that I have been declared innocent. There is nothing that God is holding against me. It is truly just-as-if-i'd never sinned. Christ paid mine and your debt of sin, and when we come to God through faith in Christ, God's grace is given us and suddenly we are declared innocent and we stand before God as pure as if we had never sinned. We are Justified.

Affirmation: I am justified through faith in the work completed by Christ on the cross. God does not hold any of my past sins against me.

Reflection: Give some thought to what it means to be justified and reconciled to God.

My Thought

Day Nine

How Am I Freed From My Sinful Nature?

For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. – 2 Corinthians 6:11

Paul had written a letter to the church at Corinth that gave them some pretty strong instruction. The church there did not rejoice over that letter. In fact, there was much discussion and a lot of hurt over the strong teaching which Paul gave them.

Our passage today is making reference to that letter. Paul is commenting that even though the first letter hurt them and gave them sorrow, it was what led them to repentance. Paul did not write the letter to harm them but to give them instruction in godly living. The fact that the letter caused sorrow caused Paul to be sorrowful, but when he heard that their sorrow led them to repentance he rejoiced at the effect of his letter.

A reality today is that not enough gospel preachers are willing to call believers to repentance over the sin in their life. Too often a rebuke is couched in such positive terms that the one being rebuked thinks he is being complimented. Strong preaching from the pulpit leads people to repentance; weak preaching from the pulpit leads people into self-justification.

We ask, “How am I freed from my sinful nature?” and the answer is, “Hear the word of the Lord which is sharp and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). Let Holy Spirit convict your heart and give you godly sorrow for your sin. Confess your sin, ask forgiveness seeking God for strength to turn away from sin.

Paul goes on to give us perspective on what it will look like when we live in repentance. Verse 11 reads, “See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.”

The joy of having repented far outweighs the sorrow which led us to repentance.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, convict me of my sin with sorrow which leads to repentance that I might again know your joy. Amen.

Message: What it will look like when we live in repentance. Verse 11 reads, "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done."

Affirmation: I have adopted repentance as a lifestyle and I am purposed to continually be turning away from my old nature and turning toward the nature of Christ.

Reflection: Paul teaches us that godly sorrow brings repentance. Can you think of some examples of godly sorrow? Paul is referring to a former letter which gave them sorrow. Do you think that letter was a rebuke or was it complimentary?

My Thought

Day Ten

Why Are We Baptized?

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." – Matthew 28:19

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." – Acts 2:38

The short answer to the question, "Why are we baptized?" is simply, "Jesus commanded it." However, a little explanation may help us to get a better idea of why he commanded us to be baptized.

The rite of baptism began to be practiced in the period we call inter-testamental. That is the time between the writing of the last book of the Old Testament and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus which was about 400 years.

During that period of time it became a practice to initiate Gentile converts into

Judaism in a ritual which included totally immersing into a pool of water. In this way a person born outside the family of Jews would put away their old life and start a new life as a Jew.

The convert would take off all of his clothes then step into the pool and dunk himself totally under the water as a symbol of burying his old life. When he arose from the water he had washed himself clean of all his past and now he was entering the world a new person. He was given a new name and new clothes.

The Jews in Jesus time knew that process and knew that being baptized symbolized starting a new life. That is why John would not baptize anyone who could not give evidence that they had indeed repented of their former sins and desired to be changed (Luke 3:8).

Today we are baptized in the same manner to symbolize burying our old nature and rising to a new life with a new name, bearing in our spirit the name of Jesus.

Baptism is an act of obedience and a work of righteousness which is expected of all believers. In fact, even Jesus was baptized so that he would lead his followers in fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that you have given me the opportunity to be baptized into Christ and to take the name of Jesus in my heart. Amen.

Message: Baptism is an act of obedience and a work of righteousness which is expected of all believers. In fact, Jesus was baptized so that he would lead his followers in fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

Affirmation: I was baptized symbolic of burying my old nature and taking on the nature, or life, of Christ.

Reflection: John linked baptism to the repentance process (Mark 1:4) as did Peter in his message on Pentecost (Acts 2:38). With everything the New Testament says about baptism what do you feel that it should mean to us?

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

Baptism is Closely Tied to Repentance

John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. – Mark 1:4

The theme of John's ministry was repentance in preparation for the coming kingdom. Repentance seemed to include being forgiven, evidence of repentance and baptism.

Matthew records some coming to him asking to be baptized and John responding with a rebuke. Matthew has John saying, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:7-8). John was not about to baptize those who were just jumping on the band wagon of a good idea; he required them to show evidence of genuine repentance.

Baptism is an important component of our faith walk and it should not be treated lightly. Some have made baptism a badge of honor and those ministers who have baptized many get accolades. A common question by one pastor to another is, "How many have you

baptized this year?" That is a good and valid question, but it should not inspire to baptize converts without being certain that the candidate has truly repented.

If repentance is making an about face; turning around to go in the opposite direction, and if baptism is symbolic of burying our old way of life, then we should be able to see how baptism is intertwined with repentance and repentance with baptism.

The importance of baptism in the process of repentance is reinforced in the fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke all three mention it in that context. It is also a command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 and on the day of Pentecost Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

Confessing our sins, asking forgiveness, turning from our sins and being baptized are all components in the repentance process.

Remember, when you were baptized you buried the old nature. Now we must have a repentance lifestyle.

Prayer: Thank you Lord for repentance and baptism into Christ.

