

Living to the Lord

No longer living to ourselves

The Christian life is not merely a matter of receiving Christ and knowing that we have eternal life and are going to heaven. Although none of these matters are wrong, they are short of the divine thought. God's thought when we receive Christ is that a new source would be established within us for our entire being. This new source is our regenerated human spirit (John 3:6). Having a change of source is the most central thing in our regeneration.

To have a source-change means that we no longer live to ourselves, but to God, and we no longer live by the self, but by His life. What naturally follows the initial birth of our spirit is a progressive transfer of our source in our daily life. For this transfer to happen, it is necessary to pass through experiences with the Lord in which the old source, the self, is dealt with, and the new source, our spirit, gains the ascendancy (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16).

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, man is a being composed of spirit, soul, and body. Although our spirit exists within us as a potentiality before we are regenerated, it is in a dead condition. So the source of our living prior to regeneration is not our spirit, but our soul, which includes our mind, emotion, and will. In Ephesians 2:1-3 Paul clearly defines our unregenerate state: ¹ "You... who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air" — that is, according to Satan — "the spirit who is now operating in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we

all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts." "The desires of the thoughts" means that we have lived out Satan in our independent thoughts. We have been one with Satan in the realm of our thoughts. This characterizes our old life before we are regenerated.

But when the Lord enters into us, our spirit is born and we have an inner rearrangement of our being. The mind, emotion, and will are no longer to take the lead to determine our living. The leading part of our being now becomes our regenerated spirit, where we are joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). It is from this Christ-indwelt center that all the parts of our soul will find their proper place and function. Formerly, we were an independent self that did its own things, thought its own thoughts, made its own decisions. But once our center changes, all this is altered. Christ comes in to make home and rearrange all our inward parts (Eph. 3:16-17).

Now the Lord wants us to become familiar with our spirit — to discover our spirit, release our spirit, and learn to take initiative with our spirit. But because our soul has taken the initiative for so many years, we have been flooded with our own thoughts and enmeshed with our own feelings and choices. So even after we are regenerated, we may not find that we consistently live one spirit with the Lord. We may still live out of the source of our self in many things. But we have to see that in regenerating our spirit, the Lord intends that all our living be permeated with the Spirit. So we need to practice living out of this source, actually being one spirit with the Lord and living to Him.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Living to the Lord
— Pages 1-3, 6-8
- Hindrances to Growth
— Pages 4-5, 8

Ministry of the Word, Inc.

P.O. Box 12277
Scottsdale, AZ 85267

Change Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Scottsdale, AZ
Permit No. 824

God's dealings effecting a transfer of our source

The Lord wants us to know that all the dealings with our self, all the many blows it receives, are to effect a transfer of our source experientially. Everything He allows is for the process of bringing us into this wonderful transfer of our source. By this transfer we become persons actually living one spirit with the Lord. For example, at home with your husband or wife, you now live one spirit with the Lord practically, and you are regulated and controlled by the Spirit. You are living out of the source of Another Life, rather than living loosely, freely, and independently. Instead of rebelliously speaking what we want to speak, we actually experience a transfer to live by the Spirit.

Second Corinthians 5:15 reveals the experiential result of our transfer: "And He died on behalf of all, that those who live should live...to Him." To "live" here means not just to humanly exist on this earth, but to live in union with the Lord. This is how we live: we live joined to this crucified, resurrected Christ. This is the truth. The fact is that in regeneration we have been joined and married to Christ (Rom. 7:4). And because we have been crucified with Him and raised together with Him, the very nature of our spirit is crucifixion and resurrection — *crucifixion* for the flesh, the self, the old man; and *resurrection* for us to live one spirit with Him.

