

# I'm Saved, What Now?



## *Basic Steps to Spiritual Maturity*

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*Like Newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. (1 Peter 2:2)*

## **I'm Saved, What Now?**

After salvation (faith in Christ), God does not leave us alone to figure His plan out for ourselves. He has provided everything we need to know His plan and he gives us the power to fulfill that plan.

### **Growing in Grace**

You made the most important decision of your life the moment you believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior. At the instant of belief by faith alone in Christ alone for salvation, you are forgiven of your sins, receive eternal life (1 John 5:11-13), share in the destiny of Christ (Eph. 1:5), and are born into the Family of God (John 1:12, Gal 3:26). Welcome to the Royal Family of God!

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

You are fellow citizens with the saints [other believers], and are of God's household. (Ephesians 2:19b)

According to scripture, Heaven is guaranteed to every believer, (John 10:27-28, 1 Peter 1:4-5, 1 John 5:11-12) but the quality and impact of the believer's life on earth depends on his carrying out God's plan after salvation. It is of vital importance that we as believers find out God's plan for our lives after salvation and carry out that plan. It is only then that we began to experience the blessings God has in store for those who love Him.

### **God's Plan after Salvation**

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. (1 Peter 2:2)

But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Every believer begins the Christian life immature concerning spiritual things. Just as a newborn baby is immature in speaking, understanding, and thinking, so is the newborn Christian. He is immature in understanding and thinking. Listen to Paul:

When I was a child (immature), I spoke like a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11).

God's plan for us following our personal faith in Christ is that we learn, think, and apply the principles found in the Bible to our lives so we may mature. This is the goal of the Christian life. Through application of the Word of God we grow to spiritual maturity in our thinking, and glorify God in our lives.

The Bible reveals who God is and explains His plan for our lives in great detail. The Bible is called the "mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). God wants the mind of Christ to become our thinking.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

The Bible gives us the truth we are to use in forming our outlook on life and in making decisions. It should be the standard of our thinking and actions as we are here in the devil's world.

When we learn who and what Christ is, we can begin to apply His thinking in our lives and circumstances. God commands believers to think like He thinks, to think divine viewpoint, so His gracious purpose can be fulfilled in our lives (Romans 12:2).

It is impossible to know God's plan for every area of our lives and to think like He thinks apart from the daily intake of the word of God.

## **Spiritual Growth**

Spiritual growth or spiritual maturity is becoming more like Christ in our faith and character. Spiritual maturity is marked by knowing how to handle problems and applying the right principle from the Word of God to a given circumstance.

God's word refers to believers as either spiritually immature or mature. (Eph. 4:11-14; Heb 5:14-15). Some believers have a mature knowledge of God's word but don't act mature because of lack of application. Then we have those who are very stubborn about learning God's Word so they never leave babyhood in the Christian life. They have no knowledge so they can't make right application for growth.



We have three great enemies: the world, the sin-nature (flesh), and the devil and overcoming these enemies call for us to become mature in our thinking.

## **Enemy #1 The World**

God's thinking is revealed in the Word of God. The world is the satanic system of thinking that opposes and leads us away from God, His thinking, and plan for our lives. The world is an orderly system that functions apart from God. It is that system organized by Satan, and run by Satan, which leaves God out and is at war with Him.

Satan tried to give Jesus the world to worship Him (Matt 4:8-11). Satan wants your worship and love. Our Lord Jesus Christ used scripture when attacked with satanic viewpoint, and so should we. We are to conquer the thinking of Satan's world system (Rom. 12:21). The solution to overcoming the world is God's divine thinking accumulated through daily learning the truths of scripture. Only those who are mature in the Word of God have the ability to overcome the world's influences.

## **Enemy # 2 The Sin-nature**

The Sin-nature is the nature in every one of us that tempts us to serve sin, self, and live independently of God.

We received this sin-nature from Adam that tempts us to sin and get out of fellowship with God. We are to flee from its enticements (James 1:14-15).

