

Twelve

Times

Twelve

Steps With a Conscious Contact

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(Steps With A Conscious Contact)

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THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS

ANONYMOUS

(1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable. (2) Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him. (4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (5) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (6) We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (7) Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings. (8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. (9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others. (10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out. (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry this message to the alcoholic who still suffers and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

AN ADAPTATION OF THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us, and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Forward

Proverbs 23: 29-35 (N.I.V.)

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaints?
Who has needless bruises?
Who has bloodshot eyes?*

*Those who linger over wine,
who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
Do not gaze at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup,
when it goes down smoothly!*

*In the end it bites like a snake
and poisons like a viper.
Your eyes will see strange sights
and your mind imagine confusing things.*

*You will be like one sleeping on the high seas,
lying on top of the rigging.
“They hit me,” you will say, “but I’m not hurt!
They beat me, but I don’t feel it!
When will I wake up
so I can find another drink?”*

Freedom from...Freedom to

Freedom for me is both freedom from and freedom to. The first freedom I enjoy is freedom from the bondage of self. What a relief! Then I begin to experience freedom from fear--fear of people, of economic insecurity, of commitment, of failure, of rejection. Then I begin to enjoy freedom to. Freedom to choose a sense of joy for today, freedom to be myself, freedom to express my opinions, to experience peace of mind, to love and be loved, and freedom to grow spiritually.

But how can I achieve these freedoms?

My own conscience clearly tells me that instantly on following up on a decision to do so, I will begin to know a new freedom. Not the old freedom of doing as I pleased without regard to others, but a new freedom that allows fulfillment of the promises in my life.

What a joy to be free!

Anyone Anonymous

CHAPTER ONE

*“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT,
FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN.”*

Matthew 5:3

To be poor in spirit is a necessary requirement of our ability to
confess our spiritual bankruptcy.
This in turn becomes our first step forward, to obtain spiritual
riches.

(1)
CHAPTER ONE
STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS -
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 31:9-10 (N.I.V.)

Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails me because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.

For those of us who have lived with our own wilful attitude such lamentation is necessary if we are to fully surrender our broken lives to God.

With the admission of our total and absolute powerlessness the feelings of confidence in our own self reliance ebbs away (hopefully in a flood of tears), as we open our hearts and minds to God.

In these verses the psalmist cast himself in mercy or favor of the Lord. He knows that by covenant he has a right to expect the Lord to act, but his situation is so desperate that he cannot wait. His cry for mercy is an expression of deep despair. His joy in life is gone and his mental anguish has sapped his physical strength to a point approaching death.

As we look on his and our own afflictions we can easily see that these are the real enemies within our own spirit. What a joy overtakes us! Instantly we know that the Lord is trustworthy and loving and will protect us as we become willing to trust in him!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER
GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD
RESTORE US TO SANITY

Psalm 33:18-22 (N.I.V.)

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

+++++

As we become willing to believe in God's great power to heal and deliver us, he will be there helping us to release our doubt, to yield our will, and to place our trust in him!

God's favor rests on those who fear him and on those who hope in his unfailing love. His people have great reason to celebrate. They alone are blessed by the very privilege of being his covenant people!

The nations of this world depend on military power(the world's greatest dependency)to protect themselves, but regardless of how powerful or threatening an enemy may be, the Godly need not fear because the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him! They know that he will deal with them in unfailing love and will deliver them from any adversity!

(3)
STEP THREE

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND
OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS
WE UNDERSTOOD HIM

Psalm 31:19-20 (N.I.V.)

*How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those
who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men
on those who take refuge in you.
In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues
of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing
tongues.*

+++++

As our decision becomes action and we relinquish our self will, fears, compulsions and excessive ambition, we can and will find true peace in the word of God!

Here we must pick up the key of willingness to take action on our own behalf. We must eagerly put forth spiritual, emotional, and even physical effort. He cannot and will not do this for us.

If we will not do so on our own it is an absolute certainty that nothing in our lives will change for the better.

The verses above are certainly verses of Thanksgiving. The Lord is good by working things out righteously for those who fear him. Even when they are oppressed they are kept safe in the shelter of his presence. While he may hide them, he nevertheless makes it clear in the sight of men, that the Godly are under his protection!

(4)
STEP FOUR

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Psalm 73:21-22 (N.I.V.)

*When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,
I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.*

+++++

Step four encourages us to thoroughly evaluate our lives and to fearlessly accept the truth of our personal history. In this case the psalmist was deeply affected by anguish and envy. Deep inside he was grieved and embittered resulting in a state of depression. In this condition he was irrational and not ruled by wisdom.

Because of God's presence, the psalmist was assured of his protection and guidance. God protects him by holding his right hand and giving him internal fortitude as well as providing for all his needs!

Psalm 90:7

*You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the
light of your presence.*

+++++

Iniquity denotes our awareness of sin and our secret sins are those hidden from public view but seen by the Lord. Since the Lord sees every sin that we commit his wrath is ever present! We can learn well from the fact that sin is its own punishment. The consequence of our behavior becomes the punishing result of sin!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND
TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT
NATURE OF OUR WRONGS

James 5:15-16 (N.I.V.)

*And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well;
the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.
Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each
other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man
is powerful and effective.*

+++++

The assurance is given that prayer will make the sick person well. In the final analysis this is what will affect the healing. In answer to the prayer offered in faith God provides the medicine to cure the malady! The statement, “the Lord will raise him up,” means that the sick man will be enabled to get up from his sickbed. If it was sin that occasioned his sickness, he will be forgiven!

The above might suggest the possibility that because of the persistence of sin God sends sickness as a disciplinary act. However the conditional, ‘if he has sinned,’ makes it clear that not all sickness is the result of sin!

Since confession of sin and the prayer of faith bring healing, Christians should confess their sin to each other and pray for each other. If sin has caused sickness, healing will follow! This is a promise from God that we should be willing to put our hope and trust into, as this hope and trust will soon become increasing faith!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD
REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF
CHARACTER

Hebrews 12:1-3 (N.I.V.)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

+++++

To let go of our old fears, addictions, compulsions, and dependencies is much easier said than done. Each of us must come to the point where we are truly committed to making this break with our past, no matter how painful the process. With the great gallery of witnesses about us it is important that we persevere in our efforts to throw off everything that hinders. Sin forms a crippling hindrance to running our race well. This race requires endurance and persistence. It is a long distance race which demands sustained effort by the runner, who keeps on with great determination. We are to run this race with no eyes for anyone or anything except Jesus! He is the one toward whom we run with undivided attention!

The “author and perfecter of the faith,” may mean that Jesus walked the way of faith first and brought it to completion, or it may mean that he originated his peoples faith and will bring it to its perfection. Both ideas may be involved, but since it is not easy to think of the faith by which Jesus lived as essentially the same as our own, the emphasis seems to fall on what he does in his followers!

(7)
STEP SEVEN

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

John 6:28-29 (N.I.V.)

Then they asked him. "What must we do, to do the works, God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

+++++

Some times we are certain that we are capable of doing the works of God or works that will please God. Jesus directs us to the gift of God that can be obtained only by faith in him. We are saved by the grace of God and believing with all our heart and soul in his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is our personal Lord and Savior!

This belief will lead to the removal of our shortcomings!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD
HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE
AMENDS TO THEM ALL

Matthew 6:14-15 (N.I.V.)

*Jesus said; "For if you forgive men when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not
forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

+++++

If we have harmed and wounded others it is vitally important that we begin to offer up our amendments for the healing of these wounds.

The purpose or objective of step eight is to draw up a workable plan and put it into action. We need a course of personal conduct which will eventually rectify the harm we have done. In carrying out this action we will soon begin to relate harmoniously to everyone, including God!

In our daily use of the Lords Prayer, (Matt. 6: 9-13), we are asking God for his direct forgiveness as we pray, "forgive us our debts (our sin against others) as we also have forgiven our debtors," (others sin against us).

Obviously we must first become forgiving if we expect to be forgiven!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH
PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE
EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE
THEM OR OTHERS

1 John 3:18-19 (N.I.V.)

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

+++++

Activating step nine in our lives will change how we respond to other people, situations, and even to our own shortcomings. Our attitude and behavior will quickly become positive and healthy.

In the above verses it is agape love which is stressed and it is always expressed first in deeds. It also provides reassuring evidence that we are of God.

Doubt and guilt are never far from any of us. Sometimes our misgivings are the result of our own actions or inaction and sometimes it is the accuser(the devil)who seizes our weaknesses and shortcomings. These are then elevated to a point where we might wonder whether we are really in the truth at all. What can we do? We can remember that God understands everything! His word and his truth are greater than our feelings or our conscience.

We must rest ourselves in his love for us and live in that love and by that love. We will not excuse ourselves of any sin and we will not needlessly accuse ourselves. When those around us see these positive changes(rather than hear about them)they are generally much more forgiving with regards to our past behavior.

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY
AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY
ADMITTED IT

Romans 12:3 (N.I.V.)

For the grace given me I say to everyone, of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

+++++

When we begin to experience success in turning our lives around, we may believe that the accomplishments have resulted from our own human power. The apostle Paul warns against that prideful attitude.

In addressing himself deliberately, “to everyone, of you,” Paul grants that every believer has some spiritual gift from God (Rom.12: 6; 1Pet.4:10). His primary goal in getting our attention in this regard is to drive home the necessity of appropriating and using our gifts with utmost humility. After all, God did not have to spread his gifts around so lavishly!

One’s faith should provide the basis for a true estimation of oneself since it reveals that each believer is dependent on the saving mercy of God. This in turn ought to induce humility!

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND
 MEDITATION TO IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS
 CONTACT WITH GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD
 HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR KNOWLEDGE OF
 HIS WILL FOR US AND THE POWER TO CARRY
 THAT OUT

Psalm 50:14-15 (N.I.V.)

“Sacrifice, thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”

+++++

Prayer is to be the channel of our contact with God. The offerings and vows belong to the category of voluntary offerings in which the offender(sinner) shares by eating from the offering.

God desires communion with his people(us). Instead of presenting dedicatory offerings in the spirit of pride we can learn that the Most High invites us to the banquet to enjoy his presence! Of course our offering must reflect our true intent.

That being thankfulness!

The Lord will graciously move his people to gratitude if we will humble ourselves and call upon him in our need. When our spirit of pride is broken and our trust in God is restored we will again enjoy the benefits of answered prayer. We will experience the

Lord’s deliverance!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

James 5:7-9 (N.I.V.)

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient, and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

+++++

Step twelve urges us, "to practice these principles in all our affairs." Doing so will hold us closer to the presence of God and covered with the serenity of his grace!

In the above verses James applies the illustration of the patient farmer. In addition he urges us to stand firm! This expression has the idea of providing solid support and of establishing a person and enabling one to stand virtually unmoved by trouble. The reason given for standing firm is that, "the Lord's coming is near." The day when all things will be set right by God is imminent. This wonderfully confident expectation will certainly make the faint heart strong!

We believers must be patient toward both outsiders who oppress and insiders who irritate. Christians are not to grumble against each other. This applies more to our inner distress than to our open complaint!

CHAPTER TWO

*“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR
THEY WILL BE COMFORTED.”*

Matt hew 5 :4 (N.I.V.)

Weeping over sins with sorrow is a deeply moving experience which can cover a global as well as a personal view of sin and our participation in it.

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 6:2-4 (N.I.V.)

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long?

Turn, O Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.

+++++

In the above verses, David the psalmist, admits his weakness, powerlessness, and total emotional collapse to God. Instead of being defeated by this admission David has actually placed himself in the strongest possible position.

Rather than confessing his sins with these words he is asking the Lord to demonstrate his covenant promises of restoration and loyalty! As these actually become his reality (and they will), he will experience a great increase in faith. This in turn will inspire him to move even closer to the love and protection afforded to him by God.

The verb faint was sometimes used to express the process of the withering leaves and crops in autumn, but metaphorically it signifies the weakness of strong people. The word bones would suggest the depth of David's depression which has affected his inner being. The anguish is even more intense because it seems that the discipline has no regard for his fragility and has no apparent end in sight. He wants the Lord to be merciful, so as to restore him now.

("If not now, when?") seems to be incomplete with its final cry, ("how long?"). Because of the intensity of his emotions, David cannot complete his thought. He then boldly calls on the Lord to return! At this moment he is truly admitting complete and utter powerlessness without his God who has promised deliverance!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

James 1:16-18 (N.I.V.)

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

+++++

To this very day the success rate of recovery movements is built and established upon innumerable stories of persons who have been miraculously delivered from fear, addictions, obsessions, dependencies of many sorts, sickness and disease, and many financial and personal maladies'. This happens whether or not these are induced chemically or otherwise.

In these verses' James tells us not to be deceived into believing that we can overcome any of our problems strictly on the basis of our own effort. In most cases trying to conceal or cover up became more of a problem than the original issue.

Whenever we take control (even our own issues) we must face dealing with the tempter (the devil), who vigilantly waits for us to do so. If we will turn to God instead of temptation, we will quickly find that he will send every good and perfect gift. His gifts are marked by kindness and helpfulness and not by destructiveness. His gifts are perfect, which in this context excludes the possibility of any evil as coming from God.

Unlike the shifting shadows that are caused by the sun, the moon, and the stars, God does not change and with him there is never any variation at all. He is always and forever the giver of good gifts! He chose to give us birth and this birth must be spiritual as well as physical! His purpose in our regeneration is that we might be a kind of firstfruits. This is the portion of the harvest given to God!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Romans 3:21-24 (N.I.V.)

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

+++++

In our step three effort we begin to lean not on our own understanding but on the God of our understanding!

God's righteousness is apart from law! In other words we cannot expect our salvations by merely being good followers of the law. The essential purpose of the law is to make sinners (us) aware of our sin. Sin is the breaking of the law (cf. Romans 3:20).

'God's righteousness has been made known,' draws attention to the appearing of Jesus Christ in human history (c.f. 2 Tim. 1:10), and especially to the fulfilment of God's saving purpose in Him! God's righteousness becomes an operative in human life through faith in Jesus Christ! The reason all must come to God through faith in Christ is that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God! God's glory is the majesty of His Holy Person! To be cut off from this fellowship is the great loss occasioned by sin.

Sinners are justified freely! If freely is the manner in which justification operates, and if grace is its basis, the redemption that came by Christ Jesus is the means that a gracious God employed to achieve this boon for human kind!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Proverbs 14:14-17 (N.I.V.)

- (V.14) The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.*
- (V.15) A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.*
- (V.16) A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.*
- (V.17) A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.*

+++++

When we are truly willing to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God and trust in him, he will be there to help us uncover our real selves!

(V.14) Retribution - One's deeds determine one's rewards!

(V.15) Discernment - The opposite of gullibility!

(V.16) Avoidance of evil. Wise people are cautious!

(V.17) Character - A quick temper or a crafty attitude is easy to define!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Psalm 51:3-4 (N.I.V.)

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in
your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and
justified when you judge.*

+++++

In his search for forgiveness the psalmist opens his sinful heart to God. The variety of words that he uses for sin expresses its seriousness. He knows himself intimately and sees how rebellious he has been. His confession is more than introspection as he knows that he has sinned against the Lord. The psalmist does not reject or argue with divine justice because he knows that the Lords' verdict is right!

God already knows everything about us but he asks us to confess our wrongs to him. Once we acknowledge these wrongs' he, and us, are able to move toward the correction of them, in us.

Confronted by God's righteous verdict the psalmist is more deeply pricked by his own sinfulness. His confession of depravity is not an excuse for his treachery but serves to heighten the distance between the Lord and himself.

God is just whereas human beings are so corrupt that their whole being cries out for help. In their sinfulness they cannot respond in confession unless the Lord sends wisdom from on high. This alone can bring remedy to the sinful heart!

Only by receiving revelation from the outside can the inside become whole!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 94:12-13 (N.I.V.)

*Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach
from your law; you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a
pit is dug for the wicked.*

+++++

God stands patiently at the door awaiting our return! As we lay down our old and destructive temptation at his feet, we open the door for a new discovery and a new communion with him!