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "that those who live should live no longer to themselves, but to Him." You can see that this is experiential. The cross is a fact that transfers the source of our lives. Now we are joined to Christ through regeneration. What is the issue of this? What is the purpose of it all? It is that we no longer live *to* ourselves, that we no longer take ourselves as the point of reference for anything! We no longer consult with ourselves or debate with ourselves. To "live no longer *to* ourselves, but *to* Him" means that we have a new center, a new source, a new base of operation. From this new source, we live "to Him who died for them and has been raised."

Based upon this transfer and its experiential effect of no longer living to ourselves, verse 16 begins, "Therefore, from now on..." In verse 15, we live in the old way "no longer." And in verse 16, it is "from now on, we know no one according to the flesh." This means we do not interpret people or relate to one another in the way we did in the past. "From now on" is the outcome of "no longer" living to ourselves. Because we have a new base of operation, our whole attitude about one another and how we relate to one another is changed. We no longer know each other according to the flesh.

This knowing even includes the way we are related to the Lord, to Christ. Paul testifies, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" (v. 16). We do not remain in our human concepts, ideas, views, and imaginations about Christ. But now, as we are firmly, solidly established in spirit — our new base, our new source — we know Him as the life-giving Spirit and as the Head filling the members of His Body (Eph. 1:22-23). Then 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." So, we can see from these verses that Paul is speaking about a transfer of source in which we no longer live to ourselves, and are related to Christ and to one another in the new creation.

We see this same precious transfer in Romans 14:7-8: ⁷"For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." This simplifies everything. This makes everything uncomplicated. This keeps us in the enjoyment of Christ hour after hour. Now we no longer handle the self, consult with it, debate with it, or live it out. We just know one thing — how to enjoy Christ, how to fellowship with Him, handle everything with Him, and relate to our environment with Him.

In this transfer we find ourselves no longer living an independent, self-trusting life, instead, we increasingly live dependent on the Lord, just as He lived dependent on the Father. In John 8:28 He describes His own living: "I do nothing from Myself." He neither spoke nor acted from Himself. It is this dependent life that the Lord supplies to us in our spirit. This grace-wrought dependency is the goal of all of God's dealings with the self. It is the result of a genuine transfer of source that takes place in us so that we live to the Lord.

In Romans 8:4 Paul explains the transfer of our source in still another way: "...the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to spirit." This phrase "according to" signifies the standard by which we live. We no longer live according to the standard of the flesh. The flesh is not our standard or point of reference anymore. We do not live out from the flesh, or according to flesh. This is synonymous with saying "not according to self." Our standard now is to walk "according to spirit," which means to do things, conduct ourselves, and live according to spirit. This requires a new spirit-source.

In Romans 8:5 Paul says, "Those who live according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh." This means that

you take your self as your source and live according to it. Experientially, you are absorbed in your self. You live out of your self — considering your condemnation, your shortage, your condition, your situation. This is to mind the things of the flesh. Minding the things of the flesh means your tendency is to bring up your whole history — your failures, your inability, your conflicting thoughts. When you begin thinking in this way, you get bent in that direction, and soon you are possessed with yourself again. Actually, it means that you are taken over by the devil and his thoughts (2 Cor. 2:11), you are susceptible to thinking the devil's thoughts. Indeed, your soul-life is enmeshed with the demonic realm (James 3:15). You entertain demonic thought patterns. Why? Because you have lived out of the wrong source — not according to spirit but according to flesh.

Romans 8:5 continues, “Those who live according to the spirit mind the things of the Spirit.” We enter into another realm here. This is merging with Christ and participating in His life (John 14:19). We begin to enjoy an all-inclusive Christ Who is everything to us. As we enjoy all that He is in “the law of the Spirit of life,” we are being freed continuously from the bondage of this self (Rom. 8:2). So we can see how crucial it is for us to be transferred out of our self and into the spirit.

The primary expressions of the self

Now let us fellowship about the expression of the self so that we can more practically know the meaning of being transferred out of the self. There are three primary expressions of the self. By defining them we will be able to grasp what it means to live out of the self, and the self will not be abstract to us.