Message: Confessing our sins, asking forgiveness, turning from our sins and being baptized are all components in the repentance process. Remember, when you were baptized you buried the old nature. Now we must live a repentance lifestyle.

Affirmation: I am committed to daily repentance. I seek God for guidance and strength to continually be turning away from my old desires and turning toward God and his desires.

Reflection: Daily give thought to how you should live and what you must do to establish a lifestyle of repentance.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Jesus Commanded Baptism

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. – Matthew 28:19

The overriding command in this passage is to go and make disciples of all nations. In the process of fulfilling that command the disciples were instructed to baptize the disciples and to teach them to obey all of the commands of Christ.

We must remember that the command is to make disciples and the way to make disciples is to baptize them as an act of public profession of faith then teach them to live according to the commands of Christ. If we have done less than that we are not fulfilling this command of Christ.

Some have made baptism the center of the command and feel that as long as they are baptizing converts they are fulfilling the great commission but baptism is only part of the

command. Some have made teaching obedience the core of the command and have not emphasized baptism and that is not fulfilling the great commission either.

How important is baptism? We showed earlier how baptism seems to be linked to repentance. Now let's look at what Mark and Luke have to say about it: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 1616); "Repentance and remission of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Luke doesn't mention baptism, but it certainly is implied, especially in light of Acts 2:38 when Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins."

I realize that I am preaching to the choir, but we must be aware of the importance of baptism in the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus the Christ. If you haven't yet been baptized since you became a believer I would ask, "Isn't it about time you took this step of obedience?"

Prayer: I thank you for granting me repentance. I have received baptism and grant me the grace to be obedient to you. Amen.

Message: We must be aware of the importance of baptism in the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus the Christ. If you haven't yet been baptized since you became a believer I would ask, "Isn't it about time you took this step of obedience?"

Affirmation: I have believed the message of Jesus Christ; I have been baptized into Christ and know I live in Christ.

Reflection: There is a trend among some to de-emphasize baptism but we must keep in mind that it is an integral part of the message of the kingdom. Matthew, Mark and Luke all call for baptism. The book of acts demonstrates the practice of baptism. How important do you believe baptism to be?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

Baptized Into Christ

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. – Romans 6:3-4

Paul is explaining one of the great truths in the Christian faith. He is explaining that when we become believers we are baptized into Christ. It is not that the baptism puts us into Christ, but it does symbolize what happens when we by faith receive Christ into our lives.

Our baptism is a symbol, yet it is more than a symbol, of our transformation from being a person born into this world system to a person born in the eternal world system. When, by faith, we receive Christ we become "in Christ."

The message is that we have come out of something and into something. We have come out of the world; we have come out of self; we have come out of darkness; we have come out

of evil influence. We have come into a new world; we were born into a new world; we have come into Christ; being in Christ we are now in the light; in Christ we are now righteous. Baptism is the public confession that we are in Christ.

When we are in Christ we are:

- ✓ Justified by faith in Christ – Galatians 2:16
- ✓ Sons of God by faith in Christ – Galatians 3:26
- ✓ Sanctified in Christ – 1 Corinthians 1:2
- ✓ Made alive in Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:22
- ✓ New Creations in Christ – 2 Corinthians 10:17
- ✓ Seated in heaven with Christ – Ephesians 2:6

In Christ we are all of that and more. Being baptized into Christ opens a new world to us. Our old life has been put to death in repentance and when we rise up out of the water we are being raised to new life, just like Jesus when he was raised to life. We rejoice in knowing that are dead to sin and alive in Christ!

Prayer: Hallelujah! I'm alive in Christ.

Message: Our old life has been put to death in repentance and when we rise up out of the water we are being raised to new life, just like Jesus when he was raised to life. We rejoice in knowing that are dead to sin and alive in Christ!

Affirmation: I surrendered my old life to God and buried it in baptism. Now I live the new life, the Christ life.

Reflection: Consider all that this devotion tells us that we are in Christ. Look up each of the Scriptures listed and begin to meditate upon what each of them to you as a believer in and follower of Christ.

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

A New Heart And A New Spirit

I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

– Ezekiel 36:26-27

God had been working with this people called the Jews for nearly a 1000 years since Moses led them out of Egypt, and he always got the same result; they would be in a period of repentance for their rebellious ways, repent and God would send a deliverer. They would live in peace for a while then begin to fall back into the sins which ensnared them. And the cycle of failing and repenting would continue.

Finally God began to reveal the way he would deal with their unfaithfulness in the future. First, Isaiah records in chapter 53 that he would send one who would be a sacrifice for their sins. He writes, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (v5).

Christ only did half the work that needed to be done with man. He made a way by which man's sins could be washed away forever and never be remembered again, but there remained a work yet to be done. That is the work of the Spirit which would come to dwell in those who received the work of Christ.

Ezekiel is giving the promise of a new heart and a new spirit to all who will listen. Man's problem has not been that he didn't have a desire to do good, it was that the good he desired to do he could not do. In fact what we wind up doing is the bad we wish we could get away from (Romans 7:14-25).

When Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us he gives us a heart toward God and a desire to do the will of God. Are we all perfect in living according to the will of God? Hardly, but all of us who have come to Christ in faith have been given a new internal compass and a desire to follow God.

Holy Spirit prompts us concerning righteousness and we will live righteously in direct proportion to the amount of control we allow Holy Spirit to have in our lives.

Prayer: Father, grant me the grace to submit to the Holy Spirit.

