TRADI-TION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A Bible Study Series illustrating the nature of the Church, how it's to function, and how Christians can return to Gods intent for it.

Chuck Schiedler

Deep gratitude to
my wife Debi
for her coutless hours
of editing and poofreading

Thanks to my long time friend
Gary Schubert
who's inspiration is behind the
design and production
of this e-book

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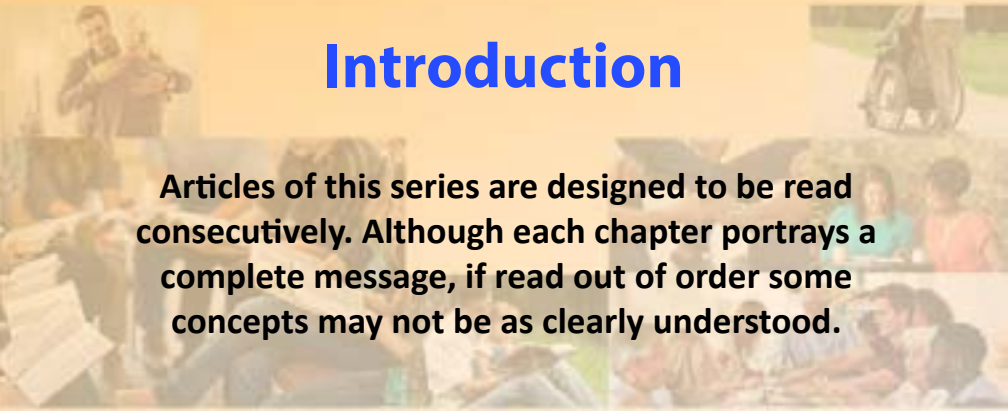
TRADI-TION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Introduction

Articles of this series are designed to be read consecutively. Although each chapter portrays a complete message, if read out of order some concepts may not be as clearly understood.

Chuck Schiedler

"though this series is intended to edify all Christians, it's more about the responsibility teachers...bear than anything else...because we've been designated to help all believers so everyone together can contribute to growth in the Church"

SERIES
INTRODUCTION

Today, there's a lot of talk among Christians about getting back to how the New Testament Church functioned. From my standpoint, I've come to believe *Tradition makes this wish impossible*. When I retired five years ago, I couldn't have imagined writing about the stifling effects of tradition. Then, unexpectedly, the seeds of this project sprouted from repetitive exposure to the Letters of Paul. This forty-five year study has shaped my conception of what the Church, the Body of Christ is; how it's to function; God's purpose for its members; and how His purpose touches

every detail of Christian practice. Having undergone this theological evolution, when I compare my current understanding of how the Body is to operate with what's happening in present day Christendom, I'm troubled.

For, I see obstacles in churches and organizations often brought on by *separating doctrine from teachings of lifestyle change*. This dichotomy exists even though both topics are clearly linked in most contexts. Also, I observe problems caused by the practice of *compromise*. This is because a number of Bible teachers aren't willing to share everything they know. Based on these two widespread practices, the cumulative effect of multi-century-sustained error continues to rear its ugly head, come full circle, and manifest its toxicity through dysfunction and division in the Body.

Having said this, I recognize I'm simply one teacher amid millions of others. Each of us possesses a Spirit-given gift to benefit the Church and, ultimately, the Lord will evaluate how well we perform our job. So, I suppose, even though this series is intended to edify all Christians, it's more about the responsibility

teachers bear than anything else. This is because we've been designated to help all develop so every believer can contribute to the growth of the Body (Eph. 4:11-16).

Before proceeding, I want to share a ritual my wife and I have most mornings as we begin our day. We enjoy coffee during which I often share my thoughts about Scripture so I can get her **take** on it. I value Debi's opinion because she has an analytical mind, has spent a great deal of time studying the Word, endeavors to respond in a productive manner, is a skilled communicator, and always targets the underlying intent. So, I know I'll receive **constructive criticism**.

Sometimes, she asks me to clarify what I mean. Other times she questions if my ideas are too provocative because she wants to protect my ministry. Often, she probes into how I plan to share my point of view to help communicate it in the most effective manner. At times, she actually says something like **'Do you know how arrogant that sounds?'** Yes, our relationship is very real. Nevertheless, in her Christian-sister-role,

she serves as my devil's advocate and has been the greatest influence in keeping me on the straight-and-narrow. Although this task hasn't always been easy for her, I do appreciate how seriously she takes this important 24/7 spousal duty.

In addition to my wife, I also thank the Lord for the half dozen believers whom I've always had as a core group to hold me accountable. Each time one departs to be with the Lord, there seems to be another to take their place. In a variety of unique relationships, I've always had at least a couple individuals with whom I can pretty much share anything concerning the Christian life.

Frequently, I'll throw out an idea about a biblical issue I've been pondering and say, **'What do you think?'** Other times I'll ask, **'Am I crazy for coming to this conclusion?'** Sometimes, they say I am! As good friends, they offer their honest assessment. Bouncing things off of brothers and sisters as listening-posts has offered me verification, correction and/or modification of hundreds of concepts over the years. I genuinely believe interactions like these represent part of

how God intends for us to develop while we mutually minister to one another.

As this series unfolds, if you think some of my conclusions are peculiar, just know most of my beliefs are based on what I've learned from other teachers. A majority of Bible teachers see a lot of truth in the Word but don't always apply what they know to the everyday operation of the Church. Usually, this is because many truths are unpopular.

"I've seen this common routine of separating principles of doctrine and practice result in a large amount of misinformation, imbalance, ineffectiveness, and disunity...most often compromise is the culprit"

Over the years, I've seen this common routine of separating principles of doctrine and practice result in a large amount of misinformation, imbalance, ineffectiveness, and disunity in the one Body. Sometimes these

negative outcomes rise from sincere inexperience with what the Word teaches, but most often compromise is the culprit. The former cause is inexcusable as competent teachers should know what they're talking about. Compromise, as I've seen from the inside, is practiced for the purpose of retaining numbers, obtaining the reverence of men, maintaining personal salaries and contributions, and carrying out what's cleverly termed as **'ministry'** for the sake of the "gospel".

The part of the "gospel" which pertains to Christian growth never includes compromising truth (Acts 20:20, 27; Gal. 4:16; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:1-3). Based on my comprehension of Scripture, a simple outline which represents our ministry includes bold yet gracious dissemination of truth, tolerance among believers so growth can occur, loving interactions rooted in godly character, and the need for periodic doctrinal/moral stands to protect the flock.

However, when compromises are made and persist, the Church suffers. Thank God I've had the privilege of knowing a few mentors who've tried their best

not to compromise what they know. By saints like these, the Body of Christ enjoys **Living Insight** into the potential for transformation of both mind and heart (Gal. 5:16-24; Eph. 3:18-21; 5:16-21; Phil. 3:17). And when maturity emanates from fellow believers, young and old benefit as we witness **True-Mentors-in-Action**.

As you've probably gathered by now, I plan to write this series by using some different than usual techniques. I've chosen to write articles in the first person so they can include emotions and experiences. Similarly, I want to connect truths from the Word with the feelings which should accompany conviction. Also, these expositions will typically be composed of down-to-earth language with the goal of including a wider audience. Finally, I'll seek to merge biblical instruction with real-life circumstances which I've either personally gone through or seen others experience. So, I can truly affirm, **'Been there, done that'**. In the end, my desire is to appeal to each reader's conscience so you're left to contemplate your own life choices by the principle, **'If the shoe fits, wear it'**.

Please know, it's not my intent to target any particular individual or group. However, experience has taught me it's virtually impossible to achieve meaningful reform in a group which emphasizes some teachings intended for the Body instead of granting equal importance to the full spectrum of that truth.

"I believe infinite reform is possible in every believer who submits to renewal by the Spirit's power... As individuals take responsibility to mature, they become models inspiring spiritual development in others"

In contrast with groups, I believe *Infinite Reform is Possible In Every Believer* who submits to renewal by the Spirit's power to internalize this life-changing instruction (Rom. 12:2). As individuals take responsibility to mature, they become models inspiring spiritual development in others. This **Domino Effect** is how God designed the Church to be perfected, built up, and caused to grow (Rom. 12:1-21; Eph. 4:11-16).