The sin-nature is the 'old man' of Ephesians 4:22. The moment a person believes in Christ he is born of the Holy Spirit and set free from being dominated by the sin-nature (flesh); but the sin-nature is still at war with our minds to lead us into sin. Learning and applying the word of God can help us and protect us from sin (Psalm 119:9-11). So, only those maturing in the Word of God have the ability to overcome the influence of their flesh.

### **Enemy # 3 The Devil**

The Devil is the adversary of God and believers in Jesus Christ. He seeks to control the world and overthrow God's plan for the human race. We are to resist him by growing to Spiritual maturity (1 Peter 5:8) through learning, thinking, and applying the truth of scripture. The devil's program in the world is

1. To keep the unbeliever from believing in Christ
2. To distract the believer from learning and applying the Word of God (which produces spiritual maturity and glorifies God)

The devil desires to enslave us to the circumstances of life, and get us to focus on self. We overcome the devil as we maintain our fellowship with God through learning, believing, and by the power of the Holy Spirit applying the principles of the Word of God.

God uses His power (His written Word, and His Spirit in us) to give us victory over our enemies. When we are living in God's power we think as Christ thought when we're tempted to live independently of God. We value what Christ valued (the Father's will). When tempted to fear circumstances, we handle problems as Christ handled problems, with confidence and obedience. The word of God gives us the truth to know God, His will, and to trust Him.

Spiritual maturity is an aspect of the believer's sanctification called experiential sanctification, in which the believer becomes more set apart unto God daily. <sup>1</sup> God is able to use the believer growing spiritually to bring honor and glory to Himself. He must empty us of all our human strength first and teach us to rely on His strength before He can really use us.

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<sup>1</sup> Experiential sanctification is a process after salvation by which the Holy Spirit is conforming the believer more and more to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified (set apart), useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Tim 2:20-22)

It should be the desire of every believer to advance to spiritual maturity whereby Christ's character can be manifested in their lives. God has done so much for us in grace and our response should be loyalty to His plan. When those around us see us respond to trials with confidence in God, and temptation to sin with obedience, God is glorified.

Spiritual maturity is not something that happens instantly the moment we trust Christ as our Savior. Because of the world, sin-nature, and the devil, it is a daily gradual process of development. It is daily depending on the provisions that God has made available.

How do we reach spiritual maturity? How do we accomplish the mission set before us in the plan of God? How do we break free from our old way of

thinking and doing things and move towards God's way?

After salvation, the believer's first priority in the Christian life is to find a local church where the pastor teaches the word of God accurately from the original languages of scripture (Hebrew and Greek).

The pastor's job is to give instructions, principles, and procedures from the Word of God for spiritual growth. It is the believer's responsibility to take what he learns and apply it to experience. If you are in a situation such as incarceration, try to get hold of doctrinal books and attend Bible class regularly. Please examine everything you read with scripture. God's plan immediately after salvation is not for us to do great things for God. He must first work in us before He can work through us.

God wants us to grow in our personal relationship with Him. In order for us to be effective in our witnessing for Christ in word and deed we must know Him and His way of doing things. Therefore we must first become students of the word of God (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

As stated earlier we advance spiritually by consistently learning, believing, thinking, and applying the Word of God to every area of our lives.

Persistent learning and application of Biblical truth increases our capacity for life, love, Christian service, blessing, and happiness.

God provided for our salvation by sending His Son into the world to be our substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21). He also has provided everything we needed to grow spiritually. The two power sources God has given us so that we can grow is (1) The power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) and (2) The power of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

## **Power from the Holy Spirit**

### ***The Potential to Grow***

At the moment of faith in Christ for salvation we are born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells us and we are new creatures in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 3:26) and we become God's property. We now have the power and potential to grow to maturity.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit after His coming on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This is not an emotional experience. Every believer has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit whether you feel like you do or not. The

word of God teaches that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and not just a select few (John 7:37-39; Acts 11:16-17; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Corinth. 5:5). It is a gift from God and not because of works. So no matter if you have sinned as a believer you are still indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The acid test of whether or not the Spirit indwells all believers is whether or not He lives in sinning Christians. Clearly He does. First Corinthians 6:19 was written to a very spiritually mixed group. Some were spiritual (allowing the indwelling Holy Spirit to control them), but many were carnal and worldly (allowing the sin-nature to control them); yet Paul did not say that only the spiritual group were indwelt by the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> All believers have the Spirit of God living in them but only those walking in obedience to God allow the Spirit of God to control His mind, will, emotion, and consciousness.