All wisdom comes from God; including the wisdom found between men and the nations. However, the Lord has given his own people (those who believe and trust in him) a much clearer revelation! Those who respond wisely to his instruction (and rebukes) are truly blessed! They receive his protection from whatever disasters others may plot against them. Our God's commitment extends to his people by covenant.

- ◆ The promise of the Kingdom, characterized by the Order of God, for which all the uprights in heart seek!

Matthew 7:24 (N.I.V.)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

+++++

What wisdom consists of, is very clear. A wise person represents one who will put the words of Jesus into practice!

They too are building their house to withstand anything! Those who pretend to have faith or those who have merely an intellectual commitment or who enjoy Jesus only in small doses are foolish builders!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

1 Peter 5:6-9 (N.I.V.)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

+++++

The humble approach called for in step seven is not to be equated with humiliation. God does not want to mortify us but he does want us to submit to his leadership! Peter ties his exhortation to humility to the end times. The "due time," is the time that God has set for Christ's return to earth to take his church (believers in him) home to be with the Lord forever. Thus the whole destiny of Christians whether it is suffering or glory is God ordained!

Peter then exhorts believers to cast all their anxiety onto the Lord. This casting entails an act of the will and should be carried out prayerfully and in obedience to Jesus' teaching about anxiety (Matthew 6:25-34). 'He cares for you,' certainly means that God is not indifferent to our sufferings. Belief in the sovereignty of God and his fatherly concern for us does not permit us to sit back and do nothing. We are to work out our own salvation, since it is God who works in us!

Peter calls Satan, 'your enemy the devil,' and likens him to a lion in search of prey. According to Scripture he has great power on earth but God has most certainly limited his activity. It would be popular opinion that he has only the power of suggestion and after he makes these suggestions we carry them out for him. The Christian response to satanic opposition is not panic or flight but firm resistance in faith! This of course is our positive faith in God's saving grace.

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

1 Peter 3:8-12 (N.I.V.)

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

+++++

In step eight we must work to replace those undesirable attitudes, feelings, and actions, which we have held toward others, and even toward ourselves in some instances. These must be replaced with feelings of true love and compassion: First for others, and then ourselves!

The verses above state five virtues illustrating the life of Jesus which Peter emphasizes should be the duties of all Christians and be manifested in each individual life. These virtues are: be humble, be compassionate, be sympathetic, be loving, and be in harmony with God and our fellow man. These virtues should be practiced most fervently toward those who may be hostile toward us. "Overcome evil with good!"

(21)
STEP NINE

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO
SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Matthew 5:23-24 (N.I.V.)

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

+++++

If we are not at peace with our fellow man, we are not at peace with God. If we are not at peace with God, we are certainly not at peace with ourselves! When we are not at peace with ourselves, we are susceptible to being ravaged by our old ideas, addictions, compulsions and temptation!

Remarkably, in these verses, Jesus deals not with our anger but with our offence that has prompted our brothers rancor. If we are truly concerned about our inner anger, we should not be less concerned when we engender them in others.

In reading Matthew 5:25-26; Jesus again urges us to make haste in our settlement with an offended adversary. Even while we are still with him on the way to court! In the old world debtors were jailed (physically), until the debts were paid.

Jesus insists on immediate action. Malicious anger is so evil and God’s judgement is so certain regarding it that we must do all in our power to end it now!

(Eph.4:26-27) “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY
AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY
ADMITTED IT

Psalm 101:2-4 (N.I.V.)

I will be careful to lead a blameless life- when will you come to me?

I will walk in my house with a blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing.

+++++

Because of the Lord's constancy in his love and in his administration of justice the psalmist breaks forth into Thanksgiving. He is motivated to lead a blameless life before God! His loyalty is to the Lord and not to the ways of this world. If we are careful to establish and maintain this honest and humble frame of mind God will respond to us with His priceless gift of mercy!

'I will walk in my house,' would suggest that our concentration should be centered mainly on what 'we' are doing. This in turn should provide us a better opportunity to recognize 'our' wrongs! In doing so it will be much easier to take immediate action to allow God to 'correct ourselves.'

'I will set before my eyes no vile thing,' would probably suggest that once we recognize and admit a wrong in our thinking or actions we immediately ask God to remove it. And once we do so, we will be much less likely to affect those around us in our former negative fashion. Just as important is the fact that the more we concentrate on 'our own inventory,' the less time we will have to concentrate on some other persons. This in itself can save us untold grief.

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

1 John 5:3-5 (N.I.V.)

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

+++++

Everyone born of God overcomes the world! Our being born of God is God's act on our behalf through which He moves to overcome the world! What is in view is the supernatural act by which human beings are being translated out of the kingdom of death and into the Kingdom of Life through the Son! The victory that overcomes the world is now identified with our faith!

It is best to interpret this statement as referring to a past event. John is emphasizing that the victory he refers to has already been won! By faith we now have access to what was previously accomplished by and through the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth!

Observe the progression of thought in what John says about how victory over the world is gained. It begins with the new birth! It moves into the believers experience and acts of faith! It culminates in the confession that Jesus is the Son of God! Victory requires the whole process! It assures us that we too can hear and obey God's commands!

Belief, love, and obedience are all the marks of the new birth! The life lived in the new birth is not a burden but a life of celebration! Christian consciousness can perceive that the "victory brings victory" over our internal enemies that confront our conscience, corrupt our soul, and negate our life of love and obedience to God!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

John 4:34-38 (N.I.V.)

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and one reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

+++++

Having received spiritual renewal and healing it should be very evident to us that we can retain these only as we are willing to offer and share them with others! Jesus is telling his disciples that the satisfaction of completing the work the Father has entrusted to him was greater than any other food (motivation) He might have been given. Jesus is pointing out that the spiritual harvest is always ready and must be reaped before it spoils! The disciples would not have to wait indefinitely for the results of their mission as the sowing and the reaping could go on together!

Jesus implied that they had already received a commission to reap for him and that they could benefit from the preparation that he and the Prophets had already made! The reaping of people for the granary of God is not the task of anyone individual or group nor is it confined to any one era in time. Each reaps the benefits of their forerunners and succeeding generations in turn gain the accomplishment of their predecessors!

CHAPTER THREE

*“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY WILL
INHERIT THE EARTH.”*

MATTHEW 5:5 (N.I.V.)

To be meek implies that we are free from malice!

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS
 THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 6:6-7 (N.I.V.)

I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

+++++

Admitting our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives is unquestionably the only means by which a human being can begin the process of a conscious contact with God; as we understand Him! We must replace our wilfulness with unbending willingness no matter how we might interpret our present circumstances.

Grieving as David grieved will cleanse our wounds and then the healing process can begin. Suffering produces tears and David does not know how much longer he can bear the anguish and insomnia associated with these tears. He is alone at night in his bed but his foes are there also, in his thoughts. He cannot renew his strength by himself. He is indeed powerless! In his suffering David turns to the Lord as if to say Lord, Father, my covenant faithful God. He does not confess his sins but asks the Lord to demonstrate his covenant promises which in this case would be loyalty and restoration!

As we read on in these verses, we will mark a radical change in David's tone. Instead of a lament there is a renewal of strength. He uses this strength to proclaim to his enemies that the Lord has been victorious in him!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Matthew 12:15-21 (N.I.V.)

Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what God had spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight: I will put my spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.”

+++++

We see a beautiful picture of God’s gentle power in these verses quoted from Isaiah the Old Testament prophet as he tells of the coming Christ!

This servant does not advance his ministry with such callousness to the weak that he breaks an already bruised reed, or snuffs out the smouldering wick. This suggests in the light of the last line that Christ will bring salvation to the harassed, the helpless, the weary and the burdened!

What is pictured is a ministry so meek, so gentle, and so compassionate that the weak will not be trampled on or crushed until the full righteousness of God triumphs over all!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Matthew 10:37-39 (N.I.V.)

“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

+++++

Human beings must love their spouse, children, family, friends, and indeed their enemies (cf. Matt.5: 44), but we must love Jesus supremely! Moreover; Jesus demands death to self! Taking one’s cross will not mean putting up with some awkward situation in one’s life, but painfully dying to self! In that sense every disciple of Jesus bears the same cross!

The appeal here is not to gloom but to a discipleship. There is a strong paradox here as well: Those who lose their life (for Jesus’ sake), whether in actual martyrdom or disciplined self denial, will find it in the age to come! Those who find it now by living entirely for themselves and refusing to submit to the demands of a discipleship will lose it in the age to come (cf. Matt. 16:25). This teaching about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus certainly has its darker side but the final section of the discord is much more encouraging (Matt.10:40-42)!

Deliverance will come to those who acknowledge that our lives are unmanageable (based on self will and determination), and that only God (through Jesus Christ), has the necessary power to manage us. Once this is clarified, all we need to do, is let him!

(28)
STEP FOUR
MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Corinthians 3:1-3 (N.I.V.)

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

+++++

Denial acts to prevent our completion of a thorough fourth step inventory. Even though we think that we have completed this our hearts may still know areas of profound pains that need to be acknowledged and grieved over.

In the Biblical statement above Paul calls the Corinthians ‘brothers,’ before reprimanding them for their ‘spiritual immaturity.’

Paul then amplifies his reference to infants by explaining that when he first came to Corinth he fed the Christians their spiritual milk only (the elementary salvation truths of the Gospel)! He could not teach them deeper doctrines (solid food), because they could not spiritually digest these!. He also points out that their spiritual immaturity is continuing. Is ours? The word ‘worldly,’ further indicates that they and everyone else who suffers from this condition will be showing characteristics of spiritual immaturity.

In the same sense we in recovery and those who have recovered must be constantly vigilant of thoughts that might suggest to us that we now have it all together and can relax in our new found serenity. A thorough and ongoing daily inventory is mandatory to continual spiritual growth!

Matthew 23:8-12 (N.I.V.)

“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

+++++

When we come confessing, we will be amazed at the cleansing and release the Holy Spirit will impart to us! Even though it may seem easier to continue in our denial or try to excuse our own behavior, in the long run the relief of cleansing is well worth the momentary pain!

‘You’ is emphatic and Jesus is probably speaking primarily to his disciples here, just as he later addresses the Pharisees directly (v.v. 13-36). A good preacher knows that forthright words about what is required of believers can be a powerful incentive to decision on the part of the sympathetic but uncommitted. These verses not only proscribe self exaltation in teaching divine things, but rejects the authority of the religious teachers of Jesus’ day. Such authority, had been taken away from them (and it is extremely doubtful that this was to make room for us). Among those who follow Jesus, ‘a brotherly relationship is required! We may certainly conclude from this that the raised Christ is as displeased with those in his church who demand unquestioning submission to themselves and their opinions, and confuse a reputation for showy piety with godly surrender to their teachings, as he ever was with any Pharisee!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Matthew 3:8 (N.I.V.)
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

+++++

The recovery process is a series of deaths and rebirths. We die time and time again to our reliance on our carnal self. We continually give birth to new life that is spiritually oriented and is filled with the love of God . . .

What does John the Baptist mean in the above verse? Could it be possible that if we are entirely ready to have God remove all of our character defects our actions must be in direct relationship to our appropriate thoughts?

In John's day confession of sin was commanded in the law, and not only as part of a priest's duties, but as an individual responsibility for wrongs committed. In New Testament days confession is scarcely less important. Since John was urging people to prepare for Messiah's coming, repentance (changing our ways), was a precondition of his baptism!

When representatives of the high religion of the day came to see what John was doing he asked them this question: "Who suggested to you that you would escape the coming wrath?" John's rhetorical question takes on a sarcastic nuance of "who warned you to flee the coming wrath and come for baptism, when in fact you show no signs of repentance?"

The coming of God's Reign demands repentance or it brings Judgement. Repentance must be genuine if we wish to escape the coming wrath and our lifestyle must be in harmony with our oral repentance. This spiritual awakening will in turn produce fruit in our lives that is 'in keeping with repentance!'

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Psalm 32:7-8 (N.I.V.)

*You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and
surround me with songs of deliverance.*

Selah

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will
counsel you and watch over you.*

+++++

The psalmist encourages the godly to draw near as we admit and yield every shortcoming to God's transforming touch.

Even in great adversity likened to the rush of water through the narrow confines of a wadi the Lord will protect those of us who seek refuge in him! He is our hiding place! The joy in our deliverance expresses itself in shouts of glory as a tribute to God's fidelity!

There is a sudden shift from the encouragement of God's protection to the exhortation to wise living as the psalmist quotes the Lord. He has promised to instruct his children, give them wisdom, and watch over them. The pattern of three (Holy Trinity), is resumed in the promise of God to instruct, to teach, and to counsel!

The key word in step seven is indeed 'humbly,' as we begin to make a complete turn around in our lives. This of course entails moving away from our wilful and self-destructive ideas and habits if we can indeed confess to them!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Matthew 5:43-48 (N.I.V.)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

+++++

Our willingness to forgive those who have harmed us (or we think they have) and to ask God to forgive us for those we have harmed (and we have), allows us to move toward deeper growth and blessings!

The command to love your neighbor, is found first in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18). “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.” No Scripture would add, ‘and hate your enemies, although this seems to be the result of popular reasoning.

The content of Christian love is not based on a presupposed definition, but on Jesus’ teaching and example. To love our enemies even though it may result in activities such as doing them good and praying for them cannot justly be restricted to activities devoid of any concern, sentiment, or emotion. There is no reason to think that these words of Jesus fail to include compassionate emotion, as well as positive action!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Romans 12:18-21 (N.I.V.)

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

+++++

The charge to live at peace with everyone is hedged about with two qualifying statements. 'If it is possible,' suggests that there are instances in human relations when the strongest desire for concord will not avail. If disharmony and discord should come, 'we,' should accept the responsibility for resolving it. Believers may not be able to persuade the other party but they can at least refuse to be the instigators of trouble.

God wants us to be peacemakers (c.f. Matthew 5:9). We are not to take vengeance, for vengeance trespasses on the providence of

God who is the great judge of all! We must leave room for God's wrath, trusting that he will take care of the situation.

The world's philosophy leads people to expect retaliation when they have harmed one another. To receive kindness and love when it appears uncalled for, will melt the hardest heart. With our hearts full of God's love and peace we can extend his forgiveness in making our appropriate amends wherever they are required.

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

1 Corinthians 10:13 (N.I.V.)

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will provide a way out so you can stand up under it.

+++++

The above verse is a great antidote to falling into sin through temptation! Temptation is not in itself sinful. God allows it as a way of purifying us from sin * (James 1:12). Satan uses it to entice us into sin * (Matthew 4:1). Temptation is prevalent in the

human condition and is one of the ingredients that make us human. It is unavoidable and to say that we do not experience it from time to time is a lie against God's Word. This can then become one of our more common sins.

As we begin to recognize our temptations and become ready and willing to admit to them we can have the assurance that God will act on our behalf to overcome them. Once our heart and mind have been cleansed there is little possibility that we might act on these temptations. Action which usually leads to more serious sin and temptation.

** James 1:12 - Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.*

** Matthew 4:1 - Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.*

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

Romans 5:3-8 (N.I.V.)

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

You see at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were sinners, Christ died for us.

+++++

We may have times of discouragement, struggle, and strife but if we persist in trusting and obeying God He will strengthen us! Suffering has value in that it produces perseverance and steadfast endurance. Believers do not take the pressure of tribulation passively by abjectly giving into it. Rather, they resist it, like Christ, who endured the cross and triumphed over suffering!

One of the distinctive aspects of the Christian faith is that believers are taught to glory and rejoice in the midst of suffering rather than to sigh and submit to it as an inevitable evil.

The word 'character,' indicates tested value. The newborn child of God is precious in his sight but the tested and proven saint means even more to him! This is because such a one is a living demonstration of the character building power of the Gospel.

When we stand in the presence of God all material possessions will have been left behind whereas all that we have gained by way of spiritual advance will be retained!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Matthew 5:14-16 (N.I.V.)