Note, this renewal process was formulated by God to reach its full potential when the entire Body is involved. For this reason, **An Optimum Level of Reformation Can't Take Place in Separated Groupings of Believers**. So, it's my sincere hope these articles will help motivate each believer to take the steps needed to facilitate **Growth in The Universal Church**.

Recently, a senior example of mine, Bob Renberg, encouraged me to adopt a life-verse from Scripture. He shared his is Galatians 2:20 and recited it something like this: "I've been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I don't live but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith (or "faithfulness") of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

This recommendation prompted me to think about verses which could represent this series. Immediately, Acts 20:20 came to mind where Paul addresses the Ephesian Elders about his past service among them, "publically and house to house, I didn't shrink back from announcing to you and teaching you the things which are profitable." Then, a few verses later he

adds, "For I didn't shrink back from announcing to you **all the counsel of God**" (v. 27 – emphasis mine).

That's my goal for this series. I don't want to simply beat around the bush by targeting passages which support my beliefs. But, my aim is to boldly tackle all pertinent Scripture which contributes to grasping God's purpose for the Church and how we should engage in it.

I don't claim to know everything or expect you to believe every aspect of what I teach. Nor should you take my teaching for granted or build your faith on it. For that matter, you shouldn't blindly accept what anyone else teaches either. Quite the opposite! For, all Christians should be like the noble Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see if what they heard Paul teach was actually true (Acts. 17:11).

As a teacher in the Body, my job is to educate its members for the purpose of helping each understand the intended meaning and ramifications of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 10:25). Then, God holds believers responsible to check out the Word and come to their own conclusions. By taking this course, individuals

can effectively construct the foundation needed to support a self-assured Christian life (Rom. 14:22-23; Col. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-3).

While stressing personal accountability, I want you to know I respect the autonomy of fellow Body members. For, every teacher should defer to the fact each believer will give an account to the Lord for our choices during this life. And teachers should offer a *Prime Example of This Reality* by executing our job with a sober anticipation of that Judgment Day (Rom. 14:10-12, 22-23; 1 Cor. 3:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Heb. 13:17).

With this outlook, my objective is to share the Word in a way which supports the spiritual independence of every single believer, though I haven't always taken this approach. For, in my younger years I was influenced by assertions such as, **'After you study** (whatever topic) **you'll end up coming to my position'**. Since then, the Word has compelled me to abandon tactics like this which I now realize encourage indoctrination and pride, plus discourage personal growth and responsibility.

At this time, I'd like to share a memory which throws light on my primary reason for writing about Scripture. About ten years ago, Debi and I visited one of my mentors who was 88 at the time. Gordon McNeilly, a medical doctor, along with his gracious wife, Lois, entertained us for about an hour in their home. I can't describe the testimony this couple had throughout their life by quietly demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit in a way I've never been graced to see before nor since. To this day, just pondering the impact they had on me along with so many others makes me smile.

"He encouraged me not to just replicate what's already out there but to write about new things, at least to the extent a theme is dealt with in a fresh way"

During this final visit, Doc asked me what I wanted to do when I retired. After sharing one of my goals was to write biblically based material, I distinctly remember and have taken to heart a recommendation he made. He encouraged

me not to just replicate what's already out there but to write about new things, at least to the extent a theme is dealt with in a fresh way.

Planned articles for this series have this purpose in mind. All subjects will relate to how **Tradition Hinders Spiritual Growth** including: An essay on 'God's Single Movement' – the Body of Christ; How the Holy Spirit leads believers in this dispensation; How salvation by Election impacts everyday life; Consideration of Church leaders and their responsibilities; Present day significance of the Judgment Seat of Christ; A practical discussion of Greek Editions and Translations; The reality all believers are 'Called to the Ministry'; and 'Bible study' as described by the Epistles. In time, some of these may be scrubbed and others may be added.

Though this commentary will test the beliefs of some and parts may even be considered controversial, I thank my friends for urging me to address these topics. For, I'm assured that a renewed deliberation of these issues will benefit Christians, especially when the intent is to source Scripture alone and **exclude**

every tradition introduced by so-called *'Church History'*.

As already stated, the secondary goal of this series is to challenge Bible teachers, including myself, to **Do our Job and Teach All the Truth God Intended for the Church!** May each of us in this God-given role conduct our service to the Body with "fear and trembling" while realizing one day we'll answer for the job we do (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 3:10-17; 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Phil. 2:12-18; Heb. 13:17). Without further introduction, if this overview has sparked your interest, join me in evaluating why various *Traditions Deter Spiritual Growth*.

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New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek texts.

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About the Author

Chuck has been married to his wife, Debi, for 45 years. They've lived in Springfield, Oregon since 1984 and are fortunate to reside within 25 miles of their children and eight grandchildren. After owning two businesses, they retired in 2016. Prior to moving to Springfield, Chuck taught Bible and New Testament Greek at Canyonview Bible Seminary from 1978 to 1984. Since then, he has continued to minister in various churches and home fellowships with an emphasis on contextual Bible teaching and applying the Word to develop Christian character.

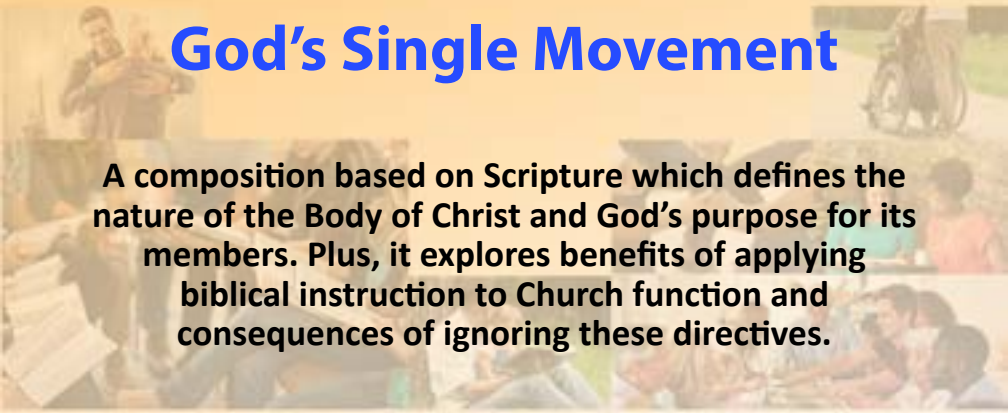
This couple's regular activities include spending time with family, numerous Bible studies, gardening, traveling, hiking in God's beautiful creation, camping in their 5th wheel, and writing.

Since 2012, Chuck has contributed numerous articles and audio messages to edifiedliving.net, three of which are published in the *Journal of Grace Theology*. Also, he's developed a mentorship program which seeks to help believers cultivate personal initiative to learn the Word and be transformed by its teachings. This combines in-depth Bible study with a close teacher/student relationship to prepare for real life ministry and Christian practice.

Those who desire greater independence in the Word are encouraged to learn New Testament Greek. By progressively building a comprehension of word meanings, grammar and language structure, Chuck helps believers understand the Original text plus teach directly from the Greek New Testament.

TRADI-TION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

God's Single Movement



A composition based on Scripture which defines the nature of the Body of Christ and God's purpose for its members. Plus, it explores benefits of applying biblical instruction to Church function and consequences of ignoring these directives.

Chuck Schiedler

God's Single Movement

Almost all Christians recognize every person who trusts in the blood of Jesus is a member of His Body. So, when we read the New Testament Epistles, even in a devotional manner, I believe most of us think there's little need to study the nature of the Church because it's so prominently on display. Yet, the majority of believers I know primarily apply biblical principles to their circle of fellowship rather than relating them to all Christians in their area. And most tend to interpret Scripture in a manner which approves the practices of their own assembly. I honestly don't think there's a conscious effort to do these things, however, this is a common tendency which distances us from other Body members. I see this detachment reflected in statements like **'God has me right where He wants me'** or **'My group is Spirit-led'**. This outlook is greatly concerning because it

almost eliminates the need for outside fellowship or checks and balances.