Message: All of us who have come to Christ in faith have been given a new internal compass and a desire to follow God. Holy Spirit prompts us concerning righteousness and we will live righteously in direct proportion to the amount of control we allow Holy Spirit to have in our lives.

Affirmation: I am guided by the internal compass placed in me by Holy Spirit. He is my guide and I allow him to be in control of my life.

Reflection: Ancient Israel had a difficult time being faithful to God. Some believers today have the same problem. God has given us the answer to this problem by the Holy Spirit he places in us. How does that help us in our faith walk?

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

Holy Spirit Gives Assurance

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's Children... Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith... And this is how we know he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

– Romans 8:16, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 3:24

I have a habit of losing things. I guess it is my short attention span, but I will think of something which needs to be done and all at once I find myself in front of the task and not have the tools necessary to get it done. Ever happen to you?

When I walk out of the house to go somewhere I must check my pockets for the keys to the car and to the door of the house. Almost every time there is a split second of panic as the locked door to the house closes and I reach for my pocket to be sure I have my keys. Thank God, the keys are in my pocket. It is always a relief when I can feel them in my pants pocket.

Now, I am certainly not comparing my keys to the Holy Spirit, but I am saying that we

must have assurance that Holy Spirit is there when we need him. Our scripture passages today tell us that God knows we need that assurance and he gives us Holy Spirit in such a way that we know for sure he is within us.

Some will say, "You are saying that Holy Spirit is something we receive by experience when in fact he comes by faith alone." I agree that it is faith in Christ which releases Holy Spirit to come into our heart and renew our spirit, but I will say that Holy Spirit comes in an experiential way or else why would Paul write, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit"? And why would John write, "This is how we know he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us"?

Yes, we do receive Holy Spirit by faith, but a test of whether we have truly believed is whether Holy Spirit gives us assurance of our relationship with him. We are not to seek experience, we are to seek Holy Spirit; and Holy Spirit gives us assurance.

Prayer: Thank you for the salvation through faith in Christ and thank you for the assurance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Amen.

Message: We receive Holy Spirit by faith, but a test of whether we have truly believed is whether Holy Spirit gives us assurance of our relationship with him. We are not to seek experience, we are to seek Holy Spirit; and Holy Spirit gives us assurance.

Affirmation: Holy Spirit within me gives me the full assurance that I am a child of God.

Reflection: Do you see a conflict between being saved by faith alone and the need for having the assurance of Holy Spirit that we are in fact born again? Search the Scriptures and pray until you are confident of your position on this vital issue.

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

Empowered to Live a Consistent Life

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

– Ephesians 3:16-17

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

– 2 Corinthians 9:8

There are many purposes of Holy Spirit indwelling believers. One of those purposes is that he enables us to live a life consistent with God's will. Looking back to Ezekiel 36 we are reminded that the new Spirit which God promised would move us to follow his decrees and be careful to keep his law (v27).

I have had many people over the years tell me that they would like to be a Christian but they know they couldn't live it. They were right, they couldn't – but they would live it

with Holy Spirit living in them and in control of their life.

Many people see their ability to live above sin from the perspective of Romans 7 where Paul is explaining the natural state of man who desires to do good but doesn't have the ability.

We can live righteously, but only by the power of Holy Spirit dwelling in our inner being. Trusting Holy Spirit to be our strength requires the same faith as receiving Christ for salvation. We receive Christ to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that is, to be made just before God and reconciled to him.

In the same manner we must turn to Holy Spirit for power and strength to live righteously. We must trust him as we have trusted Christ. We learn to trust Holy Spirit by walking in fellowship with him. How do we walk in fellowship with Holy Spirit? The same way we walk in fellowship with other friends. We talk with them sharing our concerns and desires with them.

As we learn to walk in fellowship with Holy Spirit he begins to fill a larger and larger role in our lives. It's almost like a guide dog for the blind. The blind person must learn to trust the guide dog to do his job and we must learn to trust Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, be my strength;
empower me to live right.

Message: We learn to trust Holy Spirit by walking in fellowship with him. How do we walk in fellowship with Holy Spirit? The same way we walk in fellowship with other friends. We talk with them sharing our concerns and desires with them.

Affirmation: I have learned to trust the leading of Holy Spirit because I have chosen to be in fellowship with him daily.

Reflection: In our Ephesian text Paul makes an interesting statement. He prays that the believers will be strengthened with Holy Spirit power so that Christ may dwell in their hearts. Could it be that there are some believers who do not have Holy Spirit power and do not have Christ in their heart?

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

Holy Spirit Seals the Believer

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession. – Ephesians 1:13-14

There are several very powerful concepts contained in this passage of Scripture. Paul first addresses the idea of the gospel of our salvation. How do we come to receive the gospel? We, "Heard the word of truth," then we believed. It is our believing which releases great power to us.

When we believe the gospel and respond to it with a faith commitment we are literally transferring ownership of ourselves from self to God. It is like purchasing a new home. Before we purchased the home it was owned by someone else; they lived there and decorated it as they chose. But when we purchased the home and moved in we put our

own sign of ownership on it. First we had the deed which gave the right of ownership, then when we moved in we began to decorate it to suit ourselves.

That is exactly what happens when we embrace the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ. God moves in. The sign of his right to ownership is the mark he gives us. That mark is like the certified stamp on a legal document; it is the seal of ownership. The Holy Spirit indwelling every believer is the seal of God's ownership.