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

+++++

Many people agonize through life because they believe that they are not good enough for God to love. Sharing our recovery stories regarding how our lives have been transformed may become the key that opens the door to God’s love for a struggling friend.

In the above verses Jesus drives home the metaphors: His disciples must let their light shine and show their good works and others must see this light. This may certainly provoke persecution but this is no reason for hiding the light. By this light others may come to glorify the Father! Our witness includes not just words, but deeds as well!

Thus, the kingdom norms work out in the lives of the kingdom heirs to produce the kingdom witness!

As salt exercises the negative function of delaying decay and warns disciples of compromise and conformity to the world then light speaks positively of illuminating a sin darkened world! It also warns against the withdrawal from the world. This of course cannot lead others to glorify the Father.

CHAPTER FOUR

*BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND
THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY
WILL BE FILLED.”*

Matt hew 5 :6 (N.I.V.)

Hunger and thirst vividly expresses a desire for personal righteousness and justice.

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Mark 4:38-41 (N.I.V.)

Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

+++++

This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to have slept although he did of course get tired and needed sleep like any other man. He must have been very tired to have slept through such a violent storm!

The disciples' rebuke of Jesus indicates that they did not know who he really is. Such rebuke of the Son of God was entirely inappropriate. Jesus rebuked the wind and spoke to the waves and great calm came! The Sovereign Lord spoke and his creation responded immediately! Jesus then rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith! He had expected them to have demonstrated a more mature faith in God's saving power! A power that they had seen, 'present and active,' in the person of Jesus!

A feeling of awe came over the disciples as a result of Jesus showing this mighty act. Something about him was revealed to them on this occasion that they had not experienced before! God knows our struggles, fears, and powerlessness and will give us the power to overcome if we will turn ourselves around and place our trust in him!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

1 John 4:7-16 (N.I.V.)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

+++++

Love must never be conceived of as a natural experience of the natural man. There is a natural love but it must not be confused with divine love. The love John speaks of originates with the Father, becomes manifest in the Son, and now characterizes the life of the children of God!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

1 Peter 2:24-25 (N.I.V.)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

+++++

The purpose of Christ's death on the cross is to produce new life in the believer. All those who come to him end their old life and begin a new one that is devoted to his righteousness!

Peter's application of the words, 'by his wounds you have been healed', is a precious truth to Christian slaves who had received lashes unjustly. Isaiah 53:5 - '*and by his wounds we are healed.*' Formerly we have been straying sheep but now we have returned to Jesus the shepherd and overseer of our souls! Not only is our shepherd good to us in the best sense of the word but he is totally wise and all powerful!

In our step three effort we should be constantly aware of the fact that to make a decision to do anything and actually taking the necessary action to do it is two different matters. Only through prayer and meditation can a conscious contact with God occur.

Without which, our step three decision is rendered useless.

Before we are able to know and understand God's plan for us it is essential that we humbly place our trust in him. As we come to him through prayer and meditation we are unlocking the door to our heart and mind, thus allowing him to enter in and abide with us. In doing so he brings us new life and peace in him!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Romans 7:14-25 (N.I.V.)

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, 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. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

+++++

In putting the matter like this Paul has moved from a consideration of outward acts to an emphasis on the unwanted tenancy of sin. With this alien master in control, no matter how strongly we want to do good, we find ourselves in checkmate. Under these conditions' sin is our higher power. Our failure to do the good we desire must not be attributed to a wrong attitude toward the law of God such as outright defiance or inward indifference. Paul concurs in his verdict that the law of God is praiseworthy. We should as well! The Kingdom of God is attainable to those who will utilize the power of confession!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Romans 14:22-23 (N.I.V.)

So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith. And everything that does not come from faith is sin.

+++++

The ultimate goal of recovery has to be the experience of a profound spiritual awakening and renewal.

In the above verses Paul is directing his counsel mainly to the strong (spiritually strong) since they are the ones who must be warned to act on their confidence privately where God is their witness. To exercise their freedom in public would grieve the weak and raise a barrier between them. The strong are blessed in their private enjoyment of freedom because they are free from doubt and no one who might be scandalized is looking on. They are not faced with the danger of causing the weak to condemn themselves by approving something their conscience will not endorse.

Paul then addresses the weak (spiritually weak). Faith here must be understood not as saving faith but as a reference to the confidence one has to make free use of that which God has created and set apart for the good of humanity.

In keeping with this, 'condemned,' does not refer to God's action of excluding a person from salvation but it does mean that the person stands condemned by his or her own act of being wrong. To act in contradiction of one's own conscience or to the known will of God inevitably brings an experience of guilt, which in turn weakens the confidence and the faith.

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Romans 6:11-14 (N.I.V.)

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

+++++

In step six we ask God to remove our defects of character. In order for him to do so we must die to our old ways and ideas. In these verses' Paul suggests that we count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus! This is the present tense indicating a necessity to keep up the process if we are to avoid reactivating the body of sin. Dead to sin and self, yet alive to God, in Christ Jesus! We must give no more response to sin than the dead can give and all the potential that redeemed life affords should be channeled toward God!

It is worthy of attention that Christians are said to be under grace. Usually grace indicates a principle of divine operation or a moving out in kindness and love to lift the sinful person to God. Here it appears as a disciplinary power in line with the Apostle's effort to show that grace is not licence. Paul reminds us (Titus 2:11-12) that God's grace has appeared for the salvation of all, training us to live sober, upright, and godly lives.

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Matthew 15:22-28 (N.I.V.)

*A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out,
“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is
suffering terribly from demon possession.”*

*Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and
urged him, “send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”
He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The
woman came and knelt before him. “Lord help me!” she said.
He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss
it to their dogs.” “Yes Lord,” she said “but even the dogs eat
the crumbs that fall from their masters table.” Then Jesus
answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is
granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

+++++

No prayer is of greater delight to our loving Father than that of a
humble believer asking him to do a work of power and grace in
his or her life especially if the request is for the benefit of
another! These verses adequately display the power of humble
faith, verses our normal self will and distorted attitudes.

Jesus knows that his disciples cannot tolerate a Canaanite
(Gentile) person (especially a woman) bothering them (or their
Lord). He uses their warped thinking to advantage. First he
questions the woman as to why she should have faith in him when
it was apparent to most (if anyone was interested at all) that he
was sent only (by God) to save the lost children of Israel. Her
answer is masterly! Those two words, ‘but even,’ reveal
immense wisdom as well as incredible faith! She does not argue
that her needs make her an exception or that she too has a right
to Israel’s promised mercies. She simply and humbly asks for
help, hopeful that she may receive but a crumb from the Lord’s
full table of blessings!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

1 John 2:9-11 (N.I.V.)

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

+++++

How does John understand hate? His answer lies primarily in what one 'does'. Hate is the absence of the deeds of love!

Step eight encourages us to admit our own responsibility in problem situations and relationships. Without question this must be extended far beyond the sphere of family and personal friends and must include everyone with whom we come into contact, directly, or indirectly. Where do we stand in our feelings regarding differences in race, religion, political values, financial standings, cultural traditions with our brothers and sisters of the entire world?

To walk in the light is to love ones brothers and sisters of the world. In doing so God's love for us all will express itself in concrete action! If this is missing, it is not because life can be neutral. Unexpressed love is not love at all! If absent, hate is present!

Whenever a brother has need and one does not help him, then one does in fact hate his brother. One who hates his brother is not simply in the darkness but is condemned to spend his life in darkness. Though he has eyes, he can see nothing. And the darkness so blinds his eyes that he has no idea where he is going.

Life is a search but for him it is without direction. He never knows whether he is closer to or further from his destination.

The only certainty is that he is without hope of reaching it.

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Romans 14:19-21 (N.I.V.)

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

+++++

The establishment of good human relationships requires a delicate balance between giving and receiving between meeting the needs of others and finding healthful ways to meet our own needs.

In the above verses Paul is urging the entire church to pursue peace which alone can provide the atmosphere in which mutual edification can occur. Mutual edification implies that the strong, despite their tendency to look down on the weak, may actually learn something from them.

Perhaps we will come to appreciate loyalty to a tender conscience and begin to search our own hearts! Perhaps we would discover that we have cared more about maintaining our own position than loving our weaker brothers and sisters.

Through the fresh manifestation of love by the strong the weak will be lifted in spirit and renewed in faith! Paul then reinforces his point regarding edification by warning of the reverse process (v.20). To destroy the work of God is to tear it down and make it impossible for the weaker individual or group to function as an instrument of God's Purpose!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Matthew 26:71-75 (N.I.V.)

Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there. "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said. "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away" Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

+++++

Mark 14:27

"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." (c.f. Zechariah 13:7)

+++++

Perhaps Jesus was trying to show Peter how close Peter was to falling back into his old lifestyle. Soon afterward Peter denied Christ!

Does denial of truth find a place in our inventory? We must constantly be aware of the seriousness of this problem. We can try to recognize those periods of time when we are in denial and we will soon discover that denial enters into many areas of our life.

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

Titus 3:3-7 (N.I.V.)

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having hope of eternal life.

+++++

The remembrance of our own past should be a powerful motive for gentleness and consideration toward the unsaved. The picture of our past is vividly and concisely drawn. We were foolish, without spiritual understanding, and lacking discernment of spiritual realities, because of the darkening effect of sin on the intellect.

As outward evidence of our alienated condition we were disobedient, wilfully disregarding authority, refusing obedience to God's law, and fretting under human authority. Being deceived pictures us as actively straying from the true course of life and following false guides. By allowing our conduct to be dictated to by a wide variety of personal passions and pleasures we inevitably became enslaved to them. Never finding true personal satisfaction in their pursuit, we lived our lives in the grip of the antisocial forces of malice and envy.

Our step eleven effort brought us what we needed: The washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Savior. This is the channel through which the Spirit's renewing presence was bestowed. A bestowal based on the finished work of Christ, as Savior!

(48)
STEP TWELVE

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Psalm 106:1-3 (N.I.V.)

Praise the Lord.

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord
or fully declare his praise?*

*Blessed are they who maintain justice,
who constantly do what is right.*

+++++

Step twelve reminds us that this spiritual awakening is not a passive, static, or historical event. It is an ongoing and unfolding experience!

The continual practice of the learned principles is the most important aspect of our awakening and can be greatly enhanced by the sharing of our experience with others. This in turn will benefit them greatly in their own experience!

In view of the goodness, love, and mighty acts of the Lord, blessed are all those who enjoy his benefit!

Beware!

*But they soon forgot what he had done
and did not wait for his counsel.*

Psalm 106:13

CHAPTER FIVE

*“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY WILL
BE SHOWN MERCY.”*

Matthew 5 :7 (N.I.V.)

Mercy embraces forgiveness for the guilty and
compassion for the suffering and needy.

Notes

CHAPTER FIVE

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Proverbs 14:12-13 (N.I.V.)

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads
to death.*

Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.

+++++

In what counterfeit ways do we look for peace and security through the manipulation of others, or even ourselves? This fraudulent practice of control soon becomes the foundation of our will and continues to plague us with adverse results. We should be warned that any evil activity that seems safe for the moment can take any number of turns to destruction!

In the above verses the first line does not state that the way that seems right is a vice but the next line clarifies it! The image used is of a traveler on a straight road. It seems safe but it is fatal because the destination is wrong. Death signifies mortal ruin (Matthew 7:13). Evil in other words is often deceptive! Life is filled with bittersweet things. No joy is completely free of grief. At first the reading of this Proverb seems to impart a pessimistic overtone. The point may be the alternating emotions of life or it may be suggesting that in some superficial joy there is underlying pain. Once the joy is gone, the pain remains! Our powerlessness and unmanageableness become much more evident as we reflect on God's Word!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Psalm 107:27-31 (N.I.V.)

*They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at there
wits' end.*

*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought
them out of their distress.*

*He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were
hushed.*

*They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their
desired haven.*

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his
wonderful deeds for men.*

+++++

The impact of this healing from God seems to vary a great deal between individuals. Some have experienced instantaneous and dramatic deliverance from their old addictions, compulsions, and temptation. For others recovery has been a very gradual process of transformation. In either circumstance it is very obvious that it is God's will and not ours that is responsible for the change that occurs within us. Our self-centered will failed us severely in the past and we should have no doubt regarding this truth!

The verses above portray sailors in great distress at sea. He brought them safely to their destination, thus making them glad!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Matthew 11:28-30 (N.I.V.)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

+++++

The ‘me,’ is of extreme importance to all! Jesus invites not only the wise and the learned to come to him but those who have become weary from heavy struggles, and those who are overloaded as beasts of burdens. He will give them rest! There is an echo here from Jeremiah 31:25 as the Lord refreshes his people through the new covenant.

Jesus is saying that we no longer have to pull the plow with our own strength and effort. He will be in the yoke with us! We will be his disciples learning from him!

The yoke is a metaphor regarding the discipline of a discipleship.

Jesus is not offering the yoke of the law, nor is he offering freedom from all constraints. The yoke is Jesus’ yoke! The discipleship is to him! The expression, ‘learn from me,’ must mean to learn from the revelation that he alone can impart! The rest that he promises is not only for this world but also for the one to come! There is irony in the fact that Jesus offers true rest while his opponents can do little more than impose misguided standards of Sabbath rest. His yoke is easy and his burden is light! He will never ask us to try to handle anything that we are not capable of handling!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

2 Corinthians 10:12; 17-18 (N.I.V.)

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

But, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one who the Lord commends.

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In these verses' Paul admits his timidity and humbleness. He lacked the boldness and temerity to compare himself with those who indulged in self praise! He asserts that in their folly his opponents were establishing their own conduct as normative and finding great satisfaction in always measuring up to their own standards! The implication is clear that if the Corinthians try to assess Paul's credentials against the artificial and subjective criteria established by his detractors they will be just as foolish!

Boasting is illegitimate whether it is of one's own accomplishments, or status, or that of another person's achievement as though they were one's own. For Christians boasting in the Lord is legitimate, (i.e. boasting of what Jesus has done for them (Galatians 6:14), or through them (Romans 15:18), or what they can accomplish through him)! Those who boast in the Lord give God his due glory! They will enjoy the Lord's commendation at his tribunal!

In our fourth step effort we can begin to deflate our false ego and its vision's of grandiosity if indeed we do suffer from these.

Again we should be careful not to overstate any facts!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Proverbs 21:2 (N.I.V.)
All a man's ways seem right to him,
but the Lord weighs the heart.

+++++

The words of the Proverbs are very clear and explicit in warning:

‘He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy(Prov. 28:3).’ ‘The Lord weighs the heart,’ would indicate that he evaluates our motives and not merely our actions. With this truth in mind it becomes much easier for us to determine the exact nature of our wrongs!

The Lord alone by his spirit and his word can evaluate our true emotional condition. He alone can penetrate our deepest motives. People may seem innocent in their own estimation but self deception and rationalization make this estimation extremely unreliable.

The completion of a thorough fourth step inventory, followed by a completely honest fifth step confession is the most certain way that we in recovery might learn and begin to understand just who we are, where we are coming from, and where we want to go!

Disclosure of our hidden motive which would govern our unhidden behavior is important for many reasons! Disclosure can reveal many hidden and unused assets as well as used liabilities!

Human beings are declared righteous(not self-righteous)in our confession to God alone!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 119:28-32 (N.I.V.)

*My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
Keep me from deceitful ways;
be gracious to me through your law.
I have chosen the way of truth;
I have set my heart on your law.
I hold fast to your statutes, O Lord;
do not let me be put to shame.
I run in the path of your commands,
for you have set my heart free.*

+++++

In these verses the Psalmist expresses his innermost feelings with an attitude of confession to the Lord. As we read and meditate we begin to feel similar emotions and a change in our own attitude. What a miracle!

The Word of God has the power to strengthen those who are overwhelmed by sorrow! The Word of God also helps to keep one from the ways of the world as it renews an inner burning desire to live a life of devotion to God! Such devotion focuses on doing God's will!