In addition, a lack of healthy critical thinking provides fertile ground upon which division can easily be sown. And, I witness many wishing to cultivate sectarianism, which is already too prevalent in Christendom. Based on this environment I believe we should ask, **'What factors encourage believers to gravitate toward dividing and, at the same time, reduce the desire to interrelate with other Body members?'** I think this lack of interest is largely due to messages preached in most assemblies plus recommended books, audios and videos we choose to satisfy our theological appetite.

In view of this influence, what conditions would we expect to find that suggest a group of believers is headed toward a mindset of exclusion? I see an early sign when Christians *begin to identify others attending their assembly as* **'Family'** instead of classifying all believers as the Body of Christ. Further advancement is characterized by regular attendees, as a group, *coming to accept the same list of*

distinctive beliefs. Generally, this trend suppresses questioning church dogma or practice, for to do so is viewed as divisive or at least creating unnecessary **'waves'**. A final stage which signifies division is the formation of a *group-mentality of being* **'right'**. Then, typically, *targeted doctrines are propagated* to support this claim.

I've observed this backward-movement-of-discord many times. And, believers who choose to detach frequently take on a haughty attitude along with a high level of closed-mindedness. Often, I find it difficult to even discuss Scripture since the process of indoctrination seems to desensitize the average believer from attributing much value to views of Body members outside their group.

Fortunately, Christians have always had access to **Perfect Medicine for this Disorder** – the Revealed Will of God. With this Basic Asset, *every believer is capable of being in control of their own spiritual condition* which is truly *A Default of Our Own Making*. For, when we step into the driver's seat by disciplining ourselves to spend time in the Word, we

can achieve the necessary aptitude to test everything we're taught and stay on a Spirit-directed course.

Taking personal responsibility is crucial since, disappointingly, some leaders are happy when believers surrender initiative and follow their teaching. This is because it's far easier to dominate compliant members as well as preserve doctrinal unity. In these controlled atmospheres, members are routinely cautioned from rubbing shoulders with other Christians based on the prevailing view, **'We need to protect our sheep'**.

A similar strategy seeks to get members so involved they lack time to be influenced by anyone else. Justification for these practices is based on the thought, **'They're too immature and would surely be corrupted by false teaching, so this is for their own good'**. In reality, this *Mode of Operation* is generally driven by fear of losing supporters and usually includes tactics spawned by the philosophy, **'The End Justifies the Means'**.

Ephesians 4:14 addresses this ethical issue as Paul warns believers not to be led astray by "every wind of teaching", since *instruction is often used as the tool of choice* for a "method of deception". One feature of fraudulent training is expressed by the term "πανουργια", translated "craftiness" and "shameful ways". This noun consists of two words meaning *to work everything* and, contextually, it represents *all potential methods used to promote or destroy* (Luke 20:23; 1 Cor. 3:19; 2 Cor. 4:2; 11:3 – it's other four occurrences). Of course, Christians should steer clear of any policy that contradicts biblical character. And the way we can avoid flesh-based strategies is to **Sell-Out to The Lord** by taking the initiative to acquire spiritual discernment though "putting off" our "old man" and replacing it with "the new" (Eph. 4:20 – 6:20).

Unfortunately, the techniques already mentioned together with many other strategies continue to help manipulative environments prosper and play a large part in the erosion of harmony in the Church. Again, I don't think most Christians are aware of how some of these procedures hamper growth and ministry

within their own congregation, let alone how these practices deprive them from mutual edification by collaborating with other believers. Yet, this generally unquestioned **'normal way of doing things'** goes on and on, continues year by year, and thrives regardless of how the Word describes the Body and how it should function (1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 4:7-16).

I wish this picture was better, but I don't think it is. Regrettably, I've been guilty of supporting some of the practices just described. And I'm not proud of it. At least, during those years I continued to study the Word with the aim of bringing my thoughts and actions in line with what I learned. Eventually, I began to understand how my sinful nature was in control of my mind and heart so I couldn't even rely on my own rationale. After realizing my outlook had a drastic need for change, Scriptures like Romans 12:2 helped direct me to pursue the "renewal of the mind" so I'd be able to "approve what the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God is" (cf. Eph. 5:15-21).

Thankfully, I've shared this journey with several fellow believers who also recognize the need for

ongoing growth and with whom I can banter back and forth concerning spiritual matters. Without their support, much of what I've learned wouldn't have been possible. So, with these preliminary thoughts in mind, please join this endeavor to sketch **A Portrait of The Body of Christ** from the narrative in the biblical account.

Core Truth about the Body of Christ

Since the Book of Ephesians describes the Church and how it should function in a more comprehensive way than any other, it's an excellent place to start. In chapter one, while praying for the Father to help us understand the "exceeding greatness of power" we possess to live the Christian life, Paul equates this same power with what God used to raise Christ from the dead and exalt Him to His heavenly position. Then, he states, "and He (God) subjected all things under His (Christ's) feet and gave Him Head over all things in relation to the church, which is His body, the fullness of the one filling all things in all" (Eph. 1:19, 22-23).

This passage exemplifies the Church in numerous ways. First, the title of "Head" (κεφαλην) refers to *a position of leadership*. As our *Top Executive*, Christ is everything to Christians since we're defined by the "spiritual blessings" we've received in Him (Eph. 1:3). For, through "Christ", we were chosen to be God's sons, given "redemption" from sin, provided the "mystery" truth as our "administration . . . to head up (ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι)[1] all things", and sealed by the Spirit to assure our eternal inheritance (vv. 4-14).

Next, this verse says Christ has been placed "over all things in relation to the church" (v. 22). This phrase declares the Church is fully protected in our subordinate position under the "Head", even from hostile spiritual authorities (v. 21, cf. 3:10; 6:12-13, 16). Since Jesus rules "over all things", believers should "hold fast to" or *cling to* His Person (Col. 2:19). By this connection, **we plug into the One who initiated our entry into the Body and enables us to successfully live for Him** (Eph. 1:19; 3:16-19; 4:15-16; Heb. 4:16; 12:1-2).

Both our Lord's position as "Head" and our need to "hold fast to" Him are aspects of the "mystery" revelation introduced in Ephesians 1:9-10. The term "mystery" (μυστηριον) literally means *a secret*. But the fact Paul was inspired to still use this designation after it was revealed should *serve as a constant reminder it can't be found in revelation known prior to the crucifixion* (1 Cor. 2:8; Eph. 3:2-5). Now that this "mystery" truth is available, believers have access to God's "wisdom" through the revealed "mind of Christ", it discloses God's "administration of grace" for the Body, and it divulges all the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" needed for spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 2:6-7, 16; Eph. 3:2-12; Col. 1:24 – 2:3).

These three contexts establish how believers can learn about the relationship we have with our "Head" by "reading" the "wisdom" contained in the "administration (οικονομιαν – *house-management* or *dispensation*) of the grace of God" (Eph. 3:2-4, cf. 1:9-10; 3:9-12; 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 9:16-18). **This "mystery" is exclusively detailed in Paul's Letters**, for he's the only one who uses the term or defines the specifics of this revelation. In addition, **Paul**

alone uses the term "Body" for the Church. So, if its members want to fathom our relationship with Christ, we need to spend time in his Epistles.

Continuing in Ephesians 1:23, the "church" is defined as "His body" (σωμα). This expression represents *a human figure*; however, Paul uses it to illustrate the Church as *a spiritual Body made up of many members* (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14). This "body" is then spoken of as the "fullness" (πληρωμα) of God. This noun means *completeness* or *full measure* and it brands the "body", the "church", as **God's Perfect-Crown-Jewel**. In turn, "His body" is portrayed as the *full measure* "of the one filling all things in all". This final statement indicates Body members are **Made Equal to The Complete Essence of Our Father** by the direct action of His own "filling" (Eph. 1:23). The marvelous consequence is we're now viewed by the Father as being *the full measure* of what He Himself is – holy and righteous – because of the *flawless position* we occupy in His Son (1 Cor. 1:30-31; 6:11; Eph. 1:3-7).