The Holy Spirit is not only the seal of our relationship with God it is also a guarantee of things yet to come. Our present life in the Holy Spirit is just a down payment securing our inheritance on the day of redemption. Paul writes, "Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession."

We transferred ownership of ourselves to God and he put a mark in us, the Holy Spirit, which is our sign of ownership and a guarantee of our inheritance. What a hope!

Prayer: I know I am yours because Holy Spirit lives in me. Amen.

Message: Holy Spirit is not only the seal of our relationship with God it is also a guarantee of things yet to come. Our present life in the Holy Spirit is just a down payment securing our inheritance on the day of redemption.

Affirmation: I have been sealed with Holy Spirit and It is his abiding presence which gives me the assurance of redemption as a vessel chosen by God.

Reflection: It is a common teaching of the Christian faith that at the point of our faith and commitment to the gospel of Christ the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption. Give some thought to all that means to us individually as believers.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Holy Spirit Gives Us Great Power

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

– Ephesians 1:18-19

Among the great misunderstandings in the body of Christ is the concept of God's power in the believer. It seems that a large part of the body of Christ sees God's power in such a limited scope that they can only believe for salvation and hope for help in living without too much sin in their lives.

Paul may have foreseen that condition in the church when he wrote these words to the church at Ephesus. He was praying that they would have their eyes opened to the truth concerning their hope, their inheritance, and the power investment God has made in them by his Spirit indwelling them.

I agree with Paul in that prayer. "God, open our eyes to the hope you have given us

in Christ." That hope is about the past, the present and the future. The past: our sins are forgiven and totally taken away. The Present: We are now free from condemnation because Christ has justified us before the Father. The future: We are sealed for the day of redemption when we shall be given our full inheritance.

My prayer also is that you may know "his incomparably great power for us who believe." What is this great power? He tells us in Mark 16: "These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

We must get past our personal concern for salvation and realize that our salvation is secure – what we must move into now is allowing Holy Spirit power to work through us so that the world will see the incomparably great power of God.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to the hope, inheritance and great power you have vested in me as a believer in Jesus the Christ.

Message: We must get past our personal concern for salvation and realize that our salvation is secure – what we must move into now is allowing Holy Spirit power to work through us so that the world will see the incomparably great power of God.

Affirmation: I know the hope to which I have been called and I know the incomparably great power of Holy Spirit in me.

Reflection: What are the signs, or evidences, given in Scripture of the great power of Holy Spirit living believers. What evidences do you have in your life of this incomparably great power of the indwelling Holy Spirit?

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

Power to Love and Have Self-Discipline

I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. – 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Timothy had a special place in Paul's heart. As a young man Timothy had traveled with Paul and ministered side by side with him. In this, his second letter to Timothy, Paul expresses how he misses him and reminds him of the confidence he has in Timothy as a man anointed by God.

Paul knew that Timothy carried the call of God on his life because Paul himself had placed prophetic hands on him to impart to him gifts of ministry.

Even though it was Paul who had laid hands on Timothy it was God who had given him the gift. Paul is reminding Timothy, and all who are called of God to serve, that God has not given us a spirit of timidity, or fearfulness. The Greek word translated

timidity here is *deilia*. It is never used in a positive sense and always carries with it the connotation of cowardice.

We must always be aware that when Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us he comes with power. We are to realize that power and allow it to influence our life. The Devil works mightily in the world today, but in the believer he only has the effect we allow him.

In recent years there has been a plethora of movies and TV programs which promote dark and evil forces as being powerful. And evil is powerful in the life of the unbeliever, but we cannot allow ourselves to get caught up in the fearfulness of the world. We are not given a spirit of fear but of power.

Power, love and self-discipline is a triune formula for success, not only dealing with the issues of our own life, but in taking the life of Christ to the world.

It is not time to cower in the corner while the enemies of Christ wreck havoc around us. We must not be timid, but we must boldly declare the glory of God.

Prayer: Give me an awareness of the power I have in Christ.

Message: Power, love and self-discipline is a triune formula for success, not only dealing with the issues of our own life, but in taking the life of Christ to the world. It is not time to cower in the corner while the enemies of Christ wreck havoc around us. We must not be timid - we must boldly declare the glory of God.

Affirmation: God has not given me a spirit of timidity, but he has given me a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Reflection: How powerful is evil? How powerful is God? The forces which influence us are; our own desires, the spirit of the world, the spirit of evil and the Spirit of God. The only one which gives us true peace, contentment and ultimately, happiness is the Spirit of God. How much influence do you allow God to have in your life?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

Power to Overcome the Flesh

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. – Romans 8:1-4

Here is a secret to living free from sin: Don't try to live in the law! Don't get me wrong. I'm not talking about lawlessness, but I am talking about living in a place where we don't need the law to be righteous. Remember this: the law was not given for the righteous it was given for the unrighteous.

All the law does is point out our sinfulness and rebellion against God. There is no power in the law except to continually remind us of our inability to be righteous in our own power. In fact, that is what much of Romans chapter 7 is about. In that chapter Paul demonstrates the limitations of our natural person when he says, "I have the desire to do what is god but I cannot carry it out. For what

I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing" (v18-19).

Then Paul contrasts the weakness of the natural person with the strength of those who are in Christ. He declares that those of us who are in Christ have been set free from the law of sin and death. That doesn't mean we are free to live as we choose because we are no longer bound by law, but it does mean that because we are in Christ our inner nature has been changed from sinful to righteous and we are not longer bound to sin.