On the one hand the psalmist fully depends on the Lord for life-sustaining grace and illumination. On the other hand he is fully responsible in seeking the Kingdom of God by his own choice and living a life of loyalty to God and his word!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Matthew 21:21-22

Jesus replied, “ I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

+++++

What is the meaning of the cursing of the fig tree? Could it be that Jesus is cursing those who make a great show of bearing much fruit but are inwardly spiritually barren?

The cursing of the fig tree is not so far out of character for Jesus as some might be inclined to think. The same Jesus exorcized demons from a man which in turn caused a large herd of pigs to be drowned (Matt.8:28-34). He drove the sacrificial animals of the money changers (as well as the money changers) out of the temple precincts with a whip and declared (more than just gently) about the torments of Satan!

Perhaps the fact that the two punitive miracles (the pigs and the fig tree) were not directed against people should teach us something about the compassion of Jesus. He who came to save sinners from their sins, and the consequences of sin, resorts to prophetic action (not against sinners) to warn them of the binding power, of the devil (the destruction of the pigs) and of God’s enmity toward hypocritical piety (the cursing of the fig tree)!

Did Jesus use the fig tree to preach the power of believing prayer? Yes indeed! Belief in God is never reduced to forcing ones self to believe. Instead belief is related to genuine trust in God with obedience to, and discernment for, His will for us! Such faith reposes(rests)on the will of God who in turn acts to remove our shortcomings!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Romans 13:9-10 (N.I.V.)

The commandments, "Do not commit adultery, "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

+++++

While it may be common for everyone to incur some debt (sin against others) to be perpetually in debt is not good and to refuse to make good ones obligation is outrageous! But there is an exception to the rule. The continuing obligation to love one another! One can never say that he or she has completely discharged it. Paul has love for all people in mind with this statement. Its sweep is universal!

In saying that the one who loves has fulfilled the law Paul presents a truth that parallels his statement in Rom.8:14 regarding the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in those who live in accordance with the Spirit. The Spirit produces a love in believers, to which the law can offer no objection since love fulfills what the law requires!

What then is the relationship between love and law? In Christ the two concepts that seem to have very little in common come together. Love others as he has loved us. If that love is present it will make possible the keeping of all the Commandments.

Love is obedience and constitutes the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2(N.I.V.)

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Luke 6:27-31 (N.I.V.)

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

+++++

‘You who hear me,’ means those who are listening, understanding and doing, that which Jesus commands! The word love must be understood in its classic Christian sense as ‘agape’ (awestruck; astonished; overwhelmed; divine).

Another way of putting it of course is having a genuine concern for someone else irrespective of his or her physical attractiveness, or of the likelihood of some reciprocation in kind (unconditional).

Jesus spells out the specifics: In the first instance apparently no physical harm has been done so the response need not be physical but we would pray for the offender. If being struck on the cheek is an actual physical assault then the injunction is directed to those who really desire to live as the sons of the Most High(Luke6:35).

The statement, ‘if someone takes your cloak,’ may refer to a direct robbery although this passage implies that the person has need of your cloak. This passage relates not so much to passivity in the face of evil but to genuine concern for other people’s needs being met. Inevitably to refrain from returning evil for evil, often means suffering evil. This was indeed the path taken by our Lord Jesus who prayed for his enemies and also died for them!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

2 Timothy 2:22-24 (N.I.V.)

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

+++++

Without the benefit of continued self evaluation we may fall prey to our old nemesis called denial. 'Flee the evil desires of youth,' implies that we must keep on fleeing from youthful lusts and desires and seek positive virtues instead. It is not enough to just run away from wrong doings. We must run after that which is right! This is the only means of escape from our own temptation to evil.

There are four virtues in the above verses that we should run after: Righteousness, faith, love and peace. Faith may also be described as faithfulness, love as loving, and peace as peaceful. A few ideas which can help us to keep our inventory current will come through self questioning but we must be careful that over analysis does not lead us back to self-centered living! A few helpful thoughts might be: Have I forgotten what it used to be like? Am I allowing complacency to rule again? Do I accept reality as it is? What is my level of honesty to others and to myself? Has spiritual success made me prideful rather than humble? Do I lack interest in sharing my belief with others? Do I expect others to respond to my amends in some predetermined fashion?

We can try to keep it simple and live our lives one day at a time. It can be fun to see how complicated keeping it simple is!

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (N.I.V.)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

+++++

Sometimes slowly, sometimes instantly, and sometimes miraculously with and by divine intervention, it will become natural for us to seek our perfect, gentle, and loving God! As we learn to pray for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out our conscious contact with him will become reality!

With the establishment of our conscious contact with God our understanding of His will for us increases abundantly! As the Holy Spirit rushes into our heart and mind, washing and cleansing away the wreckage of our past our rebirth is manifested! Our rebirth assures us of eternal life with God in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Psalm 107:1-3 (N.I.V.)

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*Let the redeemed of the Lord say this---
those he redeemed from the hands of the foe,
those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.*

+++++

The practice of step twelve is essential in the maintenance of our recovery process. Our willingness to share the message of our recovery with others, and especially those who still suffer, must become the foundation of our lives. Without the willingness to carry our message forward we are certainly not living God's will for us.

Loving to love and sharing with others is the fulfilment of God's love plan! In the above verses the congregation is called on to confess God's covenant faithfulness in affirming his goodness and love toward the redeemed. This is a common liturgical formula much like a confession of faith. The redeemed of the Lord have experienced adversity from the foe but have overcome it with God's help!

'The Lord gathers his people from all directions,' wherever they may be found! This of course is an indication that we can love all people with whom we come into contact and not only those in recovery or those who agree with our views.

Matthew 5:47-48 (N.I.V.)

"And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

CHAPTER SIX

*“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR
THEY WILL SEE GOD.”*

Matthew 5:8 (N.I.V.)

Pure in heart has two interrelated meanings: It means inner moral purity as opposed to merely external piety. It also means single mindedness or a heart free from deceit.

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Proverbs 18:13-14 (N.I.V.)

*He who answers before listening -
that is his folly and shame.*

*A mans spirit sustains him in sickness,
but a crushed spirit who can bear?*

+++++

It is human nature to believe that we are in complete control of our own lives and circumstances. Many people come to a point in their lives when they realize that this is not possible, or even desirable. These people are the fortunate ones because they have come to the end of themselves.

In the verses above the suggestion is that speaking too hastily is foolish and leads to shame. Poor listening reveals that a person has very little regard for anything another person may have to say or they are over absorbed in self importance.

This Proverb contrasts a healthy spirit with a crushed spirit. A healthy attitude sustains a person. Meanwhile, depression is unbearable. In physical sickness one can fall back on the will to live. In depression the will to live may be gone and there is no reserve for the physical strength.

The figure of a crushed spirit suggests a broken will, loss of vitality, despair and emotional pain. Few factors in the human experience are as difficult to cope with as these.

The admission of our powerless condition and the truth regarding our personal activities is our first step toward humility. We must know humility which leads to honor simply because the only way to honor is through humility. The humility and exaltation of Jesus Christ will provide the classic example of this given truth!

(62)
STEP TWO

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Luke 1:37 (N.I.V.)
“For nothing is impossible with God.”
+++++

In the light of his love we can accept ourselves at last as we most surely and truly are! Then in the strength of his power we can walk out of the darkness for Eternity!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Romans 5:8-11 (N.I.V.)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

+++++

At the spiritual doorway of step three we can throw open our hungry hearts to receive a merciful and eternally present God! These verses declare the height of God's love for all. Namely; it's refusal to stop short of affecting final and everlasting salvation in which the enmity created by sin has been completely overcome!

We were reconciled when we were enemies. Surely then, since God no longer looks on us as enemies, subject to his wrath, he will maintain the status quo and not suffer us to lapse back into an unreconciled position. Furthermore; He will carry us to the full end of our Salvation!

Paul not only states that we have been reconciled(v.10), but that we have received the reconciliation(v.11)! God provided it through the death of His Son! The appropriate response is exultation to the fullest degree!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Proverbs 13:13 (N.I.V.)
He who scorns instruction will pay for it,
but he who respects a command is rewarded.
+++++

We are no longer alone and we no longer have to be afraid but most important is that we no longer have to pretend. The real self is the person that God loves!

Safety lies in obedience to proper instruction and commands (a command is more forceful than an instruction).

The vivid point taken in, 'will pay,' is that whoever despises the teaching will be treated as a debtor. 'He will pay for it,' means that the debtor will pay for his debt with the consequence of that debt(sin). The sin of course is that he has offended against God's law of obedience to God!

In our fourth step inventory we can be very certain that honesty is far better than pretension even if it turns out that we are not quite who we thought we were. Some who are poor (spiritually) pretend to be rich (spiritually), perhaps to save face. Some who are rich (spiritually) pretend to be poor (spiritually), perhaps to conceal wealth and avoid responsibility. This Proverb instructs people to be honest and unpretentious, spiritually and otherwise! A display of emptiness or a concealing of means can come to no good!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT
NATURE OF OUR WRONGS

*Proverbs 27:17 (N.I.V.)
As iron sharpens iron,
so one man sharpens another.*

+++++

There is no other method available to man in our struggle to overcome our old and a fatal companion called denial than the power of confession!

In our fifth step effort we will surely discover that our confession actually strengthens our commitment toward spiritual growth. This of course is the result of having God and another human being interceding in our prayer as well as offering hope and encouragement to us!

In our selection of a fifth step partner it may be well for us to realize that a friend who is available is a better choice than a relative who is not. Although we should always nurture good relationships with our friends and relatives, a neighbor who lives close by could be a better choice than a friend or relative who is far away.

The ultimate goal of our fifth step effort is to increase our self awareness while at the same time coming out of ourselves. Many of us do not know us and it can be an enlightening experience to realize this truth!

Considering that God already knows everything about us we should direct our confession to him with a full expectation of relief from our current hang up. This in turn will provide us with an untold variety of eternal benefit!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 141:3-4 (N.I.V.)
Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord;
keep watch over the door of my lips.
Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil,
to take part in wicked deeds
with men who are evildoers;
let me not eat of their delicacies.

+++++

‘Half measures availed us nothing’ (Alcoholics Anonymous
p.59). ‘We must be entirely ready.’

Evil comes in many forms: the sin of speech, of the heart, and in our actions and behavior. In the above verses the psalmist asks the Lord to help him in his struggle with all forms of temptation. Our speech especially can indicate our relationship to the Lord.

The wise trust in him to set a guard over their mouth and keep watch over the door of their lips!

This reference to men denotes men of rank, property and status within any community and although many may be offended by the suggestion it is within this aristocracy that many evildoers practice their wicked deeds. Their riches permit them to enjoy the delicacies in life.

The wise receive their encouragement from the discipline and rebuke sent forth from God! This is in direct contrast to how the world would interpret joy and righteousness. A wise person responds to wisdom as an expression of kindness(love)and welcomes it like a symbol of honor extended to a welcome guest!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Proverbs 18:12 (N.I.V.)
Before his downfall a man's heart is proud,
but humility comes before honor.
+++++

What is a shortcoming? In God's view it is anything we say or do that falls short of his glory. He calls this sin! The dictionary says that a shortcoming is a failure or deficiency in character or action. Could that include the following characteristics that are fairly common to man?

Antisocial behavior - This does not describe someone who is merely unfriendly, but one who is self centered, unreasonable, and in many ways an enemy of society and it's decisions.

Speaking a fool - A fool prefers to give his or her opinion rather than acquire wisdom. They find no pleasure in understanding. They ask questions to show how intelligent they are rather than to learn the answer to their own question. All that is on their mind is what they are going to say next.

Laziness - This is incredibly self destructive. A lazy person and a destructive person are equally detrimental to society.

These are but a few human shortcomings that are prevalent and very visible. Sometimes the participant fails to recognize them which in itself is another shortcoming.

If we are very certain that none of the above applies to us we can thank God. If we can accept that we suffer from one or more of them we can humbly confess and ask God to remove them. In asking God to remove our shortcomings we must anticipate that he will and then we can be thankful to him for doing so.

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Proverbs 13:1 (N.I.V.)

*The wise woman builds her house,
but with her own hands the foolish
one tears hers down.*

+++++

The ability to make amends, and the willingness to do so, are connected by a series of God given steps for grieving. If we have been violated by others (or we think we have) we will experience stages of shock, anger, denial, sadness, or even depression. It is only after these feelings reach the point of us recognizing them that we are ready to take the final step in the process, and that being the step of forgiveness! The forgiveness is given with emotional integrity and without resentment on our behalf. Normally we would believe that to make amends, is the simple act of asking someone whom we think we might have offended (and we usually have) to forgive us. In doing so we can only hope that these persons will change their opinion about us. If by some miracle that happened we would have to ask what value has been achieved for them, or us!

Many times a dictionary can be invaluable to us in recovery:
Amend (a-mend) 1. To change for the better; improve; correct. 2. To change or alter by authority. 3. To become better in conduct. A-mends n. pl. Reparation as in satisfaction or compensation for loss etc.

As soon as we can understand that it is our responsibility to first forgive those who have harmed us (or we think they have), then those we think we have harmed (and we usually have) will begin to see our amends in action, rather than only hear about them!

They are indeed the same people!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Proverbs 3:27 (N.I.V.)

*Do not withhold good from those who deserve it,
when it is in your power to act.*

+++++

Our direct amends can be made with the confidence that it is not our own power at work, but it is God's power in us!

The verse above exhorts doing good to those who deserve it (everyone on our step eight list) for it is wrong to withhold good when we have the power (in us) to act!

'Except when to do so would injure them or others,' is extremely important in our step nine effort. We must come to the realization that much of the harm we have done to others or they have done to us exists only in our minds and not necessarily in theirs.

We should consider that there are many instances when other people do not feel as though they have been harmed by us simply because they don't think of us for being that important that we could harm them! These people would be offended if we came asking for or offering forgiveness. It is hard to imagine that we actually did anything in the past that could be more harmful than this!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Mark 14:37-38 (N.I.V.)

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon" he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

+++++

When Jesus tells his disciples to watch, he is exhorting them to be alert to the spiritual dangers around them. He knew their spirit (inner desire and intention) was willing and eager to follow him but he also recognized their human inadequacies.

Returning to his disciples, Jesus found them sleeping. They were very tired. The hour was late and they had experienced some exciting events during the long day. Nevertheless, it was a critical time and they were expected to be awake. Jesus singled out Peter probably because he was the one who had boasted of his fidelity to Jesus yet he could not stay awake for even one hour.

It is certain that Jesus' comment to watch and pray was addressed to all present (and us). The conquest of temptation can only be brought about with tireless and ongoing effort. The human spirit may be willing to do what is right but the human body (flesh) is weak. Even so it can display great power in opposing the spirit!

We must practice step ten daily and tirelessly or be subject to complacency and a return to our old ways!

(71)
STEP ELEVEN

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD AS
WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

1 Corinthians 15:58 (N.I.V.)

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

+++++

As we meditate on his word and speak to him in prayer we will soon discover that this sovereign and all-powerful God is a loving Father who is pleased to see us resting in him, looking to him, and rejoicing in his marvelous plan for us!

John 6:28-29 (N.I.V.)

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Once we truly believe he will open our heart and mind to his will for us and provide us with the power to carry that out! Turning our will over to God entails the act of seeking him out and this is the only way we can achieve a conscious contact. It is through this contact that he will change us and we will experience our sought after rebirth!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (N.I.V.)

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

+++++

Strict training refers not only to the rigorous effort applied to our physical well being but also to the self control over our addictions, obsessions, and temptations. In the verses above Paul observes that the athletes train rigorously for a corruptible crown that will soon wither away and will not last, but the crown of life (eternal life) and fellowship with God will last forever. Please read (Revelation 2:10) in your own Bible.

In the Greek games there was a 'herald' who had the job of announcing the rules of the different contests. Paul likens himself to a herald for Christ, but he is also one who plays in the game. That is, he not only preaches the Gospel but he also lives by the Gospel rules!

All believers while very confident of God's sovereign grace are nevertheless conscious of their own battle (race) against sin. They do not want to be disqualified (i.e., tested and disapproved) for the prize.