In chapter three, Paul further develops this Body concept by praying that these believers mightreach their potential of becoming "all the fullness (πληρωμα) of God" (3:16-19). Progress toward this goal occurs when we use the indwelling Spirit to help internalize truths about what God has made us "in Christ" (2:1 – 3:19). Then, Ephesians 4:12-16 explains how "saints" can reach this "fullness" by growing toward "perfection" for "the work of ministry" and specifically with the objective of "building up of the body of Christ". This is to happen "until we might all attain . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness (πληρωματος) of Christ". Although spiritual maturation is an ongoing process, perfection should be our goal.

Also, the word "πληρωμα" is used twice in Colossians regarding the Person of Christ. First, God desired "all the fullness" to dwell in the Son to achieve His purpose of reconciling all things to Himself (Col. 1:13, 19). Later, Christ is exemplified by the phrase, "in Him, all the fullness of deity presently dwells in bodily form" (2:9). Again, we see "πληρωμα" used to

represent the complete essence of the Persons of God and Christ.

The next verse delivers a most astounding reality since it conveys how closely we're related to God's embodiment of "fullness", our Lord Jesus Christ: "And you exist as ones who have been filled (πεπληρωμενοι) in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2:10). This participle occurs in the *perfect tense* which means Christians *were initially filled* with Christ's "fullness" (at the point of salvation) and this *filled state continues* uninterrupted.

Beyond this divine action, the present tense verb of being "you exist" (εστε) emphasizes this wrapped-up-state "in Christ" is our *current existence*. By reflecting on the combined meaning of these Ephesian and Colossian passages which articulate the connection believers have with the "fullness" of God and Christ, we can begin to conceptualize our amazing association with the Lord and His Body. And these contexts should compel us to **Broadcast this Miraculous Body-State** to others.

Having briefly looked at Ephesians one and three's portrayal of the Body, let's consider the chapter sandwiched between to see how it adds to Paul's **Portrait of The Church**. Chapter 2:1-9 speaks of how God "saved" sinners headed toward "wrath" by extending His "mercy", "love" and "grace". Now redeemed, we're described as His "poem" (ποιημα), which is how this Greek word transliterates into English (v. 10). It's equally well translated **'workmanship'** and most basically means *a doing* or *thing made*. Therefore, the Body is poetically defined as *an Expression of Divine Doing – God's Work of Art*. Then, for the first time in this Book, we who were "created in Christ Jesus" are exhorted to "walk" in the "good works which . . . God previously prepared", an appeal to live a godly lifestyle that's detailed as the narrative proceeds (cf. 4:17 – 6:20).

Continuing, Paul explains how "gentiles" who were previously excluded from God's program with "Israel" are now included and on the same level with saved "Jews" in the Church. This spiritual relationship became possible when the impediment of the "law" of Moses was set aside so "both" Jew and gentile

could be newly "created" and now exist in "one body". Christ accomplished all these feats by His work on the cross (vv. 11-16). The outgrowth of this new Body, the "one new man", is the solitary haven where Jew and gentile no longer have "enmity" with one another but now have "peace" among themselves as well as with God in our mutually "reconciled" condition (vv. 14-18; 2 Cor. 5:16-21).

The *final benefit* Christians gain from being "in Christ" is found in the statement, "because through Him, we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (v. 18, cf. Rom. 5:2; Eph. 3:12). This indicates each Body member has *a direct path to God* and, therefore, no need for a human mediator other than "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). This advantage exists in stark contrast with how Jews needed priests as intermediaries between them and God under the Law. Lastly, this *new creation* of "one body" is portrayed as God's present "building", "holy temple", and "dwelling", for His Spirit lives in us. So, today, **Saved Jews and Gentiles Constitute God's People** and together replace the Nation of Israel (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Phil. 3:2-3).

What an illustration displaying the essence of the Body of Christ! Note how this picture is intermingled with allusions about the inter-relationship of its members such as enjoying mutual "peace" and sharing the common pursuit of becoming "all the fullness of God". As this story unfolds, one would expect further clarification explaining how believers can attain these platitudes. So it is; as the Book continues, instructions for how the Church should function are outlined by its Creator.

Groundwork for Body Function

Paul begins Ephesians four by synchronizing *Church practice* with the *doctrine* already penned in the first half of the Book. Verse 1 tells believers to "walk", or *live our lives*, "in a manner worthy of the calling (*Christian belief and practice*) for which you were called" (εκληθητε). Although we're the subject of this verb, its passive voice specifies *Christians were acted upon by a force outside* of ourselves. In addition, its aorist indicative form indicates how God "called" us *at the past point of time* we were saved (Rom. 8:30;

9:12, 24-26; 1 Cor. 7:15-24; Gal. 1:6, 15; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Then, verse 2 urges God's elect to interrelate with character favorable for "striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3; Col. 3:12). As Body members "walk" in the Spirit, we can generate "fruit" which includes the "humility", "gentleness", "longsuffering", and mutual "love" mentioned here (v. 2, cf. Gal. 5:16-18, 22-23). With these qualities, we'll be able to "maintain the unity" (ενοτητα), **The Feature God Wants to Dominate His Spirit-Driven Movement**. This Greek word is a form of its root "εν", the cardinal number which simply means *one*.[2] Occurring in noun form, "ενοτητα" describes *the nature of what* the Body should sustain, that is, *oneness* or *singleness*. Most Versions translate it "unity" which is the intended idea.

Since the phrase "of the Spirit" is in the genitive case, meaning *in association with*, it's essential we choose to "be filled" with the Spirit since the desired "unity" and "peace" in Christian relationships are only possible *in connection with His control* (Eph. 4:3;

5:18). Finally, the participle "striving" (σπουδαζοντες) literally means to *be quick to* or *swiftly pursue* "unity"; and its present tense suggests we do this *unceasingly*.

This *Responsibility-Provoking-Introduction* precedes a list of *seven ones* which present *seven realities* God's provided for the Church to successfully operate (Eph. 4:4-6). In conjunction with each component, the *cardinal number* "one" is used which ties these seven realities to the "unity (ενοτητα – *oneness*) of the Spirit" in verse 3.[2] In addition, these seven ones follow on the heels of *a four-time use of this same cardinal number* "one" in chapter two. There it describes how Jews and gentiles were made "one" in Christ by removing the division-causing partition of the Law, created into "one new man", reconciled "in one body to God", and both given access to the Father by "one Spirit" (Eph. 2:14-16, 18).

Before proceeding, I'd like to re-emphasize a point from verse 3; it doesn't say we need to *develop* "unity" (*oneness*), but we're "to maintain" (τηρειν) it. This simply means God asks Body members to do

what's necessary to *keep* the "unity" *intact* which He's already "created". Therefore, the next few verses set forth *Seven Persons/Things* as a **Celestial-Pedestal** upon which believers can activate this Unity-Potential we're implored to have.

Divine Essentials to Maintain "Unity"

The **First Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is "one body" (εν σωμα – Eph. 4:4). We've already spent a great deal of time defining the Body of Christ, but now it's cited as central for aiding "unity". An explanation of how the Body contributes to "unity" is found in First Corinthians 12:12, "For, according as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body, also likewise *is* Christ."

In this verse, Paul introduces an analogy which shows the *interconnected relationship* between the members of our human body, such as ear or eye, and our whole physical body (vv. 12, 14-17). Then, he applies this concept to the spiritual realm by use of the phrase, "also likewise *is* Christ". The adverb

"likewise" (ουτως) compares the Name "Christ" as being *in like manner to* how the parts of our human body are interconnected with their whole. Therefore, in this context, the term "Christ" actually represents both our Lord as Head of the Body and us, who are Body members *in intimate connection* with Him. How can we make sense of what brought about this spiritual bond?

This interrelationship was initiated by our baptism into the Body when we "were all caused to drink one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Through this baptism, believers became so closely aligned with the Lord **We're Now Called by His Name and Exist as an Indistinguishable Spiritual Entity with Him**. For now, God sees us as fully justified "in Christ" and we possess the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 5:1-5; 6:3-4, 11). As a result, Body members aren't only identified as His "fullness" (Col. 1:19; 2:9), His newly created "poem" (Eph. 2:10), and His new "holy temple" (2:21), *we're also characterized by His Name*.