Because of the indwelling of Holy Spirit the power working in us is not the law making us aware of the sinful nature, but it is Holy Spirit which changes our inner nature from lawlessness to righteousness.

In Christ and empowered by Holy Spirit we are not given freedom to sin but freedom from sin. The requirements of the law are met in us because we no longer live after the sinful nature but we live according to the Spirit. Amen.

Prayer: Thank you for making me righteous in Christ. Amen.

Message: We have been set free from the law of sin and death. That doesn't mean we are free to live as we choose because we are no longer bound by law, but it does mean that because we are in Christ our inner nature has been changed from sinful to righteous: Sin no longer binds us.

Affirmation: Faith in Christ has broken the bondage of sin and I no longer need the law because the righteousness of God now dwells in my heart.

Reflection: This devotion begins be declaring, "Don't try to live in the law!" What does that mean to you? Does it mean you are no longer bound by law? Or does it mean you answer to a higher law? What does it mean to you?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

Transformed Into Ever-Increasing Glory

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

– 2 Corinthians 3:18

As a child I remember hearing older believers say things like, "I've been serving God for 50 years and Jesus grows sweeter every day," and I would smile to myself thinking, "How can something get better every day for 50 years?" I can now say that I have been serving God for well over 50 years and I declare that it has gotten sweeter year by year.

That is what Paul is talking about in this passage when he speaks of ever-increasing glory. I'm not sure that it is Jesus who gets sweeter, but it is probably that as we grow in grace and understanding our capacity to enter his sweetness is enhanced.

If you are one who struggles with your walk and seem to be more on a roller coaster than a path of righteousness, I want to encourage

you that serving God gets better and better. That doesn't mean we will have fewer and fewer trials in life; on the contrary, the trials of life seem to go on as long as we are in this tent of flesh. But it does mean that we are given more grace to endure and the ability to live through the trials in the power of Holy Spirit.

Paul is contrasting the glory of God given believers in Christ with the glory of God which was on Moses when he came down off the mountain with the law. His face shone so brightly that he covered it with a veil so it wouldn't hurt the people to look at him.

Paul then goes on to tell how glory was fading away (v13) and that just as the glory faded so their minds were made dull. Notice the progression: first, Moses was given the law and was made radiant by the glory of God. Then, as the glory faded the law became drudgery as the minds of the people were dulled to the presence and glory of God.

It is not that way for those who are in Christ. He declares that now the veil has been torn away for those who turn to Christ (v16). Now we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. Hallelujah!

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful that the glory you have given us is not fading but that it is transforming me into your likeness with ever-increasing glory. Amen.

Message: Serving God gets better and better. That doesn't mean we will have fewer and fewer trials in life; on the contrary, the trials seem to go on as long as we are in this tent of flesh. What it does mean is we are given more grace to endure and the ability to live through the trials with the power of Holy Spirit.

Affirmation: Day by day and year by year, as I mature in grace, I enter more into his glory.

Reflection: I have seen some over the years start the journey of faith, grow weary along the way, and drop out. What a tragedy. If they had endured they would have realized the ever-increasing glory of God as they were being transformed into his likeness. Don't give up! Hold on - there's victory ahead.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

Holy Spirit Produces Good Fruit

Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature... The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

– Galatians 5:22-23

There is no greater life than living in the Spirit. Once you learn the process by which you walk daily, throughout the day, under the influence of the Holy Spirit you won't want to go back to living normal human life.

Many of us who are Christian and go to church every week still have not found that place in our walk where we are living in the Spirit. O, I know we are born again, but we have not yet allowed Holy Spirit to fully transform us so that the fruit of our life is the fruit of the Spirit.

In verses 19-21 of this chapter Paul gives four categories of sins. There is sexual sin, not difficult to identify. There is God-substitute sins, a little more difficult to recognize. There are Attitude sins, often not thought of as sin.

Finally, there are lifestyle sins like drunkenness, orgies and the like (Paul's words not mine).

The category which seems to most affect us is attitude sins. In fact, these sins are so common that we don't often think of them as sins. We look at ambition as just wanting to get ahead and envy as simply wanting the better things in life. Our anger is justified and I can't help it if others don't fit into my clique. All of those justifications are the result of not living in the Spirit.

So, how does one "live by the Spirit?" First, to live by the Spirit we must be filled with the Spirit. Becoming filled with the Spirit is achieved by seeking God and submitting ourselves to his lordship. Jesus said, "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." I promise that if you ask, seek and knock you will be filled with Holy Spirit.

When you are filled with Holy Spirit you will then live by the Spirit and the fruit of your life.

Prayer: Fill me Holy Spirit so that I may live in the Spirit so the fruit of my life will be the fruit of the Spirit. Amen.

Message: So, how does one "live by the Spirit?" First, to live by the Spirit we must be filled with the Spirit. Becoming filled with the Spirit is achieved by seeking God and submitting ourselves to his lordship.

Affirmation: I have the fruit of the Spirit in my life because I have chosen to live by the Spirit.

Reflection: The sure test of whether you are living a Spirit led life is to examine the fruit of your life. Does your life exemplify the fruitfulness Paul describes? Or is it manifesting the works of the flesh Paul describes in just a few verses before our Scripture text for this devotion?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

Holy Spirit Power Witnesses to Truth of Christ

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

– Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8

I was once visiting with a couple of people who came to my door promoting their particular church. They were part of a well known group which covers entire cities door to door. These folks were explaining the meaning of this passage to me. They said that the Holy Spirit gave them the power to knock on doors.