As we continue to put forth our supreme effort and continually practice the twelve step principles we will become increasingly confident that we will never be disqualified for the prize!

CHAPTER SEVEN

*“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS FOR THEY
WILL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.”*

MATTHEW 5:9 (N.I.V.)

Jesus' concern is not so much with the peaceful, but with the peacemakers. Those who undertake this work are acknowledged as Sons of God!

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 25:16-18 (N.I.V.)
Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
The troubles of my heart have multiplied;
free me from my anguish.
Look upon my affliction and my distress
and take away all my sins.
+++++

Step one asks us to face up to reality and confront the chaos and the unmanageable condition in which we find ourselves. With this admission to God it will become clear very quickly that we are unable to go it alone any longer!

In the above verses the psalmist's dependency on God alone is brought to the surface and exposed by the words 'lonely,' 'afflicted,' and 'I take refuge in 'you.' The exact nature of his suffering is unclear but it seems to be related to his awareness and sensitivity to his own sin.

The effects of sin are great and although the psalmist sees a correlation between sin and suffering he casts himself onto God for forgiveness and deliverance! The psalmist prays that the Lord will not remember his past sins, shortcomings and rebellious spirit. He wants the Lord to deal with him, not in accordance with his lack of loyalty, but according to God's goodness and love toward his people!

Forgiveness is that act of grace whereby God extends his love as if the sin had never taken place!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Matthew 20:34 (N.I.V.)

*Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.
Immediately they received their sight and followed him.*

+++++

At the very instant that we honestly accept step one we will find ourselves standing on step two!

The New Testament is filled with the accounts of Jesus' touch upon the sick and infirm. Believing that these miracles actually happened (they did) is the foundation of our faith in a power greater than we! In turn we begin to feel our own healing, restoration and redemption. Ultimately we experience a very necessary rebirth into the spirit of God.

The fact that Matthew refers to two blind men rather than one shows his personal knowledge of the event (Mark 10: 46-52; Luke 8:35-43). These two were sitting by the roadside begging, and hearing that Jesus was passing cried out, "Lord, Son of David," "have mercy on us!" There can be no doubt here that at this moment they were confessing Jesus as their long awaited Messiah (Savior)!

They may have been physically blind but they did indeed see something much clearer than many of the others present! Further evidence that Jesus comes to all those who need him! In this particular case their individual faith was established from their need to have their common sight restored (Isaiah 35:5-6). Their cries for help were not merely out of desperation, but faith! This faith was not only in God alone, but in the person of Jesus and to his power and authority!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Psalm 17:6-8 (N.I.V.)

*I call on you, O God, for you will answer me;
give ear to me and hear my prayer.
Show the wonder of your great love,
you who save by your right hand
those who take refuge in you from their foes.
Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings...*

+++++

David appeals to God to respond to his petition. His urgency is based on the confidence that God will answer him! The boldness in his calling on God expresses a close relationship. This is further enhanced by the metaphors, ‘the apple of your eye,’ and ‘the shadow of your wings.’ These metaphors express the love of God and his caring acts of protection, for those who are dear to him.(Deut.32:10-12)

However God may answer prayer he provides ‘refuge,’ to those who seek it and delivers the Godly with his right hand! This signifies the strength by which he sustains and redeems His own in times of trouble. Because his need is now(today)David prays for God’s deliverance with great intensity. God stoops down to deliver his children!

Although intelligence and reason are very precious gifts from God, the most important human assets are matters of the heart and not the head!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Matthew 5:29-30 (N.I.V.)

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

+++++

It seems that our perception of people, places, and things is a major contributor to our general thought and behavior patterns. If we tend to see only the dark side(negative)of things’, we tend to practice negative behavior. If we are practicing negative behavior, we are living in the darkness of this world.

The ability to look at others and be able to clearly see their negative qualities while overlooking our own is a basic problem of the human condition. We are generally very quick to pass our judgement on others which is sinful. Jesus tells us in the above parable why we would be wise to apply this power of observation to ourselves!

Only with a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves can the truth about us be brought to light. This allows us to take the necessary corrective action. As we actually practice this step, we can be certain that we are making a significant contribution to improving the overall human condition. This is not only a means for us to feel better about ourselves but a God given responsibility. This not only improves our lives but also the lives of those around us!

(77)
STEP FIVE

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 (N.I.V.)

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

+++++

The shame and remorse uncovered in our fourth step inventory are forgiven and taken away by God's loving mercy. We now proceed to step five. We can now know for certain that the ancient tradition of confession is an indispensable ingredient in our healing and renewal process!

Paul describes how to guard against the unworthy partaking of the Lord's supper. To examine oneself is to put oneself to the test as to one's attitude, in heart, outward conduct, and understanding of the true nature and purpose of the supper. The supper is a means to spiritual grace, while self examination in confession is to come to the table prepared in heart!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Revelation 3:19-20 (N.I.V.)

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

+++++

Even though the life condition of an individual might verge on complete disaster all is not lost if we become willing to listen for his voice and open the door. When we have done so he will come in and eat with us, and us with him!

The Lord’s statement, “I rebuke and discipline,” speaks of his love. Those who accept these words of rebuke, discipline (be teachable), and repentance (change in thinking), prove themselves to be his friends. He will come into their heart and spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ and the Father come to have fellowship with us (John 14:23).

While many may consider this invitation as addressed to lapsed or half hearted believers the terminology and context suggest it is being made to mere professing believers who lack authentic conversion to Christ. A complete renewal of our lives is the promise made here and this will happen as we accept Jesus as Lord and become his friend. In doing so we are becoming “entirely ready,” for him to remove all of our character defects.

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Psalm 37:4-6 (N.I.V.)

*Delight yourself in the Lord
and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

*Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this:*

*He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice
of your cause like the noonday sun.*

+++++

As we practice step seven as a sincere and humble act of repentance, we will emerge with a new spirit that comes from the presence of the Lord!

Because the Lord is righteous and just the wise have the assurance that he will extend his righteousness and his justice to them! Righteousness and justice refer to the evidences of God's rule over the world as he establishes this rule and glorifies his children!

Shortcomings are described as a failure or deficiency in character or action and no human being can make claim to be perfectly free from these. As we become consciously aware of our shortcomings God will be right there to remove them instantly (if we are willing to have him do so). With their removal we will find a great increase in our ability to practice the words in the above verses, which are commit, trust, and delight in the Lord!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Luke 6:37-38 (N.I.V.)

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

+++++

These verses further describe the kind of mercy expected of the Lord’s disciples. “Do not judge,” would never be understood as ruling out any ethical evaluation at all but rather it is defined by the parallel, “do not condemn.” A willingness to make amends to everyone (on our list or not) is an urgent requirement of step eight.

We must set healthy relationship boundaries for ourselves and allow these boundaries to become living amendments. Just as God will give a suitable reward to the merciful, “you will not be condemned,” implies that he will bring appropriate judgement to the unmerciful. Those who are generous will be abundantly repaid for their kindness!

If Jesus’ audience is relaxing in the assumption that the preceding teachings are directed only toward others we cannot dodge the direct force of his challenge. This is specifically directed to those who profess to follow Jesus as Lord. It is not mere words nor generous ethical behavior or even religious practices that mark a true believer, but rather if we are willing to do that which Jesus commands!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Romans 15:1-4 (N.I.V.)

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

+++++

As Paul draws the discussion on Christian liberty to a close he openly aligns himself with the strong. These are the ones who hold the key, to the solution, to the problem. If they are interested in maintaining only their own position the gulf between the two groups (the strong and the weak) will not be narrowed and the weak will continue to be critical and resentful. If the strong reach out with the hand of fellowship and support the weak this will become like a bridge. Therefore, it is to the strong that the obligation belongs for taking the initiative. We are to fulfill the law of Christ, by bearing each other burdens. We must do so in love which is the key to fulfilling the law of Christ! In our amends the chief concern must always be to contribute to the spiritual good of others in order to edify Christ's Church and too win as many as possible over to the Lord.

The learning, understanding, and practicing of God's commands promote the necessary endurance and supplies the desired encouragement. These two elements are intimately connected with hope. The endurance is worthwhile if it takes place on a course that leads to a glorious future and the encouragement provides exactly that assurance!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

James 1:19-21 (N.I.V.)

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for mans anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

+++++

In these verses' James is attempting to clear the way for our reception of God's truth. He begins by calling for the readers attention by saying; "take note of this." Before we can expect the ability to receive or understand God's Word we must first develop a willingness to listen. Reluctance to listen can further be described as contempt for the word. The ability to listen can be easily obtained with our effort to restrain our speech. The restraint of anger is also demanded because anger closes the mind to God's truth.

In further preparation for the reception of the word one must get rid of all moral filth of the mind which is abundant and running rampant in the human condition. The reception of truth out of necessity must be marked by a humble attitude in which we are able to give God the credit (glory), for our newly found revelation.

"Planted in you," suggests that readers and listeners already possess these truths. Thereby we accept them when we hear them as believers in truth!

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

1 John 1:5-7 (N.I.V.)

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:
 God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to
 have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do
 not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the
 light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of
 Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

+++++

The message that God is light need be compared with
 declarations elsewhere by John that God is spirit (Jn. 4:24) and
 God is love(1 Jn. 4:8). Each of these stresses the immateriality of
 God and the Godliness of God (God in his essence). Light
 emphasizes the splendor and glory of God as well as the
 truthfulness and purity of God!

Light stresses the self communicative nature of God for human
 beings and for their salvation. Light also accents God's
 empowering activity in our lives. God as light not only shines
 down for our salvation, but enables us to walk in his light.

John 8:12

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of
 the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but
 will have the light of life,"*

John encourages his readers to walk in the light. Light then
 becomes the presence of God's grace!

The positive test of knowing God's will for us is to live (walk) in
 the light, as He Himself is in the light. John reiterates the fact
 that light is God's sphere. It is also his nature, and he wills that it
 should become ours!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
 RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
 THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
 THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

1 Corinthians 16:8-9 (N.I.V.)

But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

+++++

A wonderful and delightful treasure stands before us and is pointed to us by our step twelve effort. This is the discovery that all we have put into the first eleven steps has purchased a gift beyond measure. This being our spiritual awakening, to the God of our understanding. What a joy! This is not the end of our experience but only a meager beginning to the unlimited and unrestricted flow of God's eternal wisdom!

Paul suggests that a great door for effective work has been opened to him (and us as well). God's specific reason for us to receive his grace is that we might become living examples of his grace!

As we begin to allow, his will for us to shine as a light to others, we will certainly feel the effects of our rebirth.

Our carrying the message to others will now become evident in what others see in us!

CHAPTER EIGHT

*“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE
PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”*

Matthew 5 :10 (N.I.V.)

Jesus points out very clearly that this world enjoys its cherished hates and prejudices so much that the peacemaker is not always welcome. Opposition is a normal mark of being a disciple of Jesus. The reward of these persecuted people is the same as the reward of the poor in spirit. That being the Kingdom of Heaven!

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 22:1-2 (N.I.V.)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

*Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the
words of my groaning?*

*O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night,
and am not silent.*

+++++

When will we humble ourselves and let the guilt of our pride set us free? When will we yield up our powerless and unmanageable human condition and turn it over to a loving and gracious God?

“The choice is ours!”

This prayer begins with a cry to, ‘my God,’ and includes three questions. The psalmist pours out his heart because of the intensity of his suffering. There is no other recourse but to cast himself onto the mercy of God. At the same time he shows his amazement by the three questions: 1. Why has the Lord forsaken me? 2. Made no attempt at saving me? 3. Not listened to my groaning? To this humble believer God’s absence becomes unbearable!

The history of redemption reveals God as loyal and able to save.

In Old Testament Scripture whenever Israel became willing to put their trust in him they were never put to shame but delivered!

This psalmist was familiar with the glorious acts of God in previous history but it seems as though God was not quite ready to deliver him yet. In this experience symbolized by darkness, he was cut off from God’s mighty power. He was on his own, alone, separated and afraid. Obviously this ended up to be to his advantage. When God did act, the psalmist would have enjoyed a great increase in his faith, hope, and love!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Mark 9:21-24 (N.I.V.)

*Jesus asked the boys father, "How long has he been like this?"
"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into
fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on
us and help us."*

*"If you can?" said Jesus, "Everything is possible for him who
believes."*

*Immediately the boys father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me to
overcome my unbelief!"*

+++++

Here Mark describes the deadly conflict between Jesus and the demonic powers. The demon immediately threw the boy who had been sick since childhood and had experienced numerous attacks into a convulsion and made him fall to the ground and foam at the mouth. Pathetically the father asked Jesus for help. When he had left home to bring his son to Jesus' disciples he apparently believed that the boy would be healed. Now he was not so sure and said to Jesus, "if you can do anything." Jesus immediately fixed the fathers 'if,' clause. The question was not if Jesus had the power to heal the boy but if the father had enough faith to believe that Jesus could. The father responded with a declaration of faith but he recognized that his faith, was far from perfect. It was still mixed with unbelief.

Instead of criticizing this man for his lack of faith Jesus pointed to the importance of the father's trust in God to do what is humanly impossible! The fathers cry, echoes the cry of each of our hearts. He could declare his faith but was honest about his weakness!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

*Psalm 28:6-7 (N.I.V.)
Praise be to the Lord,
for he has heard my cry for mercy.
The Lord is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.
My heart leaps for joy and I will give
thanks to him in song.*

+++++

Turning our will and our lives over to the care of God and following him offers a security that nothing else on earth can equal or compare with. In anticipation of his righteous judgement and the experience of vindication the psalmist bursts out in a hymn of praise to God. He knows that the Lord has heard his prayer for mercy and he looks forward, to an even greater deliverance!

The psalmist calls the Lord, “my rock,” “my strength,” “and my shield.” No longer does he feel threatened to the point of despair. He is now overjoyed and jubilant. He has placed his trust in the “rock of his salvation,” and that “rock,” proved to be a reliable, covenant faithful God!

His confidence in God’s justice goes far beyond his own experience as the Lord is the God of his people! Since the Lord takes care of the individual, he will most certainly prove himself to be the strength and the fortress (stronghold) of all who trust in him!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

2 Corinthians 6:14-18(N.I.V.)

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

*"Therefore come out of them
and be separate, says the Lord.*

*Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."*

*"I will be a father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord almighty."*

+++++

Paul makes an appeal to the Corinthians for mutual openness in affection and speech. His own heart is open wide to them but both him and they know why they cannot reciprocate as fully as they ought to. Some of them have an uneasy conscience about their continuing pagan associations.

This of course does not mean that we should avoid friendship or indeed relationships with the unsaved. To the contrary we should try even harder to let the light of our lives shine through to these loved children of God. If we truly are children of God, the unsaved will see this and not necessarily have to be told about it. The main idea that Paul drives home here is that we allow God's will to control our lives and not be controlled by others opinions or religious doctrines.

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Psalm 119:66-67 (N.I.V.)
Teach me knowledge and good judgement,
for I believe in your commands.
Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I obey your word.

+++++

The Lord is good because he is faithful to his word. Knowledge primarily denotes the knowledge of God and ones communion with him and also the response to the life of fellowship with him.

In the above situation the psalmist's experience of humiliation and affliction caused by arrogance was a good thing for him. Because of it he has given himself more to learning, applying, and loving God's precepts, law, and decrees. His acceptance of God's rebuke and discipline has changed his life. He used to go astray but now he obeys God's word and is restored to fellowship with God!

In our step five effort it is of extreme importance that we uncover "the exact nature of our wrongs." This brings us to the point of confession and with sincerity in that confession God will reveal the necessary knowledge to place us on step six!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 16:1-4 (N.I.V.)
Keep me safe , O God,
for in you I take refuge.
I said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing.
As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The
sorrows of those will increase
who run after other gods.
I will not pour out their libations of blood
or take up their names on my lips.
+++++

As we continue to work(with great effort)and begin to practice step six we will be sowing the seeds of true wisdom in our own lives which will eventually yield a harvest of true peace and true joy!

Our confession of confidence in God exemplifies a deeper trust in God in both life and death. This ever growing trust will most surely teach us to become, “entirely ready!”