This perception is strengthened by the *verb of being "is"* (εστιν) in the phrase "also likewise *is*

Christ" because it portrays the name "Christ" as *the essence of* our relationship with His Person (v. 12).[3] As we contemplate *our existing spiritual essence is indistinguishable* from the Person of "Christ", this fact alone should bolster the self-image of every believer and eradicate the need to ever suffer an *Identity Crisis*.

The ongoing context further reveals God's intent for the Body as Paul shifts focus to the interrelationship of its members. First, he *validates the worth of every believer* since membership into the Body comes by divine appointment, "Now, God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body according as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:18). Next, based on provided gifts (vv. 4-11), the text proceeds to stress how *every believer benefits the Church* because each adds "value" (τιμην – v. 23) in addition to being "necessary" (αναγκαια – KJV, NASV; or **'indispensable'** – NIV, v. 22). The word "αναγκαια" most basically means *a forcing*, or *a force containing entity*, which refers to *the potential-impact* each member has by design.[4] Furthermore, by citing a second analogy about how our physical bodies

"need" every member (foot, hand, eye, ear or nose), Paul accentuates how *each Body member fills an equally necessary role* (vv. 14-17, 19-24; 12:12 = first analogy).

Anyone who reads this portion can clearly see its purpose. It demonstrates *the vital nature of each Body member* since all contribute "value" to and are "necessary" for *the spiritual vigor* of the Church, though each has received different gifts and in differing portions (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:7-16). To emphasize this point, members are singled out who dare to demean the **Divinely-Calculated-Value** of a brother. For, degrading any believer *Opposes God's Predetermined Design* of placing and gifting each member "in order that there might not be division (σχισμα or *schism*) in the body, but the members might have the same concern on behalf of one another" as they suffer and rejoice together (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

Debasing conceit is also condemned in verse 24, "God has mixed together the body, *after having given more abundant value to the one who lacks*" (emphasis

mine). Meditating on these truths should convict any person who accuses a brother of being less valuable than themselves for, in reality, this opinion diminishes their own current value to the Church.

Warnings about the destructive effects of boasting are reiterated in other contexts about the Body. Romans 12:3 says we're "not to think more highly" of ourselves "than it's necessary to think, but to think unto the outcome to be sound minded". Pride, arrogance and self-importance ("vainglory" – Phil. 2:3) only reduce a member's effectiveness. For, every person was placed in the Body to have a *positive impact for the purpose of helping the Church grow into God's ultimate vision* (Eph. 4:1-3, 12-16).

In practice, each member's value comes to fruition as he or she develops spiritually. So, if we truly comprehend this **Biblically-Stated-Reality** of the Body, we'll accept and promote all fellow believers as "the dwelling of God in the Spirit". Otherwise, we'll simply imitate the world-smart Corinthians who thought their vision of how the Church should operate was better than God's (Eph. 2:22). This is

why the "one body" is presented as the first essential element in *God's Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help believers "maintain the unity of the Spirit" (4:3).

The **Second Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is "one Spirit" (εν πνευμα – Eph. 4:4). This Person of the Godhead's role is initially seen in His act of causing believers to be "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). During this procedure, He serves as the deity-force who enlightens the heart of God's elect to see their need for salvation just as He did for Lydia a couple millennia ago (Acts 16:14, cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Eph. 1:4, 13-14; 2 Tim. 2:10).

After rebirth, the indwelling Spirit offers capacity to understand the written Word plus provides the power behind our lifestyle and gifts which enable us to become a factor in helping to build up the Church (1 Cor. 2:6-12; Eph. 3:16-19; 4:12-16; 5:15-21). The extent to which each of us chooses to be controlled by the Spirit will determine our personal level of contribution to the Body (Rom. 6:15-16; Gal. 5:16-18). This is how the Holy Spirit serves as a second

crucial facet of *God's Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help believers "maintain . . . unity".

The **Third Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is "one hope" (μια ελπιδι – Eph. 4:4). This "hope", to which all believers "were called" (saved), is the return of Jesus Christ, the event when our conformity to His image will become complete (Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13). As we apply this *common future guarantee*, the present outlook of each Body member can be redirected to concentrate on activities God prescribes for our betterment along with that of our brothers and sisters (Phil. 1:27 – 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:6-11; Tit. 2:12-13). By enabling us to *conceptualize this Shared Eternal Perfection*, the "one hope" positions itself as a vital piece of *God's Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help believers "maintain the unity of the Spirit".

The **Fourth Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is our "one Lord" (εις κυριος – Eph. 4:5). This of course refers to the *Master* whom we serve, Jesus Christ. As we've already seen, each member must cling to Him as their Head if they're to

contribute to the growth of the Body (Eph. 4:15-16; Col. 1:18-20; 2:9-10, 19). For, He alone is the "chief priest" who paid for our sins and provides access to the Father (Rom 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Also, He is spoken of as the only "chief shepherd" who deserves the prominent position as Leader in the Church (Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 5:5). With His aid, Christians can be prepared to live steady lives and become an asset for the Body's development in addition to evangelizing unbelievers. So, it's not hard to visualize how our "one Lord" is another key part of *God's Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help believers "maintain the unity of the Spirit".

The **Fifth Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is "one faith" (μιᾳ πιστις – Eph. 4:5). This term could be interpreted as "faith" *needed for salvation* or "faith" referring to the *body of revealed truth* Christians are to *believe* or *trust*. Regarding the first aspect, numerous passages show the "faith" we exercise for salvation is provided as a gift from God (Rom. 12:3; Eph. 1:13; 2:8-9; Phil. 1:28-29; 1 Tim. 1:14).[5] **The fact God chooses whom He wills and gives us "faith" to believe places all Christians on the**

same level – entirely saved by His grace (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-24; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Eph. 1:4). So, all Body members have *equal present worth* as a result of the love, mercy and grace of God just as we were *equally saved from our identically hopeless sinful state* (Rom. 11:30-32; 14:4, 10-12; 1 Cor. 8:1-3, 11-12; Eph. 2:1-5).

Truth given for the Church is also defined as "faith" (πιστις). Ephesians develops this concept beginning with the Body's need to be built up "until we might all attain unto the unity ("ενοτητα" – or "oneness", same as in Eph. 4:3) of the **faith** and full knowledge of the Son of God" (4:13 – emphasis mine). The genitive case in the phrase "of the faith" specifies "unity" in the Body is directly *associated with* this "faith". Later, this same "faith" is included as part of the "armor of God", *absolute truth* which enables us to quench all "fiery darts" the "Evil one" may throw our way (6:16, cf. Gal. 3:23-25; Phil. 1:25, 27; 2:17; Col. 2:5, 7).

In addition, this word is used to describe the "faith of Christ" or "faithfulness of Christ" which encompasses *the totality of His work* – His sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrected role as "Head" (Eph.

3:12). Jesus' *faithful actions which Christians should trust* are recorded throughout the Church Epistles (Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Phil. 3:9). When believers put **"faith" in this Divine Instruction Manual** in tandem with recognizing our *common gift of saving faith*, we become catalysts for the unifying-glue offered by this dynamic of *God's Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help us "maintain the unity of the Spirit".

The **Sixth Component** designed to achieve "oneness" in the Church is "one baptism" (εν βαπτισμα – Eph. 4:5) which is then described in four passages (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 2:11-12). The word "baptism" basically means: **Two things contact one another with an effectual result**. The two initial items colliding are *the Holy Spirit* with *sinners*. The effective result is how we're *closely associated with* our Lord's "death", *spiritually identified with* His Person ("Christ"), and *completely affiliated* with His "body". In all four contexts, the verbs are aorist indicative in form which denote *past completed action* designating *the historic point of our salvation* as the time this spiritual "baptism" took place.[6]

Furthermore, each action word has a common subject – all Christians. However, since these terms also appear in the passive voice, they stipulate *an outside force acted upon these subjects* (us) to accomplish this "baptism".

Two of these contexts allude to who this *outside source* is. First Corinthians 12:13 says it happened "in one Spirit" and "we were all caused to drink of one Spirit". Similarly, Colossians 2:12 says we've "been baptized through the faith associated with the operation of God", the same "operation" (ενεργειας) or *energizing* God used to raise His Son "from the dead".