I suppose there is some truth to that, but I don't think that is the intended truth of this passage. In fact, if that was the primary application here then I suppose those who sell anything door-to-door could claim to be Spirit filled. I have known many salesman who all go

door-to-door and they didn't seem to be Spirit filled.

This passage is referring to the powerful confirmation which is to accompany the telling of the gospel story. Notice Mark 16:20, "Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." That is Holy Spirit power.

When Holy Spirit descended upon the believers on the day of Pentecost he did so with a powerful demonstration. There was a mighty wind, tongues of fire and they praised God in a language that all could understand. Over 15 nations were present and it was said that they all heard the believers praising God in their own language.

Another instance of Holy Spirit power is in Acts 4 when they prayed for the Lord to, "Heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Holy Spirit came upon them; the place where they were praying was shaken and they spoke God's word boldly. That is Holy Spirit power.

Prayer: Lord, grant me Holy Spirit power in my witness so that people can easily see the truth of Christ and salvation. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus said, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Affirmation: I daily submit myself to Holy Spirit so that I might be filled with his power and he will confirm the truth of the message of Christ with evident manifestations.

Reflection: Jesus declared that when Holy Spirit came he would bring great spiritual power. My question is this: Have you experienced power in your witness of Christ? If not then maybe you are not yet fully walking in the Spirit. Think on it.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Holy Spirit Multiplies Believers

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. – Acts 3:6-9

This is a most powerful story of the effect of Holy Spirit power being manifest in the lives of believers. Peter and John were on their way to the temple to pray. Along the way they saw a beggar who had been carried to the temple steps to beg for money so he could survive. When Peter and John saw the man they were moved with compassion and healed the man.

Everyone who regularly went to the temple knew this man. He had sat there for years begging for enough to survive. When the miracle happened to him it was obvious to all.

In fact verses 9-10 reads, "When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened."

Peter used this occasion as an opportunity to preach Jesus to them. As Peter preached Christ the religious leaders, along with the temple guard, were so disturbed that they took Peter and John into custody.

What was the result of this healing and the subsequent commotion? Chapter 4 verse 4 declares, "Many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand."

Holy Spirit power causes people to be added to the church. We must be aware of our need for this power if we are to be effective in reaching our generation. It may be time for us to pray for signs and wonders as the disciples did (Acts 4:30) so that those who hear our message will realize that the power of Holy Spirit which is released through faith in Christ is greater than the powers in this world.

Prayer: Lord, build your church with Holy Spirit power. Amen.

Message: Holy Spirit power causes people to be added to the church. We must be aware of our need for this power if we are to be effective in reaching our generation. It may be time for us to pray for signs and wonders as the disciples did (Acts 4:30).

Affirmation: I pray for Holy Spirit Power that my witness my witness would be confirmed with miraculous signs and people will be converted.

Reflection: Remember: A primary purpose of Holy Spirit indwelling believers is to have power in their witness. Examine your own witness and ask yourself, "Is my witness filled with power and are people affected by Holy Spirit when I witness to them?"

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

Holy Spirit Guides the Church

The Holy Spirit not only gives guidance to individuals but he also gives guidance to the corporate body of the church. Just as in our personal lives Holy Spirit will not interfere with those who do not invite him. Holy Spirit will guide any person or group if they invite him and submit to his leadership.

Take a look at how the Scripture gives evidence of this:

- ✓ Holy Spirit directs in the selection of Christian leaders: The believers were gathered in prayer and the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

- ✓ Holy Spirit directs where to preach God's Word: "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia" (Acts 16:6).

- ✓ Holy Spirit calls specific people and people groups: Acts chapter 10 deals with this idea and specifically when the Holy Spirit inspired Cornelius to send his men to find God's man. Verses 19-20, "The Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them'."

- ✓ Holy Spirit gives instructions for believers lifestyle: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality" (Acts 15:28-29).

There is ample evidence of the Holy Spirit guiding the church and that places an awesome responsibility upon church leaders, and upon all of us to seek God for Holy Spirit wisdom and direction.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, grant me the grace to listen to you and to follow your leading. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is ample evidence of the Holy Spirit guiding the church and that places an awesome responsibility upon church leaders, and upon all of us to seek God for Holy Spirit wisdom and direction.

Affirmation: Holy Spirit is my guide. I follow his leading in every area of my life.

Reflection: Consider the four examples given in this devotion of Holy Spirit guiding the early church. On every occasion they would appeal to Holy Spirit to guide. They looked to Holy Spirit to guide them in selecting leaders, where to preach, what people groups to preach to, and how they should live. Practice partnering with Holy Spirit in all of your decisions.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

Holy Spirit Teaches Believers

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. – 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul addresses the limited ability of man to comprehend spiritual truth in the statement, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (v12). I like the way KJV renders this passage because of the imagery it projects. It reads, "Now we see through a glass darkly." His message is that in human ability alone we cannot clearly see spiritual truth.

One of the purposes of Holy Spirit indwelling believers is to reveal truth to them they would not otherwise understand. Jesus told his disciples, "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I

have said to you" (John 14:26). All that is known by Father God, which is everything there is to be known both in this world and in the heavenly realm, is available through an active relationship with Holy Spirit.

Paul speaks of "words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." When our life is given to the work of the Holy Spirit the things we say will be influenced by the Spirit. There have been many times that I have been praying for someone and a word or a phrase will come to mind to pray for them. When I have finished praying they have said, "How did you know what to pray?" I didn't, but Holy Spirit did.