## **Principle**

1. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, those who are committing sin and those who are not.

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<sup>2</sup> Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*, (1999)

2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God and not given based on works.

Every believer has the potential and power to grow to spiritual maturity and manifest a Christ-like character in any and every circumstance. But we must allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives in order to grow.

Therefore putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2 NASB).

We put aside sins in our lives by naming sins we commit after salvation unto God when we fail. We all fail God at times and need His cleansing from sins we commit after we are saved. Jesus Christ through His work on the cross has already made this available. The promise for cleansing is found in 1 John 1:9. God cleanses us of sin through our acknowledgement of our sin.

The Holy Spirit controls us and helps us understand and apply the Word of God when we restore fellowship with God.



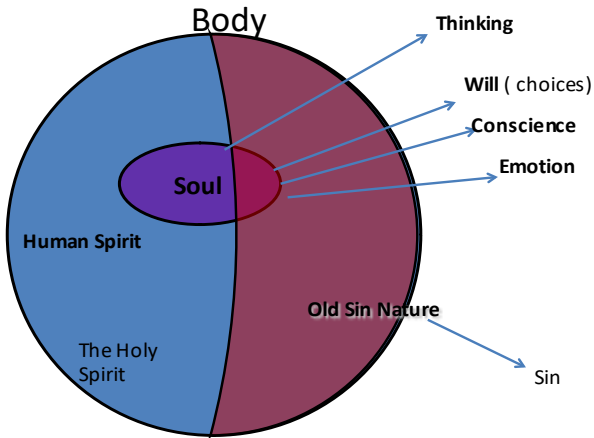
God cleanses us because Jesus Christ has already judged for our past, present, and future sins. Why confess my sins if Christ has already been judged for them? We confess our sins so that we can be under the control of Holy Spirit while on earth, experience God's power at work in our lives, fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-10), and grow spiritually. Therefore, reap blessing in time and eternity for faithfulness to God's plan after salvation.

Spiritual maturity is not easy, it's a discipline. The believer must resist the temptation to think, do, and say things that do not glorify God.

## **The Holy Spirit vs. the Sin-Nature**

### **The Battle for Control**

After salvation the believer still has the sin nature indwelling his body. The Holy Spirit wants to control the believer's life, and the sin-nature also desires to control his life (Galatians 5:16-26). We decide who we will allow to control and influence our life -- God the Holy Spirit or the sin-nature. Every person is born with an old sin nature (OSN), inherited from Adam (Rom 5:12), but only the believer in Jesus Christ has the power to overcome the sin-nature.



The sin-nature tempts us to commit personal sins (thinking sins, talking sins, and action sins) and to rely on human good for salvation. We are living with the enemy in us. But now that we are a believer, Our Lord Jesus Christ made the power to resist sin available to us through His work on the Cross. However when we yield to the temptation to sin, we lose the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and give control of our life to the sin-nature. We come under the influence of our human corrupt nature and all its weaknesses. We are said to be carnal or of the flesh. (Romans 7:14, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

When we are under the control of the sin-nature, we manifest the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), which do not glorify God. It is God's plan that we are controlled by the Holy Spirit at all times that we may grow in grace and display the character of Jesus Christ.

In order for us to be under God's control we must consistently resist sin, confess known sins (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2), and learn, believe, think, and apply the Word of God. If we are faithful to do these things, step by step, moment by moment, day by day, we will grow to maturity and glorify God, and enjoy the blessing, joy and peace of a God directed life.