“My Lord,” reveals the psalmist’s submission to God as his master and ruler over and against other god’s of which there are many. His “delight,” finds expression in God’s acceptance of the saints who are in the land. In God’s eyes these are the ones here on earth that are consecrated to the Lord. These saints are also known as the glorious ones(not because they think so), but because the Lord bestows majesty and glory on his own!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Psalm 39:7-8 (N.I.V.)
But now, Lord, what do I look for?
My hope is in you.
Save me from all my transgressions;
do not make me the scorn of fools.
+++++

The psalmist concludes that nothing in life is important or reliable unless one's hope is secured in God. In his search for the true meaning of human life he has come to a renewed commitment to God. He is also more aware of his own shortcomings in the presence of God. More than ever he realizes his need for God's forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing. His hope is in the Lord for whose deliverance he anxiously awaits. When the Lord vindicates his servant, the foolish scoffers will have no more occasion to rejoice.

Step seven is a humble confession that we cannot meet our own needs by our own striving. Instead we must cast our anxieties and burden to the care of God. Without Him we remain in our hopeless state of confusion and chaos. Each and every effort put forth from our will rather than his is further demonstration of this truth! The only way to sanity and serenity must come from God alone. This can be achieved by a personal relationship with him! It is within these perimeters that we will best see our previous shortcomings!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Proverbs 15:4 (N.I.V.)
The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life,
but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.
+++++

We must become willing to review a lifetime of relationships and make amends to those persons we have harmed. As well as major changes in our basic beliefs, attitude, perception, and behavior, we must also begin to practice conciliatory speech. A thorough study (individual or group) of the entire Proverbs 15; can be viewed as God's guidance to our learning and practicing the proper method of speech when dealing with others.

(15:1) The way we answer another person will have a definite effect on the response that we receive back. This Proverb stresses (not suggests) that it is wise to use a gentle answer to turn away wrath. To use a harsh word is to cause pain and will bring an angry response whereas a conciliatory answer restores good temper and reasonableness!

(15:2) How wise people are can often be determined by what they say. Knowledge comes from the wise and folly from fools!

(15:3) The Lord already knows everything about everyone! This verse is not meant as a statement of a certain theology but as an incentive for conduct for the righteous. Divine omniscience is a great comfort!

(15:4) What a person says can bring either healing or harm. Healing words bring life and vitality to the spirit whereas perverse, twisted, or deceitful words, crush the spirit.

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Psalm 126:5-6 (N.I.V.)
Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy.
He who goes out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with him.

+++++

In our step nine effort we should be attempting to disclose ourselves to others in a very special and sensitive manner (the key of course is honesty). At times we might feel overwhelmed by the challenge of discerning what needs to be said and how to say it with sincerity and without offence.

The Lord will turn our tears into songs of joy! This assurance of blessing also encourages us to be responsible. We are to go out and sow whatever little we have because in doing so the Lord will bless us! We must be willing to lose our seed before we can expect a harvest of gain.

This Psalm concludes with the expectation of another divine miracle to take place. We will return singing songs of joy because of the plentiful harvest!

The wonder of deliverance (v.3) is precious to God's people. First they are in shock (v.1) but then they are overwhelmed with joy!

And what a joy it is to finally feel the presence of God in our lives!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Galatians 5:13-15 (N.I.V.)

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

+++++

In these verses' Paul is showing what the true nature of Christian freedom is! He also shows that only through the spirit and by the spirit's power can Christians live for God and not to fulfill the desires of their own sinful nature.

"You," is emphatic, showing that Paul is building on the confidence he expressed earlier (v. 10). He follows it up this time with a warning not to allow this freedom to become an excuse for sinful self-indulgence. Here the contrast is between indulgence and the serving of one another, "in love!"

The use of the word 'law,' is very instructive because it shows that in spite of all Paul has said they're remains a sense in which the requirements of the law are a proper concern for Christians.

This does not mean that the Christian is to make progress in Holiness by once again setting up a system of rules and regulations. The essential ends of the law will be met in those who being called by God and being filled with the spirit of God, allow God to produce the 'fruit of the spirit,' within them! Faith in Christ is the bond that forms the basis for the fulfillment of God's Holy Will in one's life!

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

Ephesians 1:17-21 (N.I.V.)

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 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. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

+++++

Step eleven is the daily food and water that we require for our ongoing spiritual maintenance.

In these verses' Paul addresses his constant prayer on our behalf to God who is the only one capable of answering it!

'Glorious Father,' is a typical expression that points both to God's essential being and to what proceeds from him in mercy!

Paul prays that we his readers may be fully endowed with the Holy Spirit! God has already made provisions for this but it is necessary that we ourselves, "should be quickened," with the spiritual powers of 'wisdom,' and 'vision.'

Revelation refers to the insight and discernment that the Spirit will bring into the mysteries of divine truth. All this is so that we may come to know God completely!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Psalm 145:1-2 (N.I.V.) [Please read and meditate v.v.1-21]

*I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you
and extol your name forever and ever.*

+++++

The psalmist calls on us to praise God unceasingly. The reason for praise lies in God's greatness. As the great King He deserves human praise! In His presence we must admit our severe limitations for no one can fully understand God's purposes or his ways!

Unceasing praise of the Lord can only come from the grateful instruction of the new generation by the older generation. The process of transmission of salvation history from one generation to another comes by telling of God's mighty acts of deliverance! God's Kingship is magnificent, His Sovereignty beneficent, and His Redemptive Acts manifold. He is the "Kingdom," the "Power," and the "Glory!"

The Lord is faithful and loving to all he has created. His love evidences itself in his acts of restoration and acts of provision. He satisfies the needs of every living creature as the master of the house would open his hands to all who are dependent on him. Members of the Lord's fellowship are special because they call on him, fear him, and love him!

CHAPTER NINE

***“Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds
of evil against you because of me.”***

Matthew 5 : 11 (N.I.V.)

His Disciples are likened to the Prophets!

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Proverbs 26:12 (N.I.V.)

*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

+++++

There is no question that our own power can be used to turn our own lives around, and around, and around, upside down, inside out, and around, and around we go!

Eventually we come to the realization and to the truth that God alone is the ultimate source of our healing and we become ready for true liberation and freedom. If any of us think that we will arrive with the right combination (instead of a key) to provide for our own redemption, we would do well to contemplate the verse above. This verse states that “there is more hope for a fool than for him.”

These verses use a comparison to stress how impossible it is to curb self conceit. Self conceit and self deception are a large part of the human folly (condition) that the book of Proverbs decries. If we think that we are all wise when reality suggests that we are far from it, any hope that we might have had is indeed in vain. One of the more graphic illustrations of foolishness is expecting that events in our lives are going to change while at the same time we continue to practice the same behavior. This has been defined as not only foolish but as an act of insanity. This definition can help us a great deal in our step two effort!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

John 12:44-46 (N.I.V.)

Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in the darkness."

+++++

As we come to the light of God's power and love we no longer have to abide alone in the crippling darkness of this sin darkened world! Sin is the darkness associated with our separation and independence of God.

Jesus equates belief in his person as belief in God (John14:1; 1John2:3). The Father and the Son are inseparable as well as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. Though they are three distinct entities, they are one in the same, God! Jesus speaks of the Father as the one who sent him, and he claims to be the light that illuminates the darkness for those who do not know the Father. (Please study John12:47-50).

The judgement on unbelief is not arbitrary, but it is inevitable. The message of Christ will become the condemnation in the last days (we are in them now) of those who hear it, but reject it. Those who hear it but refuse it cannot plead ignorance. Jesus emphasizes (positively) that his mission is intended to rescue us from the darkness (condemnation). The Father's sovereign purpose is to lift his people out of hopelessness and death and give them eternal life!

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Psalm 147:10-11 (N.I.V.)

*His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of a man;
the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

+++++

Step three is an open invitation to us to get out of our self-centered world and turn that place over to its rightful owner,
God!

The Lord rewards those who fear him (the dictionary states that fear is: to stand in awe of). His people know the vanity of the military, logistical, or human power because the strength of the horse or man amounts to nothing in relation to God's power. God's people have hope! They have received his word! That word is Jesus!

Praise and worship is due to the Lord because he is King (v.8-9)! He sustains everything! He has created the cattle and the ravens, representative of two different realms of the animal kingdom. The Lord is concerned not only with the magnificent universe but also with the lowly creatures on earth.

Turning our will and our lives over to the care of God requires that we first believe, and secondly develop a conscious awareness of his presence. Thirdly; we must continue to trust in his guidance (faith). All of these can be accomplished by obeying his command to do so. God will communicate with each and every one of us through our own conscience, through the voices of others and by the silence of his magnificent creation!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Luke 12:1-3 (N.I.V.)

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."

+++++

God cares about us very deeply(v.v. 6-7). Our inventory step becomes a special opportunity for us to feel that personal care, as we experience the grace of his forgiveness of us!

In the verses above Luke emphasizes the extremely large size of this crowd of listeners. Jesus addresses his disciples first and the masses receive his words later(v.v.13-21). The word hypocrisy was triggered by the charges made against him. Jesus compares the insidious way that this attitude can influence others to the same action as yeast in the bread(it gradually works its way through the whole batch).

His next words about concealment and disclosure seem to be a warning that whatever hypocrites try to cover up will be revealed. Meanwhile, verse's three and four have an extreme positive thrust. Here the disciples are encouraged not to be afraid but to declare publicly what they have heard privately, from Jesus!

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Luke 15:3-7 (N.I.V.)

Then Jesus told them this parable:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

+++++

Addictions, dependencies, and compulsive behavior patterns, by very nature, isolate us from other people and from God. Step five sharing breaks down the walls and barriers that we have erected due to our wrong thinking and behavior.

There are two amazing features to this parable: First is the obvious analogy to the search for the sheep. Jesus takes the initiative in seeking out lost people, a major theme in Luke(c.f.19:10). Secondly the climax of the story is not only the return of the sheep but the triumphant rejoicing in their rescue. Jesus is stressing both by the parable and by the direct statement that he is seeking and receiving sinners! The future rejoicing may include a future gathering and feasting in God’s Kingdom! ‘There is none who is inherently righteous’(c.f. Romans 3:10). The righteous persons referred to are probably devout believers who have no accumulation of gross or open sins to repent of as they do so on a daily basis!

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 4:4-5 (N.I.V.)
In your anger do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.
Selah
Offer right sacrifices
and trust in the Lord.

+++++

Psalm four presents avenues for believers to come to the heavenly Father in prayer. As an expression of confidence in God this Psalm helps the reader to meditate on God's Fatherly care and to leave our trouble and anxieties in his hands! It is extremely important for us to realize that we may indeed be blind to some of our flaws and character defects. We must through confidence in God become entirely ready for him to remove these along with the more open and obvious iniquity. The psalmist David turns to his righteous God. He believes that regardless of his suffering God will act triumphantly on behalf of his servant! The word righteous expresses the relationship between God and his people. It signifies more than an absolute standard or norm. He has promised us his presence, as well as victory over our adverse circumstance. Calling boldly on God is a privilege that belongs to his children. It is to this end that the Psalmist calls on God as his righteous God!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Acts 3:19-20 (N.I.V.)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus.

+++++

As our step six effort focused primarily on our willingness to yield up our defects of character to God, step seven centers on the humility with which we should approach him for the removal of our shortcomings.

What strikes the reader immediately in this call to repentance section of Peter's sermon is it's attitude toward Israel, which in its hopeful outlook is unmatched in the rest of New Testament dialogue. Even though he has emphasized Israel's part in crucifying Jesus (v. v.13-15) he now magnanimously (benevolently or forgivingly) says that they had acted in ignorance. Then he mitigated their guilt still further by saying that God Himself had willed it in order to fulfill the words of the prophets.

Even more positively, Peter goes on to say that if his listeners repent, their repentance will have a part in the ushering in the great events of the end times. The call to repentance itself is tersely stated. Then it is elaborated in words unique in New Testament dialogue, and reflective of a Jewish remnant theology. "Repent then, and turn to God," says Peter, "so that your sins may be wiped out," and further, "so that there may be brought about the promised times of refreshing and so that with the coming of God's appointed Messiah, Jesus, He may restore everything!"

(104)
STEP EIGHT
MADE A LIST OF ALL PEOPLE WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Philippians 2:3-4 (N.I.V.)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

+++++

Step eight entails the more specific person to person application(practice)of our amends that were essentially begun in the first seven steps. What are the changes that have come about(not due to our will)in our personality and behavior patterns?

Paul says we should avoid selfish ambition and vain conceit and consider others above ourselves(have we ever improved)!

Persons who seek only to advance themselves usually enjoy glorying in their success(not a problem for us). Our new attitude should reveal itself in humility. A concept not highly regarded by us in the past.

As believers we should be humble toward one another and mindful of our spiritual brotherhood and our ultimate subjection to Christ. In this practice of humility we must consider others to be above ourselves and that does not mean better. This also does not mean that we should take a negative view regarding ourselves, or the gifts that God has given to us. Our consideration for others must precede concern for ourselves(Romans 12:10). This goes very far toward the end of our previous disharmony. We should be looking not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. Our self-centered interests of the past have been replaced by a much broader outlook (open mindedness), which includes the interests of everyone with whom we come into contact(not only those we have harmed)!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Colossians 3:12-14 (N.I.V.)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

+++++

A major and critical factor which can determine the success of our recovery is our willingness to assume new, healthy, and honest self responsibility.

The very essence of the above verses is that we have had and must continue to have a radical and life changing spiritual experience. In this experience we have discarded the old self and it's ideas and put on the new self. The metaphor here is one of clothing. The old self is like a dirty worn out garment that is stripped from the body and thrown away. The new self is like a brand-new suit that we put on and joyfully wear. This picturesque language gives vivid expression to a great truth, but one should be careful not to press the imagery too far as we are painfully aware that our old nature is ever close by.

The final article in this description of Christian attire is love! All of the other virtues listed are manifestations of love but love is larger than any of these. Indeed, larger than all of them combined!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Proverbs 12:1 (N.I.V.)

*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates correction is stupid.*

+++++

The basic correction to our life style that is brought about by our step ten effort, is the ongoing elevation of our own character. For best results our daily inventory should be related exclusively to today and to reality!

We will quickly develop an ability to view our decisions in the light of their consequences, prompting us to make many more correct decisions (and we will not always be right). As the number of correct decisions increases, the number of incorrect decisions will decrease. With this decrease we will certainly feel that our lives are becoming much more manageable. What a delightful change!

The ability to promptly admit that we might be wrong becomes a guard against our previous false pride (we were never wrong). The opposite to pride is humility (we need this). Those who want God to improve their lives will learn to love his correction (discipline), and also love to learn by it! The Proverb above adds the contrast that to refuse correction is stupid (descriptive of a dumb animal). Even they enjoy learning to practice good behavior!

The ongoing growth that is achieved by sincere effort may have the effect of making us just a little more righteous in God's eyes. It is for certain that this can lift us and those around us very high!

(Proverbs 12:28)

*In the way of righteousness there is life;
Along that path is immortality.*

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
 IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
 AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
 KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
 POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (N.I.V.)

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.

+++++

During our step eleven effort we are certain to recognize the necessity for change in our old ways and ideas. One of these changes should be the fact that we have to slow down. Our old idea that everything must be our way, and now, has to be put away for good. We must stand on guard that this idea stays away.

Prayer and meditation are absolute requirements to achieve and maintain our conscious contact with God. Carried out in the spirit of peace with a quiet attitude will render results that at times can be hard to believe (but believe)! Next we should remove ourselves from the driver's seat. We are no longer in control. God is! The results of prayer and meditation come to us according to his will, rather than our own.

'Be on our guard,' suggests that we should not forget where we have come from.. 'Stand firm in the faith,' means to trust in God. He will meet our needs, when they are needs. 'Be men and woman of courage,' don't be afraid to follow his voice. 'Be strong,' as all exercise increases our strength, be it physical or spiritual. 'Do everything in love,' will be the most important aspect of our newly found and balanced lifestyle.