Holy Spirit teaches us through giving us understanding of the meaning of Scripture. He also teaches us through communing with us in prayer. Have you ever been praying and a deeper understanding, or a new application of a Scripture will just pop into your mind? That is Holy Spirit teaching you. Take time to commune with Holy Spirit. and listen to what he says.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the patience to wait on the Holy Spirit to speak wisdom to my spirit. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Holy Spirit teaches us through giving us understanding of the meaning of Scripture. He also teaches us through communing with us in prayer. Have you ever been praying and a deeper understanding, or a new application of a Scripture will just pop into your mind? That is Holy Spirit teaching you. Take time to commune with Holy Spirit and listen to what he says.

Affirmation: I am in communication with Holy Spirit throughout the day. I am talking to him and he is speaking to me, guiding me and leading where he desires me to go.

Reflection: Take time to commune with Holy Spirit.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

Holy Spirit is Our Comforter

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. – John 14:25-26

Jesus was going away. The disciples were feeling discouraged at his leaving. They had had the benefit of his presence for quite some time now and they were looking at the prospect of being alone again. In John 14 Jesus begins to encourage them. He says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (v18)

Then he says, "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (v20). Jesus is preparing his disciples for the day when his physical presence would be taken from them, but he would continue with them and in them in the form of the Holy Spirit. He was preparing them to receive the most unique experience ever given to mankind; the indwelling

presence of the almighty God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The hope we have in Christ is affirmed by the abiding presence of Holy Spirit. Christ had promised that if he went away he would return and the only evidence we have that he will return is the indwelling Holy Spirit. John wrote, "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13).

Have you noticed how many Christians are stressed about the economy, the weather, their relations, their job, and a thousand other things? All of that concern comes from not allowing Holy Spirit, our comforter, to give us peace. In the verse following our text Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

The things which give us stress are things we have no control over – if we could control them they wouldn't give us stress! It seems like God is saying, "You take care of the things you can take care of and leave the rest to me." When we make the decision to take God up on that offer Holy Spirit goes to work giving us peace and comfort.

It is time to let Holy Spirit do his job.

Prayer: Thank you Holy Spirit for giving me peace and comforting me with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Message: The things which give us stress are things we have no control over – if we could control them they wouldn't give us stress! It seems like God is saying, "You take care of the things you can take care of and leave the rest to me." When we make the decision to take God up on that offer Holy Spirit goes to work giving us peace and comfort.

Affirmation: I often appeal to Holy Spirit, my counselor, and he comforts me with his peace.

Reflection: Give some thought to the things which cause you to be stressed out. Do you have control over those things? If you do, then control them. If you don't trust Holy Spirit to take care of them and allow him to guide you through them.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

Holy Spirit Gives Gifts for Ministry

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

One of the purposes of the Holy Spirit is to confirm the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and He does that by giving people who are filled with the Holy Spirit special abilities, or gifts. Those special abilities are called gifts of the Spirit. These gifts vary from gifting in leadership and administration to literally being helpers in the work of God, but each gift has its' special place. Some of the gifts are vocal like tongues and prophecy, others are demonstrated in prayers of faith like healings and miracles.

The best teaching on the function of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ is 1 Corinthians 12-14. There is a listing of

spiritual gifts and an explanation of how the gifts work within the body. These chapters also deal with the proper administration of the gifts.

Chapter 13 really puts the gifts in perspective. Apostle Paul makes the point that the focus is not the gift, or the person who is manifesting the gift. But is the expression of God's love. If we do not minister out of agape love, God's love, then everything we do becomes hollow and is just a lot of noise and activity. The purpose of God will not be accomplished in it.

The message seems to be that the work of Holy Spirit is to confirm the preaching of the word of God and to empower the members of the body of Christ in their life and ministry. In accomplishing that purpose He gives spiritual gifts to enable believers to do these works of ministry. Whatever is the need for a particular ministry there is sufficient power and resources in the Holy Spirit to accomplish that task and He will give those who have the call to minister gifts to minister.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, manifest yourself to the world through the gifts of ministry you have placed in me. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The work of Holy Spirit is to confirm the preaching of the word of God and to empower the members of the body of Christ in their life and ministry. To accomplish that He gives spiritual gifts to enable believers to do these works of ministry.

Affirmation: I have been given gifts of ministry so that I may serve the body of Christ more effectively and so that I can reach the world around me with the message of Christ.

Reflection: I encourage you to carefully read 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. Pay particular attention to the emphasis of chapter 13, which is the importance of love. Also notice that chapter 14 deals with the proper use and manifestation of gifts. And remember: the focus is not the gift but the work of the ministry.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Be Filled With Holy Spirit

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. – Acts 4:31

Our Scripture today is taken from a time of crisis for the early church. Peter and John had just returned from being interrogated by the Jewish leaders and they were ordered to not teach or do miracles in the name of Jesus.

When they were released they went back to the place where other believers had gathered and reported to them what they had been told. Knowing they could not deny the name of Jesus they did the only thing they could do: They Prayed.

Their prayer is recorded in Acts 4:23-30. Their concluding petition reads, "Now, Lord, Consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (v29-30). They didn't pray for relief from persecution they only prayed to be given

boldness to continue declaring the word of God.

God's response to their prayer is our Scripture for today. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. They had all been filled with the Holy Spirit earlier, but now they needed another filling to be able to do the work they had been called to do.