Please let me explain how it works. Anything that is not like God's character or goes against the Word of God is sin (thought, word, or deed) and grieves the Holy Spirit. There are three categories of sins faced by believers:

- I. Thinking sins - Fear, worry, anxiety, panicking, self-pity, arrogance, jealousy, envy, revenge

Thinking sins cause us to operate by emotion and to focus on self rather than God who has a plan for our lives. We are commanded by God to not fear people or circumstance.

Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today (Ex.14:13a, NASB)

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you (Deut. 31:6, NASB)

For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (Matt. 6:25)

After salvation we will have trials. The Greek word for trials or temptation is *peirasmos* and means a putting to proof by experiment of good or evil. It can apply to God in one situation and to the devil in another.

- God will never tempt us with evil (James 1:13), but He will place us on trial for the purpose of proving our faith and character but never for the purpose of causing us to fall.
- The devil is the one who tempts us to sin for the purpose of causing us to fall.

Being tempted is the means of someone trying to get you to do something wrong or against what you should know is the right thing to do. Temptation from the devil is the means of trying to persuade you to think and act in an evil way by the use of something which is attractive to you.

Being tested by God is when you are given an examination to find out what you have learned after a period of teaching time, and your ability to apply what you have learned. The student listens, and concentrates on what is being taught and then applies what he learned on test day. We should be able to pass any test and get good grades if we're listening to, concentrating on, understanding, and if we believe what we hear and learn from the bible.

God allows trials to come into our lives to prove our faith and character. We learn God's promises from the Bible and He gives us opportunities to exercise faith that we may become stronger. Imagine going to the gym for the first time. You start off with about eighty pounds till you gain momentum to lift more. You work out every day and you get stronger. You then begin to lift 150 pounds with no problem. In the spiritual life God builds spiritual muscles through trials. He will allow and send trials to get us to trust Him. The truth you learned about God and His plan for your life must be applied to the difficult

circumstance. When you apply the promises of God to the problem you have peace in the circumstance and the strength to patiently wait upon the Lord.

When we apply the Word of God to the trial we manifest our gradual spiritual maturity. The quality that is developed in trials is patience and the strength to endure the pain. When God comes through for us we are better able to handle the next test.

Our faith has become stronger through testing. A new convert doesn't have much to stand on after salvation. He must learn daily and apply daily to develop strength. You can be assured that God will not allow more than we can handle.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

**Principle:** Temptation to sin is not from God (James 1:14) but he will allow testing of our faith. When we are tried, we are to draw upon the knowledge we have of God, the promises we have learned from the Word of God, and wait patiently for him.

God wants us to think His Word which reminds us of His power and faithfulness. When a believer thinks otherwise, he has sinned and needs to name his sin of unbelief, fear, and worry to God.

II. Sins of the tongue - Lying, criticizing, gossiping, judging, maligning

These sins are not all the sins that are mentioned in the Bible. They are used to give you the idea of my point.

Therefore lay aside falsehood (lying), speak truth each one of you with your neighbor, for we are members of one another (Eph. 4:25).

Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measure to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to you brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?" (Matt. 7:1-4)

We are to avoid the temptation to commit sins that relate to others. These sins can hinder our growth and progression in the plan of God. We are commanded to love one another.

This I command you, that you love one another (John 15:17).

III. Action sins - murder, rape, sodomy, incest, gluttony, greed, adultery, drunkenness, drug abuse, stealing, fornication (idolatry), lack of prayer, lack of studying the bible,

Apostle Paul writes:

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit. (EPH. 5:18)

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor (get a Job), performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. (Eph. 4:28)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor. (1 Thess. 4:3-4)



Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17)

When we are obeying the word of God we are filled with the Spirit and allowing the Holy Spirit to control our lives. We grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) through sinning and quench (1 Thess. 5:19) the Spirit by failing to confess our sins.