Therefore, this "one baptism" which all believers have equally undergone, is **the single divine act behind our initiation into the Body of Christ**. In addition, our "baptism" is the reason all Christians have the indwelling "one Spirit", who then provides potential to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4; 7:4-6). So, it should be easy to see how understanding "baptism", *our Divine Initiation into the Body-Fraternity*, is an indispensable part of *God's Reality-Empowering-*

Arsenal which can help believers "maintain the unity of the Spirit".

The **Seventh Component** designed to support "oneness" in the Church is the importance of our "one God (εις θεος) and Father (πατηρ) of all" (Eph. 4:6). Some prominent personality traits of the Father are: He developed the Master Plan for Creation; He executes this Plan; He receives glory for the effects of this Plan, and He's the one to whom prayer is addressed. Yet, the feature which most closely relates to "unity" in the Church seems to be represented by the fact He is the "one God" who is "the Father of all", both Jews and gentiles (Rom. 3:29-30; 4:11).

In this dispensation, the Father has chosen previously "alienated" gentiles and reconciled them with elect Jews for the single goal of placing us together as His "sons" (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:11-16; 3:2-6). As Body members absorb the significance of this achievement, we'll *Elevate the* "One . . . Father of all" *to His Proper Place* as the Essence of our "fullness" (Eph. 1:23) and, as such, the final piece of the *Reality-Empowering-Arsenal* which can help believers "maintain the unity of the Spirit".

Applying These Unifying Essentials

Having taken this bird's-eye view of **God's Seven Foundational Tools for the Maintenance of Unity**, notice how they *represent everything He has made available to believers to accomplish this task*. These *Spiritual Elements* comprise God's TOTAL FORMULA which enables the Body of Christ to operate in a unified manner. *No other Groundwork exists for this*. Let me repeat: **No other Realities are needed to Comprehend the Essence of The Body or to Fulfill Its Function!** When Christians grasp this point, we should promote the *only two physical entities* which exist to accomplish His purpose for the Body: *The Revelation of His Word* ("one faith") and *Every Gifted Member* ("one body"). We should also promote the *Other Five Realities/Beings* each believer must depend on to perform in an approved manner.

Okay, what am I driving at? It should be apparent, God's creation of and provisions for the Church *are complete* – **No Add-Ons are Needed**. For, His "new creation" of the Body is already as perfect as His original creation was before sin entered into the

world. And He's made available "God-breathed" truth for the "man of God . . . to be fully equipped for every good work" and have access to "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Paul calls this same revelation "sound teaching (υγιαινουσῃ διδασκαλιᾳ) according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which I was entrusted with" (1 Tim. 1:10-11). We derive the English word 'hygiene' from the word translated "sound". It's used as an adjective to describe *the healthy attributes of this teaching*.[7] As this "sound teaching" is related to "the dispensation of God" (οικονομιαν θεου) introduced earlier in the passage, both phrases describe *divine truth which is supposed to administer or manage the Church* (v. 4, cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). So also, **Biblical Revelation Contains Everything Needed to Direct the Body's Management and Heath**.

Consequently, *anyone who changes* biblical definitions, administrative principles, or stated practices for the Church, **will only Cause God's Flawless Movement to Operate in a Less-Than-Perfect Manner**. The very act of adding to or ignoring

part of the divine record always mitigates, deflects, replaces, and/or contradicts God's established standards. For, His revelation was given to be implemented by all Body members for the purpose that *His* "fullness" – the Church – *would function in the unified way for which it was* "created" (Eph. 1:23; 2:10, 15).

Ill-advisedly, this is exactly what many Christians have done through the ages which has resulted in many divisions and cheated members out of their divine benefits. This outcome has happened each time a person or group initiates or puts emphasis on a *Humanly-Labeled Church, Group, Denomination, Movement, Religious Organization*, or *whatever designation* is chosen. Note, I didn't use the title **'Christian Organization'**, for **The Only Christian Organization is The Body of Christ**. So, it should be clear, any amendment which supports a Humanly-Created-Add-On violates the Word and will impede God's stated desire for the Body to maintain "the unity of the Spirit".

Rooting Out "Division"

God, through His foresight, has highlighted our foremost obligation to maintain "unity" by providing an extended passage which contains corrective measures for division plus directions to help prevent factions from ever taking place. In his First Letter to Corinth, Paul states he'd heard about "divisions" (σχισματα) and "quarrels" (εριδες – or *strife*) among Body members there (1 Cor. 1:10-11). The following declaration speaks to the root cause, "each one of you says, 'I indeed am of Paul', also 'I am of Apollos', also 'I am of Cephas', also 'I am of Christ'. Has Christ been divided?" (vv. 12-13).

The *genitive case* in the phrase "I am of Christ" expresses *association*, so this verse is well translated "I am associated with (or *belong to*) Christ".[8] When this concept is applied to the question, "Has Christ been divided", it shows *only believers who identify with our Lord are correct*, for true Body unity only exists around His Person (see 12:12). Yet many Corinthians, prompted by their flesh, routinely identified with men such as Paul, Apollos or Cephas.

Though these were the greatest possible human **'celebrities'** known to them, identifying with humans rather than "Christ" is the main reason "divisions" and "quarrels" existed and persisted at Corinth (3:1-4).

Now that this Grim Sickness is exposed, the Spirit guides Paul to give *Unifying Instructions* which serve as **Heavenly Medicine Prescribed to Heal the Body** – a two-plus-chapter remedy for their "divisions". For, who knows best what this Spiritual Body needs than the One Who Designed and "created" it?

To symbolize this diagnosis and treatment, compare God's Creation of the Body of Christ with man's creation of the automobile. The proper maintenance for a car is specified in its owner's manual. Who'd follow this guidebook to maintain the engine but not the transmission or wheel bearings? Mechanics who're experts in their field faithfully follow these manuals to keep vehicles in optimal working condition. All analogies break down at some point because these manuals may contain faults since men wrote them. In contrast, there're no faults in the

revelation designed to govern the Church. So, **Careful Adherence to this Manual** (the "one faith" of Eph. 4:5) **will Enable Believers to Maintain the "unity" God Invented**.

To begin this Therapy Session, Paul reminds the Corinthians Christ was "crucified" for them; he wasn't. Also, he reminds them they were "baptized" into the Name of Christ, not into his name. Then, the context details how God initiates regeneration in "the ones being saved" by means of His "wisdom" and "calling" (1 Cor. 1:18, 24, 26). In verses 26-28, this *call to salvation* is linked with God's *election* or *choice* of both Jews and Greeks (v. 24). So, because the source of their salvation is "out of Him" (εξ αυτου), *from within God's Person*, all "boasting" should be directed to Him, not men (vv. 29-31).

This passage plainly details how no Corinthian had any part in their conversion, but it was *solely brought about by a sovereign act of mercy* (Rom. 9:15-18; 11:30-32). To the extent these believers realized *they were all undeserving* of this spiritual transformation, *a Humble Sense of Camaraderie* would've overcome

their congregation to achieve the **First Divine Stage to Cure their Illness of Division**.

Then, after addressing the humble and down-to-earth presentation of the gospel believers ought to have during evangelism, Paul sets forth **the Prescription of Foundational-Teaching** as *the next remedy* for their detachment (the "one faith" of Eph. 4:5, cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1:26-31; Rom. 9:11-13). These "teachings of the Spirit" were once a "mystery", *an unknown secret*, until after the Lord was raised from the dead (1 Cor. 2:7-8, 13). This instruction is also labeled "the wisdom of God" and "the mind of Christ" (v. 7, 16). Any believer can mature by using the "Spirit" to internalize "the deep things of God" found in these "teachings" (vv. 10-16).

For, "mystery" revelation recorded here and in Paul's other Letters enables Christians to comprehend the reality of who we are as Body members, how we should act toward one another, and how God wants us to share the gospel with the world as a unified force (Phil. 1:27). By accepting this offer to be inoculated with this *Mystery-Treatment-for-Body-*

Awareness, the Corinthians would gain a *Reunifying Appreciation* for who they are "in Christ" and, by so doing, experience the **Second Divine Stage to Cure their Illness of Division**.