I noticed something particular about their prayer. It is this; they were desperate to have God intervene in their circumstances. They were not wavering on whether they should do the work they were just telling God they needed boldness and they needed signs to accompany their ministry.

In observing the church today there seems to be a lack of that kind of desperate crying out to God. He has the same miraculous power and the same boldness for his church today, but do we sense the same desperate need to have it in our lives and ministry? Think about it; then pray about it.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see the desperate need for power and boldness today and to seek you for that boldness. Amen.

Message: God has the same miraculous power and the same boldness for his church today, but do we sense the same desperate need to have it in our lives and ministry? Think about it; then pray about it.

Affirmation: I am continually praying for boldness and power in my witness. I expect Holy Spirit to confirm the witness of Christ with a manifestation of his power.

Reflection: The early church was warned about preaching in the name of Jesus. Notice that ceasing to preach and do miracles in Jesus name was not even considered. They simply prayed for boldness to preach and signs to follow their preaching. Question: How should we respond today to the changing attitude toward religious freedom in America?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

Holy Spirit Flows When We Submit to God

Do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. – James 4:5-8

Coming to Christ involves a lot more than just reciting a formula which includes a belief in the resurrection. It includes making a commitment of our life to him. Paul wrote in Romans, "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

James begins chapter four of his writing by addressing the disunity and in-fighting among the believers. We might say he is addressing gossip and bickering, much the same as we sometimes see today. He states that these problems come from the desires which they have within themselves. Their desire was to

answer their own wants without regard to the rest of the body.

It is in this context that James calls believers to submit to God. He seems to be saying that when we submit to God there is grace released to us sufficient to keep us from the evil intended by the devil, the world, and our own human desires.

Verse five makes an interesting observation: "Do you think Scripture says without reason that the Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" The Amplified Bible seems a little more clear on this verse: "The Spirit whom he has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and he yearns for the Sprit [to be welcome] with a jealous love."

James is telling us that God is jealous over us. Anything we desire outside of him leads us away from him. That is why we are called to submit ourselves to him as a living sacrifice. When we live in that manner Holy Spirit lives freely in us and he releases his love, joy and peace in us.

Prayer: Lord, help me to submit my will to you so that your Holy Spirit may live freely within me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we submit to God there is grace released to us sufficient to keep us from the evil intended by the devil, the world, and our own human desires.

Affirmation: I make a conscious effort every day to surrender my life, my will and my ambitions to the will of God and God releases his grace to me sufficient to keep me from evil.

Reflection: Take a close look at the first 10 verses of James 4. James is telling the church why it has so many problems, why the evil one is so evident among them, and how to remedy the situation. Give some thought to the problems he poses and the solution he offers.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty One

Obedience Releases Holy Spirit in Believers

We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. – Acts 5:32

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. – 1 John 3:24

Many years ago I worked in a state prison. I met many very bad men while I worked there. Among the worst of the gangs in the prison was a group called "Aryan Brotherhood." One day as I was putting one of their members into his cell he whispered, "I would like to be a Christian, but I know I couldn't live it."

That man was right, he couldn't live it. In fact, neither can I and neither can you. That is why God gave us the Holy Spirit. John wrote, "Those who obey his commands live in him." We could rephrase that to say, "Those

who live in him obey his commands," and that would certainly be accurate.

The passage in Acts says that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him. The reference there is obeying God in receiving Jesus as the Christ and allowing him to become our savior. When we obey God in accepting Christ, Holy Spirit is released to us.

When we have obeyed God in receiving Christ, Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us. The test of whether we have truly accepted Christ is if we obey his commands. How do we get the ability to obey his commands? John tells us, "By the Spirit he gave us."

Yes, it is true, we cannot fully obey Christ in our own ability, but as we live submitted to God, Holy Spirit releases in us the ability to live out the commands of Christ.

It was many years ago that I worked in the prison and I didn't understand the principles of the kingdom of God as well as I do now. If I had I would have told that young man the same thing I am telling you now; you will never be able to live the Christian life without Holy Spirit, but those of us who have believed in Christ have the Holy Spirit – with him we can do it.

Prayer: Thank you Lord that Holy Spirit lives in me. Amen.

Message: We cannot fully obey Christ in our own ability, but as we live submitted to God, Holy Spirit releases in us the ability to live out the commands of Christ.

Affirmation: I have obeyed the message of Christ and he has given me Holy Spirit affirming that I have been received into his kingdom.

Reflection: It is obedience to the message of Christ which releases Holy Spirit to believers. Give some thought to the purposes of the Holy Spirit as he dwells in believers.

My Thoughts:

Resources available through New Hope Ministries:

God Walk – A Journey of Faith – This book deals with overcoming undesirable behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse, anger issues, pornography and lust, and other behavior which interferes with your spiritual growth.

Daily God Walk – A daily devotional which inspires and motivates a closer walk with the Lord. People all across America have been blessed by these devotions. There are 4 series and each series have 12 one- month devotionals. In total there are 4 years of devotions. The devotional series are:

- ***Promises*** – An entire year of exploring the promises of Scripture
- ***Virtures of the Spirit*** – Each month of devotions features one fruit, or virtue of the Holy Spirit working in us.
- ***Life of Christ*** – 12 months of devotions on the life and teachings of Christ with one devotional devoted to The King and His Kingdom.
- ***The Christ Life*** – This series deals with different aspects of our faith walk. Many find this series helpful in their journey of faith.

We would love to hear from you. Email us at:

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