God in grace and love will discipline us if we remain immature, not growing. Many believers continue to live in prosperity even in carnality. He is gracious and gives us many opportunities to judge ourselves. If we reject or ignore His plan, his justice will act. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear:

... and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.... We have had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live... All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the

peaceful fruit of righteousness.”(Hebrews 12:5, 6, 8, 11)

## **Divine Discipline**

O Lord, My God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol; thou has kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. (Psalm 30:2, 3)

Thou art to consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.  
(Deuteronomy 8:5, 6)

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me very much, but he hath not given me over to death.  
(Psalm 118:17, 18)

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.  
(Proverbs 3:11-12)

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:32)

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent (Revelation 3:19) see also: (Hebrews 12:5-13)

God's discipline is compared to a father disciplining His child for a bad decision. The Father does not enjoy disciplining the child but He must correct the child in order for the child to grow up to maturity. He must correct the child before he destroys his life. The justice of God will act to correct, punish, encourage, to train, and to motivate the believer's free-will towards His plan. If we fail to utilize 1 John 1:9 when we sin, we will be disciplined by God.

Many believers who fail to grow are being disciplined by God but fail to acknowledge what is happening to them. They blame God for their problems, others, and they just adjust to their pain (broken marriages, rebellious children, financial problems, mental and physical illness). They fail to admit that a lot of their pain is self-induced. They failed to learn, believe, and apply the word of God.

Discipline comes in three categories:

1. **Warning discipline** – This type of discipline is not severe. God administers a warning like discipline to alert the believer of his/her carnal state (Rev. 3:19-20). He hates to see us ruin our lives and lose the opportunity for blessings. This can also be the point in your life when your life begins to crumble. Have you been there?? I have!
2. **Intensive discipline** – When the believer does not heed to warning, acknowledge His sin, learn, think, believe, and apply His word, God intensifies the suffering (Hebrew 12:6-11, 1 Corinthians 11:30b).
3. **Dying discipline** – God removes the negative believer from the face of the earth (1 Corinthians 5:8) without the believer fulfilling His plan and he loses rewards. (Proverbs 29: 1; 1 John 5:6; 1 Corinthians 11:30c)

### **Biblical Example of the Sin Unto Death:**

God's desire was to give Israel the promised land of milk and honey as a possession forever (Exodus

3:17). Through Moses and his miraculous signs, an estimated two million Israelites were brought out from the Egyptian bondage -- 603, 550 men twenty years old and older. (Numbers 1:46)

God took them all through the Red Sea, drowned the entire Egyptian army that pursued them, and led them while they were whining through the wilderness providing for their every need. (Exodus 14:11-14)

Israel spent 40 years wandering in circles while God was trying to teach them to trust in Him and His word (Hebrew 3:9). Instead of trusting God and His word the people continued to complain, live in sin, and hardened their hearts against God. Finally, the entire adult generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb (Hebrews 3:17-19).

Why? They failed to learn what God wanted to teach them: to trust in Him, His word, and live by His word (the law).

The Exodus generation committed various sins which led to their premature death (Exodus-Numbers). Their experience was recorded in the Bible to warn us today not to follow their example of unbelief and sins (Hebrews 3:17-19 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-13).

God has a purpose for every Christian to learn, believe, think, and apply His Word so we can become spiritually mature, prepared to battle with Satan. God will give every Christian an opportunity to learn about His character and His plan. If we harden our hearts against God's word and refuse to believe in His promises or in His character, we can find ourselves suffering the same fate as some did in the Exodus generation.

Please know that God doesn't enjoy disciplining us but wants to bless us. Therefore, may we strive for spiritual growth through learning, believing, and obeying His Word.