The first expression of the self is opinion. To live in our opinion is to live in the self and express the self. In other words, self and opinion are two sides of one thing. Opinion is the manifestation of the self, and the self is embodied in opinion.

The second expression of the self is reasoning. The reasoning of our mind refers to our thinking process. By this process we evaluate things and make decisions according to our own concepts, logic, proofs, and rationalizations, even according to our imaginations and fantasies. To live according to reasoning is to live according to the self.

The third expression of the self is subjectivity. What does it mean to be subjective? It is the opposite of being objective. To be subjective means that we are a person who is prone to evaluate our personal situation, our

present condition, and our relationships with others entirely on the basis of our own feelings and our own thoughts. We have no objective base. The Word of God is not our base, the truth is not our base, and the fellowship of the Body is not our base.

The Word is objective and the Body is objective. If I am objective, I am a person who opens up to the Word and to the members of the Body. I fellowship with others and hear the Body (Matt. 18:15-17). But if I am subjective, I analyze everything according to my own feeling, regardless of what others say and regardless of what the Word says. The deciding factor is how *I feel*, how *I think*. So a subjective person is a self-centered person — one who has no other way of seeing things but from himself, making it very difficult to hear and understand others properly.

Subjective persons are totally wrapped up in themselves, taking themselves as the standard by which they measure others and interpret or understand situations. This destroys the ability to live Christ and have a proper church life. Being subjective also makes it very difficult to receive the impressions of the Spirit — to be touched by the Lord, to hear and know what the Lord is speaking, and to be shined upon by Him.

WHAT OPINION IS

Though the word *self* is quite abstract, we can identify these three concrete expressions of the self — opinion, reasoning, and subjectivity. Now let us consider the first expression of the self — opinion. What is opinion? In the dictionary *opinion* is defined in several ways. First, opinion is “a view, a judgment, or an appraisal formed and found in the mind about a certain matter.” Something formed in our mind can also be called a *concept*. We may have a concept about our husband or wife. We may have a concept about the church in a certain place. This concept, view, or judgment formed in our mind is our opinion. From experience we know that opinion naturally controls and dictates how we relate to one another. Proverbs 23:7 says, “As he *thinks* in his heart, so is he.” What is formed in our heart, what we think, what our concept is, dictates how we relate to others.

Another definition of opinion is “a settled judgment in regard to any point.” Opinion is something that is settled. This is what is most damaging about opinion. When we have settled thoughts about each other, the Lord has no way to break down the barriers in our relationships. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Paul shows us that settled thoughts are strongholds. There is no way for us to be properly related

(Continued on Page 6)

Hindrances to Growth

We are often attentive to those factors that contribute to our growth in the Christian life. This is as it should be. But we must also pay attention to those factors that hinder our growth. Perhaps we have never considered the fact that in the spiritual life there are things that will stunt our growth. For instance, Paul told the Corinthian believers that they were still “babes in Christ.” At the time he wrote to them, they should have been more mature in Christ. They should have been “spiritual men” who could partake of solid food and not just milk. That would have been normal since they had been believers for a number of years. But unfortunately, the Corinthians had tolerated certain matters in their daily life that stunted their spiritual growth. As a result, they remained in an infant stage.

Thus, we must take heed not only to those factors that contribute to growth, but also to those that hinder it. A gardener not only provides water and fertilizer for his garden, but he is also vigilant to keep out weeds, insects, and disease. He must carefully tend his garden by keeping a watchful eye on any negative factors that would hinder the growth of the plants. We too must be careful to tend our own heart, to take heed to ourselves. We need to be watchful for matters that would creep into our daily life and frustrate the growth of Christ within us.

It is helpful to realize that we do not need to guess or surmise what these negative factors are. The Holy Spirit has identified in the Word of God those items that hinder our growth in order that we may be aware of them and deal with them. Let us consider three primary matters that will stunt our growth: sin, the past, and the world.