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

1 Timothy 1:5 (N.I.V.)

*The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure
heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

+++++

The goal of this instruction from Paul is love. The highest goal of true religion is a devotion to God which leads to unselfish love for all others. Together they provide us with boundless goodwill toward our fellow man. This must be our ultimate goal in life.

True love comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Our hearts must be cleansed from self-centered thoughts of the mind if we ever hope to obey the two greatest commandments enunciated by Jesus (Matthew 22: 37-40). We must add to this a good conscience if love is to function properly.

All of this hinges on a sincere faith.

Although we begin our recovery process with the idea that we need to be healed of a particular affliction we find that as time goes by we are receiving far more than specific healing. We are receiving and will continue to receive the boundless and endless gifts of a profound spiritual awakening!

CHAPTER TEN

*“REJOICE AND BE GLAD, BECAUSE GREAT IS
YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN, FOR IN THE SAME
WAY, THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO
WERE BEFORE YOU.”
Matthew 5:12 (N.I.V.)*

We must take up our cross and follow Jesus.

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 44:15-16 (N.I.V.)

*My disgrace is before me all day long,
and my face is covered with shame
at the taunts of those who reproach
and revile me,*

because of the enemy, who is bent on revenge.

+++++

The central paradox of step one is that it is only when we can admit complete and utter defeat that the life transforming victory begins.

‘My disgrace is before me all day long,’ is very descriptive of our compulsive thinking, which has led us to our powerless and unmanageable condition. With this admission we can no longer escape the advance of the real enemy within. These being guilt, shame, remorse, and disgrace. The opposite to disgrace is grace and in this case, God’s grace!

At this point we can no longer run, hide, or cover up our feelings of fear and distress. We have no choice except to finally face up to reality and take our stand. What can we do?

As we take our stand against these foes of our soul, we are first assured that they come from within ourselves and not from the outside (we cannot blame others). Victory over self is impossible if we attempt to do it on our own. What can we do? We can call on God! When we have done so, victory over these enemies from within is absolutely assured!

As we stand here on step one, alone and afraid, we can look up and we can see Jesus standing there on step eleven, we can see Jesus!

His arms are stretched out to us in love. What can we do?

?

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Psalm 107:41-43 (N.I.V.)

But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord.

+++++

The step two phrase, “Came to believe,” suggests a process and a progression of faith that evolves over time.

The needy (i.e. the afflicted) who wait patiently for the Lord can draw comfort from seeing the justice of God. As they become upright, he blesses them by silencing the ruthless power and great evil of their affliction.

The conclusion of this psalm transforms the hymn of Thanksgiving to a psalm of wisdom. The righteous will become wise by observing the great acts which demonstrate the wondrous love of God!

Psalm 107 is the first, of the fifth book of psalms, a Thanksgiving - wisdom psalm. It compliments the confession of our sin, as well as providing prayer for divine favor and restoration. We are called on to confess God’s covenant faithfulness, affirming his goodness and his love toward us, the redeemed.

The redeemed of the Lord have experienced great adversity in our afflictions and exile but we have been safely delivered by the Lord. The Lord gathers his people(us) from all sources and directions. Indeed, “wherever we may be found!”

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Romans 8:1-4 (N.I.V.)

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. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 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.

+++++

As we discover new, healthy, and God directed ways to meet our emotional and physical needs we are certain to become less needy, less selfish, and less preoccupied individuals.

There is now no condemnation for us who believe and are willing to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God (through Jesus Christ) as we understand him. This will become the basic starting point for God's Sanctification of us. This acceptance and sanctification assure us before God that we will continue to grow in God's grace and conformity to Jesus Christ. Paul's construction of the above verses carries us even beyond the thought of freedom from condemnation to the application of the Redeeming Work of Christ by The Holy Spirit. This is accomplished in such a way that the dominion of sin is broken and the Reign of Godliness assured!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Galatians 5:19-21 (N.I.V.)

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. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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Galatians 5:22-26 (N.I.V.)

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

+++++

Paul illustrates the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, within the above sections of Galatians. These lists of character realities are more than mere proof of what he has written earlier.

By raising these particulars of conduct he also provides a checklist for measuring the conduct of those who already consider themselves to be spiritual. If ones conduct is characterized by the traits (even one of them) in the first list, then he or she may be a believer, but not led by God's Holy Spirit. The nine listed virtues that are the fruit of the Spirit hardly need classification. The first three lead us to God, the second three are social virtues, and the final three are achieved by the practice of the first six. Overall it should be obvious that to walk by the Spirit is the ultimate solution to our problems.

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Acts 19:18-20 (N.I.V.)

Many of those who believed, now came, and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

+++++

Many of those who believed now came but all who heard were overcome by reverential fear and held the name of Jesus in high honor. They learned not to misuse the name of Jesus, or treat it lightly, for it is a very powerful name!

Many new Christians renounced their secret acts of magic and several magicians were converted to follow Jesus. Openly demonstrating their repentance they brought their magic scrolls together and burned these expensive items in the presence of the gathered congregation.

Having shown in his earlier panels the gradual widening of the Gospel to new groups of people, and the establishment of a new missionary policy to the Gentiles, Luke presents for his readers a graphic account of the Gospel's entrance into entirely new regions.

It is the story of the Church's dedicated service under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming the good news to those who desperately needed to hear it. In looking back on those days' Luke simply says, "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Psalm 19:12-13 (N.I.V.)
Who can discern his errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.

+++++

The Psalmist reflects on himself and his relationship to God. He reflects on his sinfulness and limitations. As a Godly person he stands in fear before his Creator - Redeemer knowing that he may have hidden faults and errors that he himself has not yet uncovered.

The Psalmist is concerned about these faults because his goal is to live blamelessly before God. Therefore; he asks God for forgiveness and the ability to express humility and contrition. Wilful sins are those attributed to the arrogant who have little or no regard for God. The great transgression could be idolatry (extremely rampant in today's society) or any other sin that goes against the moral law of God.

In our step six effort we must become entirely ready (willing) to have God remove all these defects of character whether we are aware of them or not. This can be accomplished by becoming sensitive to God's Guidance (through prayer and meditation). This awareness will gradually (or suddenly) become clear to us.

As we are already acquainted (by the time we are on step six) with the power of confession, and the relief that it provides from our difficulties, we will enjoy significant change in our thinking and attitude!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

*Psalm 51:1-2 (N.I.V.)
Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion.
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*

+++++

In desperate need of Divine Forgiveness the sinner can do nothing accept cast himself onto God's Mercy. When sin disrupts fellowship with the Covenant Lord the sinner has no right to Divine Blessings. However, the Lord has promised to forgive! This forgiveness is based solely on his unfailing love and great compassion!

Forgiveness is an act of Divine Grace whereby sin is blotted out and the sinner is cleansed by the washing away of sins! The Old Testament sacrifices and ritual washing symbolized the removal of sin and the renewal of fellowship with the Lord.

In our step seven effort our self esteem will be restored to its proper state and balance and we will become more comfortable and humble before him. Indeed, the orderliness of our steps and the entire recovery process is ultimately determined by our willingness to humbly surrender ourselves to God's grace and guidance.

Also in step seven we have turned from trusting in our own (and other people's) will, to trusting and delighting in the power and strength of God alone. This kind of humility opens a new door of blessings as we allow the Lord to do his wonderful work of grace in our lives!

(116)
STEP EIGHT

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

John 13:34-36 (N.I.V.)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

+++++

The most important instruction that Jesus gives us is this fresh new commandment, “to love one another!” Jesus knows that the spirit of rivalry will disrupt our fellowship before we can accomplish his commission to us. The attitude of love will be the bond that will keep us united and we will be the convincing demonstration that we have partaken of his own Spirit and purpose. He has loved us without reservation and without limitation and expects us to do the same for each other!

The Gospel ever reminds us that we are to be known by our capacity to love and the willing effort that we display and practice in step eight will be the direction in which we must go. If we feel that we have been harmed by others (and we have) especially in our childhood it is extremely important that we discover how to engage in the necessary self - nurturing and re-parenting activities as a means to heal the wounded child within us. In doing these things our amends to all those we have harmed will be completed: Even in God’s eyes!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 (N.I.V.)

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

+++++

Steps eight and nine are without question leading to our reconciliation. First to the Lord. We are finally going to have to listen to him in order to practice these steps with any degree of humility. Secondly to our fellow man. Our effort will have to be genuine and sincere lest we put ourselves in a situation that is harmful to them or us.

There is no more effective way of carrying out mutual edification than Paul's exhortations for improvement within the assembly of God (v.v.12-22). Heading the lists is the exhortation regarding the proper attitude, toward other people, whose qualifications (because of their work), are over us in the Lord. It is through these people from whom we must learn to come to an understanding of love for others and the proper treatment of others!

Paul also gives us a constructive alternative to retaliation: Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Whenever we feel offended, we must learn that the welfare of the offender must be the prime consideration in our response!

Easy Does It

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Psalm 24:3-5 (N.I.V.)

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?

Who may stand in his Holy place?

*He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.*

*He will receive blessings from the Lord
and vindication from God his Saviour.*

+++++

The Psalmist expresses the nature of fellowship with God as, “ascending the hill of the Lord,” and “standing in His Holy place!” Those who seek His Favor need to prepare themselves not only ceremonially but also by sanctifying their lives.

The Lord expects purity and singleness of heart from all who seek His Presence (c.f. Matthew 5:8). Purity of heart (and hands) is the condition of living before God in accordance with His Precepts and out of the Desire of His Heart. Singleness of devotion is expressed by the Godly person refusing to dishonor the Lord’s Name by idolatry or by hypocrisy.

The Lord rewards believers for their walk of integrity. The blessing is the status of God’s Favor extended to His Loyal Servants who enjoy the Promises of the Covenant. They also receive Vindication from their Savior - God! The Redeemer will provide Justice and grant the ultimate vindication to those who are faithful to him.

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
IMPROVE OUR CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH GOD
AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

Psalm 1:1-3 (N.I.V.)

Blessed is the man

*who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seats of mockers.*

*But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.*

Whatever he does prospers.

+++++

The Godly person meditates on the law of God day and night. Since the Holy Bible was generally not available to God's people they memorized and meditated on his word, his perfections, and his mighty acts. The one who meditates continually receives God as a loving Father.

The happiness of the Godly is likened to a tree. The imagery of leaves and fruit assures the Godly that they will receive God's blessing on their words and works. The psalmist thus encourages the Godly to pursue the way of wisdom. The prosperity of the righteous (guaranteed but limited to the Godly) is a gift of God, as a by-product to wise living!

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (N.I.V.)

All this is 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 mens sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

+++++

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (N.I.V.)

*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he say's,
"In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you."
I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*

+++++

Paul shows here that God's divine act of reconciliation is based on the death of Christ. Jesus is the supreme sacrifice offered by God to the human race. God's Holy displeasure against sinners is appeased, the enmity between God and humankind is removed, and human beings are restored to proper relations with God. Reconciliation is a total and objective removal of hostility. Paul establishes that the Gospel era (today) is the day of Salvation when God's Favor is shown to humankind.
How unthinkable that such Grace should be received in vain.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

*“COME FOLLOW ME,” JESUS SAID; “AND I WILL
MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN.”*

Matthew 4 :19 (N.I.V.)

Jesus' followers are to catch other
people.

TODAY!

Notes

STEP ONE

ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 30:8-10 (N.I.V.)
To you , O Lord, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
“What gain is there in my destruction,
in my going down into the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me;
O Lord, be my help.”
+++++

Here the Psalmist states emphatically that he looks toward the Lord for mercy. He then reflects again on the desperate situation in which he finds himself. The Lord is faithful in changing ones circumstances. He effectually changes wailing into dancing, mourning into joy, and a deathly cry into a song of praise. Such is the goodness of God!

Step one calls on us to admit our powerless and unmanageable condition and circumstance. In doing so we will begin the process of our own restoration. We have to yield, surrender, and let go of our wilful spirit and let God show us His Faithful Mercy. The relevancy of our circumstance and suffering is quickly overcome by the experience of deliverance. Then we move up to step two!

CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

Mark 5:36 (N.I.V.)

*Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't
be afraid; just believe."*

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While Jesus was still speaking to the woman, some men brought Jarius the news not to bother Jesus anymore since his daughter was dead. Jesus ignored the messengers and he encouraged Jarius to keep on believing. This word of assurance must have been just what Jarius needed. He in no way tried to dissuade Jesus from resuming his journey to the child's bedside. At this point Jesus decided to separate himself from the crowd that was following him (v.37).

A momentous miracle was about to take place and he wanted to have only a chosen few witness it. The twelve year-old girl responded immediately to Jesus' words. She not only stood up but she also began to walk around. The five witnesses to the miracle were completely amazed. Death is the enemy (be it physical or spiritual) but it must give way to the Power of the Kingdom that is ever present in Jesus the Messiah!

Jesus gave two commands to the witnesses. First they were not to reveal the facts about the miracle. Jesus revealed His Messianic Dignity to those who could be entrusted with it but it was veiled to those who could not. Jesus' second command was that they should give the girl something to eat. Beautiful evidence of his concern for ordinary human needs!

"As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered that we could face life successfully, as we became conscience of His Presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn." (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 63).

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

Romans 10:9-11 (N.I.V.)

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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says: "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

+++++

Discovering what our real needs are and then asking to have them met is in all probability the most unselfish act we will ever perform. Scripture indicates how faith is the transforming act in ones life. It replaces fear and apprehension with bold confidence that rests on the sure promises of God!

In the above verses Paul addresses himself to the positive approach for which purpose he makes use of the Scriptural passages from Moses (Deuteronomy 30:11-20). These passages describe the righteousness that comes by faith. Building on this passage; especially it's use of heart and mouth, Paul goes on to speak directly of the content of the Christian Gospel, and it's availability to all people.

Whatever other differences there may be among human beings there is no difference when it comes to the need for Christ and His Salvation. The source of our spiritual life is found in the same God and Lord whose blessings (notably Salvation) are richly bestowed on us without partiality!

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Galatians 6:3-6 (N.I.V.)

If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.

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In the closing verses of chapter five Paul contrasts the works of the sinful nature and the Fruit of the Spirit concluding that Christians must live Spirit led lives. But what does it mean to live a life characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, and all the other God Given Virtues?

To those who might prefer a mystical experience or a flight of fancy it comes as a shock to find Paul returning at once to the most down to earth subjects: personal relationships (v.v. 1-5), and the use of money (v.v. 6-10), and to find him measuring spirituality in these areas. We who are Christians (or confess to being one) must learn that it is in concrete situations rather than emotional adventure that the reality of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in our lives!

Love - sacrificial unmerited deeds to help a needy person.

Joy - inner happiness which is not dependent on outside circumstance.

Peace - harmony in all relationships.

Patience - putting up with others even when severely tried.

Kindness - doing thoughtful deeds for others.

Goodness - showing generosity to others.

Faithfulness - trustworthy and reliable.

Gentleness - meekness and humility.

Self control - victory over sinful desires.

ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Proverbs 30:32-33 (N.I.V.)

*“If you have played the fool and exalted yourself,
or if you have planned evil,
clap your hand over your mouth!
For as churning the milk produces butter,
and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife.”*

+++++

Without question the greatest roadblock to our recovery is pride (the dishonest and false kind). In our fifth step sharing we can open up (and face up) to the reality of our deepest and darkest secrets. Most importantly the fact that we are sharing (confessing) these to God will ultimately bring the healing medicine that we require!

The sage advises those who have exalted themselves and played the fool (it can happen during our confession) and those who have planned evil (so can this) to cease their efforts and take control of what they say. Namely, “clap your hand over your mouth.” The reason for this warning is that anything short of the simple and honest truth put forth in a humble manner will only cause more strife (in the confessor).

The entire purpose of our step five effort is that we are striving for peace and harmony in our life. This can only be brought about with humility and truth.

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

Romans 12:1-2 (N.I.V.)