We can always turn our hearts back to God by acknowledging our unbelief and sins. He is gracious and will forgive (1 John 1:9). We escape the sin unto death when we turn our hearts back to God.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me. O may your loving kindness comfort me, according to your word to your servant. May your compassion come to me, that I may live. (Psalm 119:75-77a)

## **The Filling of the Holy Spirit**

### **The Influence for Spiritual Growth**

Do not be drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.  
(Ephesians 5:18)

Here the believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit is the opposite of drunkenness. When a person is drunk with wine, he is under the influence or control of alcohol and thinks and acts like his old self (Galatians 5:19—21). When a person is controlled or influenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit, he thinks and acts like the new man (Galatians 5:22-26).

The Holy Spirit helps you concentrate and gives you mental focus as you seek to learn and apply the Word of God for spiritual growth. The believer is to be:

- Fully possessed by the indwelling Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit fully possesses us when we are clean of all unconfessed sin. God being perfect Righteousness cannot fellowship with us when we sin. Therefore we must name the sins we know to be

in our lives. “Be filled with the Spirit” is a present active command (Ephesians 5:18).

- Fully influenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit

When we confess our sins the Holy Spirit then can influence every facet of our lives as believers.

- Filled with a certain quality by the indwelling Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit leads us to Spiritual maturity as we maintain fellowship with Him (Eph. 3:16-19) and produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

### **Two Facets of the Filling of the Holy Spirit**

There seems to be two facets to Spirit filling. The first may be described as a sovereign act of God whereby He possesses someone for special activity. We see this in Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist), 41 (Elizabeth), 67 (Zacharias); Acts 2:4 (the group on the Day of Pentecost); (Peter), 31 (the believers) 9:17 (Paul); and 13:9 (Paul).

The second facet of the Spirit filling may be described as the extensive influence and control of the Spirit in a believer’s life. It evidences an abiding state of



fullness rather than the specific event. It produces a certain character of life and seems to be a close synonym to spirituality. It occurs in Luke 4:1 (Christ); Acts 6:3, 5 (the first helpers of the apostles); (Stephen); 11:24 (Barnabas); 13:42 (the disciples); and in Ephesians 5:18 (believers).<sup>3</sup>

Therefore the Apostle Paul writes:

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30)

God's objective for the believer's life after salvation is that he advances to spiritual maturity. It is through maintaining the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God learned, believed, and applied that we advance to spiritual maturity. Peter writes:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. (2 Peter 3:18 NASB)

Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2a NASB).

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<sup>3</sup> Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology*, (1999)pp.434

The Holy Spirit is the teacher of truth. Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26 NASB)

*The Holy Spirit enlightens us to the truth of scripture and helps us understand and recall it in our minds to be able to make the correct application to life.*

### ***The Word of God***

#### ***The Mind for Spiritual Growth***

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

*The Word of God was given to us by God for our profit. This verse tells us in what ways the whole realm of God's Word is beneficial:*

**For teaching:** *The Lexical Aids to the New Testament defines the Greek word didaskalia; as that which belongs to a teacher.<sup>4</sup> It is also defined as that which is taught; teaching and instruction. The Bible gives us the truth upon which we are to base our perspectives and make our decisions in life.*

**For reproof:** *The Greek elegchos means conviction. It implies not merely change on the basis of which one is convicted, but also the manifestation of the truth of that change, the result to be reaped from that change, and the acknowledgement of its truth inwardly to the accused person. The Holy Spirit uses scripture to convict us of error, and to show us when we have wandered off course.*

**For correction:** *The Greek epanorthosis, from epanorthoo, to set right again, correct, from epi. It means correction or amendment of what is wrong in a man's life. The Word of God sheds light on the right way we should be*

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<sup>4</sup> Lexical Aid to the New Testament, Compiled and edited by Spiros Zodhiates, NASB *Hebrew- Greek Key Word Study Bible (Chattanooga, AMG)*

going. If we are humble before God when he corrects us and we confess our sins and amend our ways, we will begin to change and grow spiritually. The believer is back on course again.