Sin

God has clearly identified sin. For instance, the Bible speaks unequivocally about sexual sins such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and other forms of sensuality such as indulgence in pornography. It specifies other moral sins, such as rebellion, violence, lying, stealing, cheating, cursing, and drunkenness. These are matters that the Bible plainly prohibits. They are violations of God’s holy and righteous nature. There is no gray area in these matters. If we commit such acts, they are sins before God.

Many unbelievers today ridicule the Word of God as being old-fashioned and outdated because of its prohibitions against sin. They point out that it has become socially acceptable and common for people to live in certain sins. They reason that if society deems it acceptable then they are justified to practice it. However, there is Someone higher than our society who will one day judge the whole earth. That Someone is God. Though society’s standards might change, His righteousness and holiness do not. What was sin to God yesterday is still sin to God today. His Word is

unchanging and absolute. And in the day of judgment, what will count is not what was acceptable to society, but what is acceptable to God.

Even as believers, we must make no mistake — sin grieves the Holy Spirit and will frustrate the flow, growth, and fellowship of His life. Too often, Christians tolerate practices of sin in their lives, thinking that God is not that serious about it. Or they surmise that since God is full of grace and mercy, they can live in sin without any real consequence. It is true that God is full of grace and will forgive sin that is confessed. But, as the apostle Paul says, “Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” In other words, if we sow to the flesh by practicing sin in our daily life, then we will reap the result of our sin. And what is the result of sin? It is corruption and death. We know that sin is pleasurable for a period of time. But the long-term effect of sin is that our souls become polluted and deadened. Of course, the Lord never leaves our spirit. Yet our fellowship with Him is hindered. His presence and the flow of His life wanes. His life does not grow properly.

Therefore, as believers we need to deal with sin in our lives. How do we do that? First, we must understand that *sins* come out of *sin*. That is, the plural acts of sin proceed out of a sin nature that indwells our flesh. The New Testament reveals that even as believers, we must still cope with a sinful nature. Our salvation does not eradicate sin from our flesh. (This will occur at the Lord’s second coming when we receive our resurrection bodies, which will be free of all sin.) While we still live in these mortal bodies, we continue to feel the tugs of our sin nature. The apostle Paul calls them “the lusts of the flesh.” And he tells us, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Notice that he does not say, “you shall not *have* the lust of the flesh.” We should not have the false expectation of being delivered from all the influences of sin once we receive Christ. All believers continue to have the lusts of the flesh.

However, as Paul states here, we do not need to *fulfill* those lusts. We are not obligated to sin. Why? Because as believers, we now have the indwelling Spirit. We know that to deny those lusts requires a power beyond our own will-power. And this power to overcome sin resides in the Spirit. Only the Spirit can truly set us free from the power and slavery of sin. As Christians, we not only have sin in our flesh, but we also have the Spirit in our spirit. We have the power and ability of the Spirit to resist sin, to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, to deny ungodliness, to break the habits of sin. So, how do we deal with sin? We deal with sin through the Spirit. In our daily life we can actually walk in the Spirit, and not carry out the lusts of our flesh.

Dealing with sin by walking in the Spirit has three practical aspects. First, we must keep ourselves supplied by the Spirit in our daily lives. By regularly drinking of the Spirit in fellowship, prayer, and the meetings of the church, we lessen the frequency and intensity of the risings of our flesh. The flesh has a more difficult time gaining ascendancy

within us when we keep ourselves daily supplied by the Spirit. Second, the Spirit will lead us to avoid those environments that entice and draw out our flesh. Paul says to “make no provision for the flesh.” That is, we should not put ourselves into situations where our flesh will be aroused. For instance, if in our past life we had a history of drunkenness, then as a believer we should not allow ourselves to get into situations where we might be tempted to drink. Third, when our flesh is tempted to sin, we need to exercise ourselves to put that temptation to death through the Spirit. In other words, when we are in the middle of a lustful temptation, we can call on Jesus, we can pray, we can touch the Spirit within our spirit, we can tap into the power and sin-denying ability of the Spirit. When we do, we are enabled to walk in the Spirit. We are empowered to not fulfill the lust of the flesh. We are quickened to flee from sin. And the result is that we live. Whenever we, by the Spirit, deny sin, we receive the benefit of more of Christ’s life flowing within us. We sow to the Spirit and we reap life. We grow in Christ.