This Prescription continues in chapter three where the Corinthians' *fleshliness* is bemoaned and singled out as the underlying cause for their "jealousy" and "strife" (1 Cor. 3:3). After connecting these attitudes with how many were identifying with men, Paul reprimands them by profiling himself and Apollos in the correct way, as simple "ministers through whom" they "believed". In contrast with their minute ministry, the emphatic statement "But God causes the increase" *credits all real growth to its source, the Person of God* (vv. 5-7).

With this distinction, he and Apollos are relegated to being lowly "fellow-workers" laboring as "one" in the Body of Christ, which is then described as "God's field" and "God's building" (vv. 8-9). Now that the practice of idolizing men has been squashed, our Lord is again made the **Person-of-focus**. Accordingly, verses 10 and 11 emphasize how Paul, as the "wise

master builder", established "Jesus Christ" as the only "foundation" of our Christian faith. Then, in connection with our service to Him, each believer is warned concerning **how he or she builds on this Christ-Centered Message**.

We should take this warning seriously since after ministering we'll receive a "wage" (μισθον)[9] for any good "work" produced. However, any action the Lord assesses as *flesh-based* will be burned (1 Cor. 3:11-14, cf. Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). When these bad works are burned, each believer "will be caused to suffer loss" yet verse 15 clarifies this Judgment has nothing to do with our eternal salvation. On a positive note, rewards received for "good work(s)" will endure forever (Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim 3:17; Tit. 2:14). When Church members at Corinth contemplated this Sobering-Future-Judgement, the *Expectation of Their Individual Accountability* would've had a massive humbling impact on them as the **Final Divine Stage to Cure their Illness of Division**.

Wrapping up, Paul advises the Corinthians that any person who "corrupts" this "temple" (the Body

of Christ), which is "holy", "God will corrupt this one", that is, burn his/her fleshly works resulting in personal "loss" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Then, the imperative mode is used *to command every single believer* not to "deceive himself" by following a type of "wisdom" other than God's, for this approach to life is complete "foolishness" (see 1:18, 20-21, 23, 25, 27; 2:14). Like a dictionary, **this Two-Plus-Chapter-Condemnation of Division Pinpoints "foolishness"** to *define the Corinthians' choice to* "boast in men" (vv. 18-21).

Based on this Discord-Causing-Blunder of "foolishness", Paul concludes his rebuke by articulating the proper view they should have of "the temple of God which is holy" – the Church – "all things belong to you" (vv. 17, 21). The phrase "all things" represents the persons of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas in addition to everything else in creation. So, the intent of the combined words "all things belong to you" is to switch on an illuminating spotlight to showcase **The Body of Christ as the Most Important Entity in the Material Universe**.

Now, the crescendo: "all things belong to (or *are associated with*) you, also you belong to Christ, also Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor. 3:22-23).[10] The genitive case used in these verses is the same found in the phrase "I indeed am of Paul" which *stresses affiliation* (1:12). Therefore, Paul is saying this *Divinely-Endorsed-Viewpoint is the Only Theological Perspective Christians should ever Associate Body Members with* – **Our Lives and Ministry should be Monopolized by The Centrality of Christ and His Church**. This **Correct-Statement-of-Identity** should've convicted the Corinthians back then, and it should shame anyone today who similarly corrupts the Body (3:17). If "division" is to be averted in present day assemblies, **This Corinthian Remedy Must Penetrate** *the minds, hearts, and conscience of all those in management*.

Disregarding This Remedy

A disturbing Reflection: I don't see support for the idea Paul, Apollos or Cephas was teaching any different doctrine by the time this Book was written (1 Cor. 15:5-11). So, the Corinthian state-of-affairs

appears to be mostly a *personality preference issue*. A more-upsetting Application: Since most divisions today are justified by a combination of *preferential doctrine* (beliefs which aren't considered 'heresy') and *emphasizing personalities*, I can only conclude **Many of Today's Splits are Worse-Than-Corinthian**.

Moreover, it's worth recalling the Corinthian believers had "every bit of knowledge" and didn't lack any "gift" (1 Cor. 1:5, 7). Still, they are forever chronicled as examples of disunity. Since this Book confirms knowledge and gifts alone can't produce "unity", it demonstrates how Christians need to learn to integrate the facts of "knowledge" with Spirit-empowered character if we want to successfully minister in a loving manner among all Body members. Otherwise, our "knowledge" simply "puffs up" (φυσιοι or *makes proud*) and *Will Propel Us to Repeat the Same Factious Spirit* which is evident in the rest of this Book, then in Second Corinthians (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:1-7; Gal. 5:16; Phil. 2:12).

Focusing on this haughty attitude, note how Paul closes the first three chapters by setting himself and Apollos forth as an example of how believers should work together in unity (1 Cor. 4:6; see 3:4-9). Then, drawing from this model, he teaches "not *to go* beyond which things have been written" so that "one (brother) on behalf of one (another brother) might not be puffed up against the other" (a third brother, 1 Cor. 4:6-7). Paul's dual use of the term "one" forms the plural subject for the verb "be puffed up" (φυσθιουσθε or *be proud* – the same verb used in 8:1) and indicates how these two brothers were *gratified to gang up against* a fellow believer. Also, the preposition translated "on behalf of" (υπερ) or *in the stead of* shows the first mentioned brother is *lobbying as an advocate* for the second so together they can oppose the third – their fellow brother.

Furthermore, the voice of this verb could mean they *acted upon themselves* (middle) or *were prompted by an outside force* (passive). When the meaning of both is applied, they specify *each person's choice to be controlled by their flesh* formed the thrust behind their joint pride which prompted this

"division" with their brother. The application: Today, each of us should ask, **'Am I going to "go beyond which things" God has "written" and choose to repeat this Corinthian Tragedy?'** Unless each of us makes a conscious determination to promote the Preeminence of Christ and His Church, **We Will Repeat Their "foolishness"!** (1 Cor. 3:18-23; 12:24-26; Col. 1:18-20)

How "Division" Enters the Church

Having observed this biblical standard for the way we're to be unified in "one body" (Eph. 4:4), how can Christians evaluate whether our assembly is in conformity with this mandate? Initially, we need to define how a gathering of believers can legitimately claim to be God-Ordained. First, there must be Apostles, literally *those sent from* God to distribute a message (Rom. 10:15). To establish His Old Testament program for the Nation of Israel, God sent Abraham, Moses, The Prophets, Jesus and The Twelve to preach "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23; 24:14; Acts 8:12). After Israel rejected this message, God sent Paul and other Apostles to establish the "mystery"

message about The Body of Christ, His new program which persists to this day.[11]

Second, to verify Ambassadors are sent by God, they must distribute Revelation to a target audience accompanied by supernatural miracles. These two mandatory requirements, reinforced by a massive amount of Scripture, should persuade all saints to acknowledge: **Today, The Body of Christ is the Only Legitimate Movement** which fully replaced God's program with Israel. Consequently, all instruction and practice permitted in our assemblies should be consistent with this conviction.

This principle of **God-Ordination** has been correctly applied by **'Protestants'** to condemn the validity of the **Roman Catholic Church** which claims to be established by God. An additional issue is this organization claims truth can be added "beyond which things have been written" including proclamations made by their popes (1 Cor. 4:6). These same criticisms have been voiced to condemn the legitimacy of the **Mormon Church** which claims authenticity based on assertions that Joseph Smith

received divine revelation; **Christian Science** which is based on the writings of Mary Baker Eddie; **Scientology** based on the book *Dianetics* and other writings of L. Ron Hubbard; and so many other Groups. The error of adding outside teaching to Scripture will be examined shortly. But, one comment now: Any humanly instigated group which **Claims the Bible doesn't contain Sufficient-Divine-Truth / Authority is already Descending a Slippery-Slope with No Corrective Brakes**.

To be fair, we should equally apply this **Standard of Divine-Initiation** to so-called **'Protestant'** Groups. **Under this scrutiny, how can any of these organizations claim to be God-Ordained?** I realize most assert they were commenced by revelation from the Spirit, visions, dreams, a voice, or some other kind of divine message or leading. This claim is made even though the act of forming a separate group, in and of itself, clashes with God's definition of the "one body" He "created".[12]

So, even the commonly accepted belief that it's valid to form or operate a fellowship separate from but

within the greater Body of Christ lacks any support from Scripture. Just ask yourself, **'Does Scripture support the idea the Holy Spirit would ever sponsor any subdivision in the Church?'** Simply based on passages covered so far, let alone the rest of Scripture, anyone should respond to this question with a resounding **'NO'!** For, **The Spirit is the One Who Moves God's Single Movement**. Because this issue is so important, the next two articles of this series will focus on how the Spirit currently leads and works in believers.