**For training:** The Greek *paideia*, originally instruction of children, from *pais*, a child. It evolved to mean chastening because of all the instruction given to the child. This word means chastening and discipline with the goal of raising children to maturity. The Bible is the guide to lead us from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of Bible Study is not simply to determine what it says and what it means, but to apply it to one's life. Bible Study is an intellectual pursuit in which we seek understanding of what God says. But Bible study must go beyond that to include spiritual discipline, in which we seek to put into practice what we read and understand. Heart appropriation, not merely head apprehension, is the true goal of Bible study. Only in this way can believers grow spiritually.

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8 Gene Cunningham, *The Basics*, ( Hot Springs: Basic Training Bible Ministries), 1988-89) pp.54,55

Spiritual maturity, in which we become more like Christ, comes not just from knowing more about the Bible. It comes from knowing more about the Bible and applying it to our spiritual needs.<sup>6</sup>

When our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil to act independently of His father these were His Words:

It is written, “Man Shall NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVER WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD”. (Matthew. 4:4)

God’s plan after salvation is that we be obedient to His word. When we are tempted to act independent of God and disobey Him we need to think the Word of God and apply it to experience. The issue in spiritual growth is humility. Humility is a way of thinking that is free from arrogance. It is the way of life which submits to legitimate authority and responds to the Word of God obeying its commands.

Paul gives us this command:

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are

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<sup>6</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, (Colorado Springs: Victor, 1991) pp.13

established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves (Rom. 13:1-2).

Governing authorities can be your parents, your boss, police officers, pastor-teachers, and the highest authority which is the God of the Bible. Authority has the right to give you a command. We are not to obey any authority that tries to organize us to go against the Word of God. We understand from the Word of God that we are to obey those in authority. Our Lord Jesus Christ obeyed the authority of His parents when they found Him in the temple (Luke 2: 51). God's plan for our lives is that we be like Him in every facet of our being (thought, words, and actions). The believer who obeys the Word of God in all circumstances is growing to spiritual maturity and is a humble person. He is growing in His commitment to God.

But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (James 1:22)

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual

doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does (James 1:25).

Apostle Paul gives us an example of application of the mind of Christ when he wrote:

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY, says the Lord. BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:19-21)

We understand from the word of God that even if someone wrongs us or treat us with injustice, we are not to take matters in our own hands. God sees everything. When someone wrongs us it is an opportunity to follow Christ's example. He prayed for those who crucified him (Luke 23:34). Stephen followed Christ's example while being put to death:

Lord does not hold this sin against them! (Acts 7:60)

The Apostle John in His first letter wrote these words:

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

What do you do when you notice another believer in need? We are to not overlook our brethren in need. If we see him in need and we have the resources to help and we do not, we are not applying the mind of Christ. We are to be generous and honor God with our material possessions (Proverb 3:9-10, 27-28, 11:25, 19:17, 22:9;28:7 Luke 6:38, Galatians 6:6-10). We are to follow Christ's example. Paul writes:

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude (mind) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on



a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:4-11)

We need not to be ignorant of the word of God and its requirements on our life. Many go to churches that tickle their ears (2 Tim. 4:3). Among those few who teach sound doctrine, there is little application. Some doctrinal churches are missing application and not knowledge of scripture. Many know much about the Bible but apply so little of it.

The Christian church needs to focus more on a personal relationship with God whereby we cherish His word and seek to apply it to every area of our lives. Knowledge of your responsibilities as a Christian is not what produces spiritual maturity or changes our lives but making the choice to apply what the Word of God says to life.

In conclusion, we see that it is God's power that produces spiritually mature Christians. God makes the provisions for spiritual growth and our part is to utilize what he has provided. God has provided a

local church, pastor- teachers, the Bible, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The believer in Jesus Christ is to maintain the filling of the Holy Spirit and think the Word of God in all circumstances of life, and; apply its truths to the problem. This is the process to spiritual maturity.

*May God keep you from stumbling, protect you from the enemy, and give you the strength to accomplish His plan for your life. May you have the peace that passes all understanding that comes from keeping your mind on Him. Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible.



“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who strengthen me, because he considered me faithful, putting me into service...It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all”.

(1 Timothy 1:12, 15)

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