The Past

The next matter to consider is our past. It is very normal for new believers to experience the Lord’s leading in clearing up various matters related to the past. We all have different backgrounds and histories in our past life as unbelievers. And the Holy Spirit will often speak to us about specific matters of our past that He desires us to clear up. Of course, we need not comb through our life’s history looking for things that we need to deal with. But as the Spirit brings matters to our consciousness, we should pray about them and then take care of them as the Spirit leads us.

One area of our past that we may need to deal with is related to things we have done or said. Perhaps we stole something a number of years ago. The Spirit might touch us to go to those whom we stole from, apologize, and make restitution. Or, perhaps we said some cutting, hurtful words to someone. The Spirit might speak to us to go to that person and ask for his forgiveness. Or, perhaps we were deceitful or we even cheated in a certain situation. The Spirit might lead us to make it right.

Another area of our past relates to our possessions that we have accumulated over the years. We might sense the Lord’s dissatisfaction with certain items in our home or office. Those items that, at one time, we felt so comfortable owning now cause us to feel uncomfortable. This can include things like pictures, artifacts, or clothing that, because of their nature or content, are not compatible with the Spirit. Of course, if we own items such as idols or things related to the occult, witchcraft, or the demonic world, we should dispose of them immediately because demons are related to these things. The book of Acts records that the believers actually burned books related to witchcraft that they had acquired as unbelievers. Although the books were worth 50,000 pieces of silver, the Lord led them to destroy such items rather than sell them.

Dealing with these matters often requires wisdom and spiritual experience. It is particularly helpful to fellowship with believers in the church life who are more mature in the Lord and can exercise wisdom in the practical clearance of our past. And as we cooperate with the Lord in dealing with the past, He will grow within us.

The World

To many Christians, the fact that we must deal with sin is obvious and plain. Yet, dealing with the world is perhaps not so straightforward. As a result, many believers, though strict with sin, tend to tolerate the influence of the world in their lives. Sin is seen as pernicious to the Christian life, whereas the world is seen as rather neutral and harmless. But when we examine the Word of God, we find that the influence of the world is anything but neutral and harmless. The apostle James says, “Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” The apostle John says, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world,” and “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The apostle Paul charges us to “not be conformed to this world” and to “come out from among them and be separate.” It is obvious from these passages that being a worldly Christian is indeed a serious matter to God.

To understand why friendship with the world is serious to God, we must realize the source and ultimate goal of the world. The original New Testament Greek word that is translated “world” is actually “cosmos.” The word refers to an orderly system or arrangement of things. After the fall of man, Satan initiated the world system. In fact, Satan is the mind behind the cosmos, or world system. For instance, in our society we have such things as commerce, education, entertainment, the arts, and politics. Where did these things come from? The Bible reveals that their source is not God. Nor is their source merely man. The invisible inspiration behind the whole system is Satan. He is called the “ruler of this world” and “the god of this age.” Why would Satan devise such a system? Because his goal with the world is to usurp man from God. In other words, if Satan can consume our time, energy, and heart with the various occupations of the world so that we have little or no time, energy, or heart for God, then he has succeeded in his evil intention — he has replaced God in our lives.

Of course, the world does not consist of just evil things. There are many good things in the world. We know that education is not inherently evil. Yet, if education consumes my life, then it is the world to me — I am being usurped from God by education. Another example is sports. If my heart loves sports and my desire to read about or watch sports exceeds my desire to read the Word of God, then sports is the world to me. Even “my ministry” for God can be the world to me! If I allow “my ministry” to mean more to me than God Himself, then that ministry is the world.