Therefore, 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. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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Paul begins the above verses by urging us rather than instructing us (urge lies between commanding and beseeching). Mercy denotes that quality in God that moved him to deliver sinners from their state of misery and sin and therefore underlies his saving activity in Jesus Christ. It serves here as the leverage for the appeal that follows: Whereas the heathens are prone to sacrifice in order to obtain mercy, Biblical faith teaches that Divine Mercy provides the basis for a life of sacrifice as the fitting response! Are we entirely ready?

The living sacrifice is equated with spiritual worship. While the exact sense is difficult to determine, the main idea is that the sacrifice that we do render to God must be sincere, intelligent and deliberate (a great contrast to animal or human sacrifice). The definite advantage to living sacrifice is that it covers the entire range of Christian life and activity (c.f. Deuteronomy 10:1-22).

Serving God is the proper sequel to worship!

Complimentary to the refusal to be conforming to the pattern of this world is the command to be transformed. We must test and approve; refusing the norms of conduct and reaffirming for ourselves the spiritual norms that are befitting the redeemed!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

Psalm 51:7-10 (N.I.V.)

*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

*Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

*Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

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Step seven embodies the miracle of transformation as we turn defective personalities over to the care of God. In our doing so we are allowing him to remold us into healthy and effective instruments of his will!

In the verses above the Psalmist petitions the Lord to be his priest and declare him cleansed from all sin. The metaphor, ‘whiter than snow,’ signifies forgiveness, cleansing and renewal (rebirth)! Even as God’s displeasure with sin brings judgement described above as “crushed bones,” so does his pleasure, bring a joyful heart! This joy is much more than an emotional expression. It is contented resting in God. Hence it is known as ‘the joy of Salvation!’

Forgiveness and cleansing (the removal of our shortcomings) are prerequisite for communion with God. Wisdom maintains this communion. In the spirit of true contrition the Psalmist prays for a pure heart and a steadfast spirit. Spiritual renewal always leads to Godliness and Wisdom!

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

1 Corinthians 4:4-5 (N.I.V.)

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

+++++

If we have become willing in our step eight effort, our most underlying attitude must come from the heart.

In the above verses Paul examines the character of those who are handling God's Truth. They, including himself, must first of all show themselves faithful. He states that since he is the Lord's servant and steward, it is the Lord to whom he owes responsibility, and it is the Lord who will judge him for the quality of his service.

Human judgement has very little value. Even self evaluation is completely unreliable. Christ is Lord of the conscience and the only one who can evaluate it properly!

Paul then moves forward to the return of Christ when all of us will have our works examined at the judgement seat of Christ. Because of this he charges the Corinthians (and us) not to judge his faithfulness, for this can be done only by the Lord, when he returns! Therefore, knowing that the Corinthians are already judging him and others (we do also), he says to them in effect, "curb your habit of judging." This should be an important consideration for us in our step eight effort. What is hidden in darkness, is the actions and motives, concealed in the inner recesses of someone's mind and heart. If we are not certain of our own, we must be very careful about judging others. Paul says the Lord will expose the motives of mens hearts. He will bring to light what is hidden in the darkness!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Proverbs 16:23-24 (N.I.V.)
A wise man's heart guides his mouth,
and his lips promote instruction.
Pleasant words are a honeycomb,
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

+++++

During our step nine effort our ever increasing wisdom will begin to show itself in everything we say and do. The Proverbs above are specific regarding the use of wise speech in all of our daily contacts but this is imperative in our direct amends to those we have injured, lest we injure them even more. This can only make matters worse.

Those who are wise ensure that they say wise things. The first part asserts that the wise heart “guides the mouth,” while the second part adds that such a heart increases the reception of what one might have to say. Wise speech builds a reputation for competence and enhances influence. It also leads to a reputation of being discerning which in turn promotes instruction!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

1 Corinthians 3:10-17 (N.I.V.)

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each mans work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

+++++

Paul gives a warning: All builders and whoever works for God must be careful how they build. Any defects in our work will be our own faults. Christ cannot be blamed for it. A continual and ongoing personal inventory, in unison with our willingness to admit when we are wrong, is the only sure way that we can build our lives on the foundation that Jesus has already laid for us!

The quality of our work refers to the kinds of materials that we as individuals use in our building. The fire referred to is the fire of God's Judgement. Those Christians whose work's stand the test of fire (c.f. 1 Peter 1:7) will be rewarded (c.f. Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19: 11-27). Those whose works are consumed by the fire will themselves be saved but without any works of praise to present to Christ.

SOUGHT THROUGH PRAYER AND MEDITATION TO
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AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM PRAYING ONLY FOR
KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL FOR US AND THE
POWER TO CARRY THAT OUT

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (N.I.V.)

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the
glory of God.*

*Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the
church of God - even as I try to please everybody in every way.
For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that
they may be saved.*

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These verses introduce a positive and the ultimate perspective. It is not only the other brother who should be in view, but rather, God is the Creator and Giver of all things. As recovering persons we may use our groups and literature as additional food and water and as springboards toward spiritual, emotional, and personal growth!

The Glory of God must be our objective in everything (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). Paul says that doing "all for the Glory of God," means always for the good of others. So we can find encompassed in these verses the two great commandments - "Love God," and "Love your neighbor," (Matthew 22:37-39). As it is Paul's, our ultimate objective in all of our conduct is that others might be saved - not superficially, but fully, and to the Glory of God!

The command given has continual relevance: "Follow my example," (literally). "Ever become an imitator of Christ. The same Christ who had dealt gently with Paul (Saul) in Paul's previous prejudices (Acts 26:12-18)!"

HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS A
RESULT OF THESE STEPS WE TRIED TO CARRY
THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS AND TO PRACTICE
THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS

Galatians 6:1-2 (N.I.V.)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

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It has now been well established that people who share a common problem will have a special capacity for empathy among ourselves. Even relatively new members of the various twelve step groups will recognize this essential fact so on into their recovery process. Our acceptance into the group should also involve our responsibility to the group if we are truly interested in helping one another.

In the verses above Paul reveals the necessary maturity of a believer within a spiritual group with regard to how we might help others who are “caught,” in their present situation, while at the same time remaining free from judgement and criticism. He imagines a hypothetical situation in which one member of the group suspects that another member is caught up or trapped in a situation that is out of agreement with the group. What can we do or what should we do?

Would love and caring mean that one should overlook this situation and refuse to accept the facts? Should one expose the other person openly, thus gaining a reputation of superior righteousness? Paul suggests that a spirit-led person would not proceed in either of these ways. He then goes on to describe the proper course of action.

One should deal directly with the other, and with extreme caution do whatever they can to help restore that person’s faith and trust in the group (this does not mean just us). Secondly; this work of restoration must be done only by one who has the experience and capacity to help (we cannot give away something we do not have)!

CHAPTER TWELVE

*“SALVATION IS FOUND IN NO ONE ELSE, FOR
THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN
GIVEN TO MEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED.”*

ACTS 4:12 (N.I.V.)

Jesus is the only way!

Notes

STEP ONE

WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS-
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Psalm 38:13-22 (N.I.V.)

*I am like a deaf man, who cannot hear,
like a mute, who cannot open his mouth;
I have become like a man who does not hear,
whose mouth can offer no reply.
I wait for you, O Lord;
you will answer, O Lord my God.
For I said, "Do not let them gloat
or exalt themselves over me when my foot slips."
For I am about to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.
I confess my iniquity;
I am troubled by my sin.
Many are those who are my vigorous enemies;
those who hate me without reason are numerous.
Those who repay my good with evil
slander me when I pursue what is good.
O Lord, do not forsake me;
be not far from me, O my God.
Come quickly to help me,
O Lord my saviour.*

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CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN
OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 (N.I.V.)

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the Kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

+++++

Step two is the logical and orderly follow up to step one. If we have admitted and accepted our own powerless and unmanageable human condition we must now seek a new source of strength and guidance and this being one that will restore us to sanity (the sanity with which we were born). Our restoration and

Salvation dictate that this new power cannot be and is not anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ.

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,” is an emphatic and conclusive way of introducing us to some vitally important affirmations. Paul implies that no Christian believer will deny that an integral part of the Gospel is the Resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). Therefore, we must now accept the sequel. Christ Guarantees the Resurrection of the Christian dead, as the word “first fruits,” teaches!

Paul is calling all believers to stop sinning in their denial of the Resurrection of the dead, and by implication, the Resurrection of Christ. A denial that leads to loose living and death. There are those in the church as well as those not in the church who do not know God or the precious truth of the Resurrection of Christ.

Paul also implies that all of these are in shameful condition (human condition) because they are espousing such a great (and fatal) denial of truth.

MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR
LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE
UNDERSTOOD HIM

John 5:25 (N.I.V.)

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”

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Jesus the Son of God is the arbiter of destiny. The determination of this destiny is immediate as the present tense “and has now come,” implies. Eternal life becomes the inheritance and possession of the believer at the instant of acceptance: The future judgement will only confirm what has already taken place! The phrase, “and has now come,” refers to the present era. This will terminate with the return of Christ, and the Resurrection of the dead in Christ. There is also another sense in which the Lord’s word rings true; He is promising to those of us who were previously spiritually dead (the woman at the well) Eternal Life!

Jesus claimed Deity by saying that he was not dependent on another for life just as the Father had derived his life from no one. Jesus Christ possesses Inherent Life, the power to create new life, and the power to renew life that has been extinguished, spiritually, emotionally, or physically.

MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL
INVENTORY OF OURSELVES

Proverbs 5:1-10 (N.I.V.)

*My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
listen well to my words of insight,
that you may maintain discretion
and your lips may preserve knowledge.
For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double edged sword.
Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.
She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.*

*Now then, my sons, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.
Keep to a path far from her,
do not go near the door of her house,
lest you give your best strength to others
and your years to one who is cruel,
lest strangers feast on your wealth
and your toil enrich another man's house.*

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ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO
ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF
OUR WRONGS

Psalm 32:3-5 (N.I.V.)
When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer. Selah
Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord" -
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin. Selah

+++++

The Psalmist describes the anguish of his suffering as a comparison to the wasting away of his bones and the complete sapping of his strength. God's discipline weighed so heavily on him that he nearly succumbs under the pressure. The power of God's discipline dries up the Psalmist's vigor like a plant exposed to the sun in the heat of summer. In a truly repentant spirit the Psalmist confesses his sin and immediately he receives the sought after forgiveness of God; his Savior.

WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE
ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER

James 1:2-6 (N.I.V.)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

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By trusting completely in him (faith) our old fears will fall away and we will become willing to have him remove all of our character defects. God is more than eager to do so as these dependencies, addictions and compulsions have seriously hampered our walk with him!

James explains that trials are a reason to rejoice because of the wholesome effects that they produce. The word trial describes things and events that put a person to the test (of faith). These can be trials from within (ourselves), such as temptation to sin, or they may be from without (coming from others), such as persecution.

If perseverance is to finish its work, faith must persist, and not falter or give up. The goal in view is that believers might become mature and complete (whole). Perseverance in facing trials develops a maturity of character which overcomes character defects. The overall effect will be a balance of grace and strength which will be required for the Christian walk with God.

As we ask God for anything, we must believe, and not doubt.

Our faith must be much more than the mere acceptance of a religion, creed or doctrine. The true believer has confidence that it is God who is in control, and he will meet our every need (if we need)!

HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR
SHORTCOMINGS

1 John 3:4-9 (N.I.V.)

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devils work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God.

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As God sees us humble and trusting before him, he will bring about the necessary changes in our lives to repair the damage of the past, and restore us to wholeness.

All who have their hope in Jesus will also be committed to keeping themselves from sin. They will put away defilement. They will aim to be like him in purity and Righteousness. Here again we have the pattern of Jesus being held up as an example to believers (c. f. 1 John 2:6; 3:7-16; 4:17). Those who would claim a likeness to him must conform to His earthly life even as they wait his coming. To live in sin or disobedience to his commands is to abandon any hope in him. It is the pure in heart who will see God (Matthew 5:8).

Anyone who is born of God (or born again) has God's seed in him and cannot continue to sin. Believers must live in him. He in turn will live in us and we will live even as he lives.

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED
AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO
THEM ALL

Romans 14:7-11 (N.I.V.)

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgement seat. It is written:

*“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘ every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will confess to
God.’”*

+++++

Without question we need to grieve out our hidden and underlying resentment, hurt, anger, and pain.

In the verses above the recurring phrase is “to the Lord,” indicating that whether one is thought of as being weak or strong the most important demeanor is that each one of us conducts his or her life with a conscious awareness of God’s presence. God’s approval is far more significant than the approval or disapproval of our fellow man!

Paul is not expressing a maxim that is applicable to all people, rather, he is speaking to believers. Christians (if they are) do not live to themselves because they live to the Lord. Both groups (believers and nonbeliever alike) will someday have to answer to God on their own account.

As we become willing to forgive others (our amends), for what they have done to us (or not done for us), it is then that God can and will forgive us and thereby facilitating the necessary change in us (amends)!

MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE
WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO
WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS

Philippians 4:8-9 (N.I.V.)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

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In these verses' Paul sets forth in memorable words a veritable charter of virtues for Christian thought and action. If we are willing to follow this Apostolic Guidance, we have the additional promise that God, who is the provider of true peace, will be with us! From a spiritual perspective, casting off our defects and shortcomings and tendering amends is both healing and freeing; to all concerned!

True - has a sense of valid, reliable, and honest. The opposite of false. It characterizes God and should characterize believers as well.

Noble - denotes a quality that makes people worthy of respect.

Right - refers to what is upright or just, conformable to God's standards; thus worthy of his approval.

Pure - emphasizes moral purity.

Lovely - relates to what is pleasing, agreeable or amiable.

Admirable - denotes what is praiseworthy, attractive, and true to the highest standards.

Paul knows that if we become willing to center our thoughts on things such as these we will live as Christians ought to. In doing so our amends and behavior will be greatly enhanced!

CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND
WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT

Romans 16:19-20 (N.I.V.)

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

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Paul affirms his confidence that we his readers will be able to handle our present situation. Steps ten, eleven, and twelve are sometimes called the maintenance steps, as they repeat many of the points outlined in the previous steps. Most importantly they emphasize the necessity and value of continuing (perseverance) to work our steps on a day to day basis. Our confidence will also increase with our obedience!

An appeal to ones record always puts a person on his or her mettle (temperament). Paul strikes a balance; on the one hand he rejoices as he thinks of the good name of this congregating; on the other hand he wants to make sure that we are discerning, able to spot trouble, and avoid falling into it.

Perhaps the mention of what is evil lead's Paul to think of the instigator of evil (Satan), and the one who has blocked the devils effort thus thwarting the devil's hoped for triumph over us.

God is the God of Peace (c. f. Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:9; 1

Thessalonians 5:23) who is concerned to preserve harmony between His People and protect them from divisive influences. He is able to defeat the adversary who delight's to sow discord among us. The word "crush," suggests that Paul has in mind the Scriptural Promise of Genesis 3:15. Our ongoing ability to take our own personal inventory, coupled with the willingness to confess our wrongs and having the courage to change will magnify the Grace of God within us!

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Psalm 127:1-2 (N.I.V.)
Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchmen stand guard in vain.
In vain you rise early and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat -
for he grants sleep to those he loves.

+++++

The building of the house may refer to the construction of a house or the raising of a family but in this Psalm it is very obvious that reference to our spiritual house and our fellowship with the Lord is the theme.

The Psalmist suggests that human effort in the construction of one's spiritual house without input from God is in vain. The building of our spiritual house, the spiritual welfare of our families and the involvement in our community spirit is also practiced in vain, without the Lord. We can only know the Lord if we are willing to turn our will and our lives over to him, and obey his commands!

The Psalmist does not depreciate the importance of hard work but decries this as an inferior way of life if the hard work is only to provide daily food and is not dedicated to the Lord. The higher way of life is obtained by working and trusting in the Lord to provide our every need. With His blessing on them and their labor the Godly can rest without anguish!

Revelation 22: 1-6 (N.I.V.)

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. The angel said to me, " These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

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Revelation 22: 12-14 (N.I.V.)

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

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Freedom From-Freedom To