Thus, the world can be defined as *anything which usurps our hearts*. So in dealing with the world, we simply

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued from Page 3)

to others because of the stronghold of settled judgments we have about them.

A third definition of opinion is “notions, beliefs, or convictions based upon probable evidence.” Often we form a notion or a belief about someone which does not have any basis in fact. “Probable evidence” and “suspicion” are the soil in which opinion grows.

Just consider these definitions before the Lord. How do you feel about others? Do you have an opinion about them? Is there something formed, a settled judgment, in your mind? These things dictate how you relate to the brothers and sisters. To live by these settled judgments, these views, these concepts, is to live in opinion.

WHAT OPINION DOES

Opinion divides us

Having defined what opinion is, let us fellowship about what it does. In the Body opinion divides us. Wherever there is opinion, there is division. In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul says, “Now I plead with you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no *divisions* among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same opinion.” Paul is burdened for the saints to be of the same mind and of the same opinion. We know that they were of different opinions because each was saying, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:12). So division existed among the believers in Corinth due to their opinions about the superiority of certain brothers.

There was division in the church, but it was not denominational division at that juncture. It had not developed to that degree. But Paul calls it division. Division due to what? Due to their opinion — their judgments, their concepts, and their settled views about the brothers. They were even speaking out their opinion. So Paul diagnoses that as being division, by saying, “that there be no divisions among you.” These verses in 1 Corinthians show us that opinion produces division in the church.

We cannot be so confident as to say that we are without division. In the church there may be much opinion. There may be settled views, judgments, and concepts about the saints, about our relationship to other churches, about our relationship to certain persons, and about the way to practice the church. There may even be opinions about what it means to experience Christ as life. Some saints may have an opinion, a settled view in their mind, that others are walking according to the flesh, when actually

they are genuinely following the Lord (2 Cor. 10:2). For example, there may be saints who are dealing with the Lord about getting rid of some worldly items in their house. They are before the Lord, and they are having specific experiences of Christ. But others may think, “This is too much. The Lord does not care what we do with our possessions. We will wait and see if this is really the Spirit.” To stay in this realm and entertain thoughts like this is to be in the realm of opinion. It is this kind of opinion that causes division.

Opinion insulates us

Opinion not only causes division, but it also insulates us from one another. By holding opinion, we cut off the organic flow of life between us, insulating ourselves from the other members of the Body. What is left is just an outward existence together. You and I may meet under the same roof, sing the same songs, and read the same Bible, but there is no organic reality of life. This insulation is due to opinion — the expression of the self.

Ephesians 2:14 says, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity.” The insulation of opinion is the middle wall of partition, and the middle wall of partition is the enmity. Thus the insulation is the enmity. And what is the enmity? It is this little bad feeling I have toward you and the little bad feeling you have toward me. These ill feelings, this enmity, is in apposition to the middle wall in this verse. In other words, the middle wall equals the enmity.

Verse 15 says, “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.” According to this verse, the factor producing the enmity is the ordinances. Ordinances are the concepts we hold dear, the things that we feel strongly about. Wherever there is an ordinance, it will always breed some enmity and bad feelings. Holding ordinances and having strong opinions go hand in hand. They damage the organic relationships in the Body and keep the members insulated from one another.

We not only have opinions about the church or the brothers, but many of us have a deep-seated opinion about our husband or wife. If we live with such an opinion about each other, there will constantly be bad feelings and reactions. Why are there so many reactions in your marriage? Why are you always angry? Why is your temper always on the surface? It is only because the self is alive through opinion. This is not a normal way to

exist. Temper is a symptom of the self-life that lies beneath the surface in the form of ordinances and opinion. When the Lord deals with the self by dealing with opinion, temper is killed, as well as all that insulates and divides us. The cross is the only answer for opinion (Matt. 16:22-24).

Opinion disintegrates the reality of the Body

Where opinion exists, it not only divides and insulates us, but it also disintegrates the reality of the Body. Furthermore, it prevents us from discerning the Lord's Body. In 1 Corinthians 11:18 Paul says, "There are divisions among you." There were opinions, choices, and preferences among the saints, and in that condition they presumptuously took the Lord's table, "not discerning the Lord's body" (v. 29). So the reality of the oneness of the Body was disintegrated through division caused by opinion. Satan works through opinion to divide, insulate, and disintegrate.

Opinion immobilizes us

Ultimately, opinion immobilizes us as members of the Body. In addressing the saints' situation at Philippi, Paul's burden was that the opinion existing in the church and causing the dissension would be dealt with. Then they all would think the same thing and be joined together in soul. In Philippians 4:2 Paul implores two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche, "to be of the same mind in the Lord." Then in verse 3 he addresses another saint, saying, "I beseech you also, true yokefellow, help these women" (ASV). This means that Paul wanted someone to get into the situation of these two sisters. They could not deal with the self and experience Christ by themselves. Their self, expressed in their opinion, needed someone to get into their situation.

Through the book of Philippians, Paul's burden was to get into the situation of the saints and help them to deal with the opinion among them that was causing the disharmony. He realized that opinion had immobilized the church. This is why he exhorts the saints in Philippians 1:27, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together in the faith of the gospel." This means that for the Lord's move on the earth to be a shining testimony that holds forth the word of life (2:15-16), and for the church to be aggressive for the gospel, the saints needed to be standing "in one

spirit, with one soul striving together." The words "striving together" come from the compound Greek word συναθλέω (*sunathleo*). The root word is rendered "athlete," and the prefix means "with" or "together with." So this word gives you the sense of a team of athletes moving together, *mobile*, for the advancement of the gospel.

But opinion will immobilize and even completely stop this genuine coordination, this "striving together." There cannot be genuine fellowship and openness when opinion is in the air, because there is actual division and insulation among us. As a result, the reality of the Body is disintegrated and we are just immobilized. This is why it is crucial to deal with the self and its expression of opinion. Without this dealing, the Lord cannot obtain a proper expression of His Body.

We have seen what opinion does — it divides, insulates, disintegrates, and immobilizes. For example, if there is opinion existing between a husband and wife, they are immobilized as parents from properly and adequately handling and dealing with the children. So when parents live in their opinion, the children receive the brunt of it.

If opinion immobilizes on the smaller scale of the family, consider its effects on the larger scale of the church, the Body of Christ. No wonder Paul exhorts the Philippians to "stand firm in one spirit." Stand firm, because it is so easy to be pulled out of your spirit by your opinion or consideration. When Paul speaks of standing firm in one spirit with one soul, practically it means praying together (1:19; 4:6), emptying yourself (2:7), laying aside your thought, and not grasping for anything out from yourself (2:6). This standing together in one spirit issues in having one soul. The soul simply follows as long as we stand together in one spirit. This is how Paul got into the situation of the saints in Philippi with light and life, ministering to them in a transparent way. Because of this, they could deal with opinion and continue in the Lord's work together.

Dealing with opinion through failure

Now that we have identified what opinion is, how do we deal with it? A divinely appointed way to help to experience this transfer out of our self and opinion is failure. For example, we are so fortified with self-confidence that we live out the self just as Peter did. Peter was so full of the self, so full of self-confidence, so full of his opinion, that God allowed him to have a big failure. Immediately after his spiritual success, he had a big failure. So failure is part of the process of dealing with

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued from Page 7)

our opinion. Of course, to know the self is part of knowing the Lord. If we do not know the self, we cannot adequately know the Lord. And when we adequately know the Lord, we know ourselves — we know that we are untrustworthy, that there is nothing good in us. So experientially, the more we get to know the Lord, the more we know ourselves in God's light (Psa. 36:9).

Deuteronomy 8:2 says: "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." This verse shows us that the Lord humbled the children of Israel and tested them. Their being humbled came about through many testings and failures. It was not that the Lord needed to learn more about them or get to know them; but they needed to get to know themselves. It was the same with Peter in the Gospels. It is obvious that he was a person full of self-confidence, because he had so many opinions. So the Lord allowed him to fail the most.

We may express our opinion to our husband or wife, or to other saints. We are so strong. We feel we are so right. We are convinced the other person is wrong and we are right. But then in some area of our personal life, we sin. We live in the flesh. We fail. Yet we may not connect our opinion with this failure. But this failure is intended to cause us to open ourselves to the Lord and tell Him, "Lord, I do not know anything. I cannot do anything. I just open to You, Lord, to cast down not only the sin, but all of my opinion." Through dealing with failures in this way we are brought more and more to the place of having no confidence in ourselves but in the Lord Himself. Thus, failure is part of dealing with the self to effect a practical transfer of our being into the spirit. By this transfer we live to the Lord as our source and center.*

— To be continued
— Bill Freeman

* This article is taken from chapter 3 of the book, *The Cross and the Self* by Bill Freeman. This book of 321 pages may be ordered for \$12.00, postpaid, from **Ministry Publications**, P. O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (602) 948-4050 • Fax: (602) 922-1338.

(Continued from Page 5)

need to ask ourselves, What items of the world occupy my interests, affections, time, and energy? What items crowd out the Lord Jesus? Is He still my first and best love? Where does my heart go in my free time — does it dwell on Him? If not, then we need to deal with those specific items that

usurp the Lord's place in our lives. This might mean breaking certain habits and patterns of life, severing certain relationships that are worldly and not godly, and terminating membership in certain associations, clubs, or organizations. Of course, this does not mean that we leave society and become monks. We must still live and function in the world. However, though we may be *in* the world, we do not need to be *of* the world. We are those who have been called out of the world to be set apart unto God. He has not called us to be common, but sanctified. Indeed, the Bible says that we are sojourners and strangers in this world. Our real home today is the church. And when Jesus comes again, our home will be the kingdom. Therefore, when we deal with the world in our lives, our time and energy will be reserved for Him, our love for Him will be nurtured, and His life will flourish and grow within us.

Scripture References:

The possibility of remaining a babe in Christ: 1 Cor. 3:1-3; 13:11; 14:20; Eph. 4:14-15; Heb. 5:11—6:1

Taking heed to ourselves: Luke 21:34-36; 1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Tim. 4:12-16; 6:11-14, 20-21; 2 Tim. 2:4-7, 21-23

Dealing with sin: Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-4; 13:12-14; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 2 Cor. 12:20-21; Eph. 5:3-18; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 2:20-22

Dealing with the past: Luke 19:1-10; Acts 19:18-19

Dealing with the world: Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:14—7:1; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2-3*

— Kirk Eland

* This article is taken from chapter 16 of the book, *Christ: the Christian Life* by Kirk Eland. This book of 218 pages may be ordered for \$9.95, postpaid, from **Ministry Publications**, P. O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (602) 948-4050 • Fax: (602) 922-1338.

the Christian

the Christian is a non-profit monthly publication of **Ministry of the Word, Inc.** This paper is for the spreading of the truth of God's Word and the building up of the Body of Christ.

Subscription to **the Christian** is free and will be sent upon request. Any donations to Ministry of the Word, Inc., to further the publication and distribution of **the Christian** will be appreciated and are tax-deductible: P.O. Box 12277, Scottsdale, AZ 85267.

Ministry of the Word: (800) 573-4105 / (602) 948-4050

E-Mail: MinWord12@aol.com

Internet Address: <http://www.thechristian.org>