Proper Body Attitude & Focus

At this point, a reader may say, **'Wow, you're anti-denominational!'** Yes, that person would be correct. I'm opposed to any faction endorsing an entity smaller than the Body of Christ or any stand which promotes just a portion of the revelation given to the Church. For, I believe, the only way Christians can avoid becoming participants in an **IT-GROUP** is to *actively promote the application of all truth God delivered for the Body*. If we fail to follow this *Refuge for Both Mind and Heart* by venturing beyond or

falling short of it, **we won't be able to escape Some Degree of Participation in Emptying His "fullness"** (Acts 20:20, 26-27). Whether we think the group we fellowship with practices Christianity the right way or if we discourage fellow believers from associating with other Body members, either way, we've already become **Accomplices of the Division-Causing-Problem within the Church**.

Before proceeding, I'd like to share a couple valuable lessons which've helped shape my outlook about ministry in the Body. More than 40 years ago, I asked Doc McNeilly why he attended a denominational church since he didn't believe in segmenting the Body. He recounted, while in the Navy, he attended a non-denominational church but noticed the dominant mindset was just as sectarian as in attached churches. This experience prompted him and his wife to choose a fellowship and quietly minister wherever they landed to practice medicine. From my standpoint, they were highly successful as they influenced countless Body members in and outside of that Conservative Baptist Church.

Yet, it wasn't always easy for them to carry out this conviction. For, over the years, I've heard numerous believers testify how the McNeilly's Body-Attitude helped them maintain fellowship with all believers whether they chose to stay at their assembly or not, even during church splits. Also, Doc once shared how they were criticized by their own leaders for chaperoning a Bible study in which most partaking didn't attend their church.

Another lasting impression came by way of my best friend, Jeff McCleary. During one of our final chats in the year before he met the Lord, I remember being moved by an idea he was contemplating from his current study in Ephesians. At that time, while preparing to teach, he'd been deeply convicted by the concept of *how close believers are portrayed to be in the Body of Christ*. Back then, this thought made an immediate impact on me. This and so many other memories have continued to inspire me. For, Jeff was a great example of how truth from the Word can synchronize with daily intentions and actions in the pursuit of a balanced Christian life and mutual

ministry with all believers. Apart from my wife, his testimony has touched me more than any other peer.

Recognizing the Seeds of "Division"

Based on deliberations to this point, I hope you can see why I fear for anyone who **cheer-leads the tenets of their 'doctrine'**, for I've seen how **preaching to the choir** develops a condescending mindset of exclusion in those who participate. Also, I fear for leaders who use the strategy of "lording it over . . . the flock" to gain allegiance rather than seeking to train these same believers to become independent members who can profit the Body (1 Pet. 5:3).

I know what I'm talking about because I haven't been innocent of quite a few of the divisive practices just detailed. As a consequence, I've suffered a great deal of remorse. At the time, I defended my actions by thinking they were for the **'ministry'**. And, part of my rationale was based on the mantra, **'Those who aren't for us are against us'**. For, I was taught to define friends by those who verbalize only positive things about an organization and/or financially

support it, otherwise *they're enemies*. How sobering and humiliating it's been to admit my "foolishness" (1 Cor. 3:18-23). Over the years, I've met many who follow this same reasoning yet think it's no big deal.

This same mindset infiltrates many Church leaders today, though, virtually every group asserts their **'ministry'** is patterned for the glory of God. How can this be when members are purposely kept so busy they don't have time to fellowship outside their group? And, what about calculating statements like **'These folks are dear brothers, but . . .'** followed by some *So-Called Justifiable Warning* their followers should avoid these **'dear brothers'**? This same condemnation can be applied to a vast number of cleverly-phrased put-downs worded simply to steer members away from other brothers and sisters. Finally, what about the use of glib labels and derogatory names with the hidden agenda of terminating relationships between Christians? Are these methods in line with God's desire for us to exert effort "to maintain the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3)?

Also, how can anyone claim to promote "unity" if they actively squelch the voice of some or discourage the exercise of their gifts?[13] Then, what about believers who agree to discuss the Word but each time a difference arises they try to correct that person? Or, what about those who routinely bring up known differences just to exacerbate an **open wound**? Are these actions prompted by love and the command to preserve peaceful interactions (Rom. 14:1; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:4-17)? I don't know how many times I've heard the expression, **'We need to agree to disagree and still love one another'**. In my experience, this claim's often made but it's usually a smokescreen for what really takes place. For all too often, *there's a conscious effort to get around biblical directives* just to keep current practices in place.

Division often starts between individual believers (1 Cor. 1:12; 4:7). When brothers have a disagreement, unless both parties seek resolution by attempting to understand the other's position, reconciliation can't occur. Unfortunately, what happens most of the time is *flesh-based guesswork generates wrong conclusions*.

Since we can't fully know why a brother or sister thinks the way they do or what their intent is, if we proceed without practicing **Christian due diligence**, we'll just deepen the rift. In addition, we shouldn't act self-righteously by quoting Bible based condemnations or accusations which simply add fuel to an argument.

For, the simple truth is, any believer can find something wrong with any other brother if this is our motivation (Phil. 4:8). Instead, we should choose wise words tempered by Christian love so reunion is possible while "forgiving (literally, *showing grace*) . . . as God forgave" us (Eph. 4:32). At the end of the day, most "division" results from believers building themselves up at the expense of tearing others down, a process which transgresses so much biblical advice (to cite a few: Rom. 12:3, 16-21; 1 Cor. 8:1; Phil. 2:3).

When contentious behavior is encouraged, personality vices follow such as ostracizing, gossiping, disdaining, or dividing from fellow believers. At that point, it doesn't matter what doctrine we hold if our actions violate other Biblical Instructions we

claim govern us. This kind of hypocrisy is driven by ignorance or choice. Either way, this state-of-mind is a far cry from the connection God wants us to nurture in **His Beautiful Body**. As its members, **He wants us to Acquire Character which Represents our Spiritual Profile – the "new creation", "poem", "fullness", and Name of "Christ"**.

As a substitute for operating in a spiritually beneficial manner, many groups work like cut-throat businesses which do what they need to do in order to survive regardless of how it affects their employees. When this model is copied, financial security is by and large placed as the top priority and *Usually The Entity's Image is Protected at All Costs*. By publicizing virtues and covering problems, the organizational infrastructure is preserved and monetary support is maximized. Also, leaders are commonly elevated to positions of prominence above other members, so much so, that at times they reach **Celebrity** or even **Idol Status** (1 Cor. 3:3-9).

Yet, truths found in First Corinthians 12 should discourage this practice plus motivate us to promote

the **True-Reality**: *By God's Design, Each Body Member has Equal-Ministry-Value*. So, if our goal is to conform to His portrayal of the Body, those in charge need to take the lead to ensure the worth of each believer is recognized. This change is possible when a group is willing to **Make a Concerted Effort to Lower the Perception of Leaders to Simple-Brother-Status**. Then, the congregation can make an Eternal-Investment in all its members by emphasizing edification accompanied by love, patience, long-suffering, and tolerance – qualities needed to foster any successful Christian relationship.

Formula for Body "Unity"

What does the picture of a practicing assembly look like which strives to "maintain the unity of the Spirit"? Initially, all members should self-assess to make sure each aspect of their belief and conduct is consistent with God's commands for the Body. Second, when the Word is shared, we should apply what's taught to all believers, not just to **'our group'**. For, a group-centered-focus will create a superiority complex in everyone who hears (2 Tim. 4:3). Third,

we shouldn't promote part of God's message for the Church while shying away from the rest of its teaching (Acts 20:20, 27). Forth, we should allow discussion and criticism of both doctrine and practice, show tolerance for differences of opinion, and be committed to treating one another with love regardless of conviction (Rom. 14:1, 22-23; 15:1-7). Fifth, we should actively encourage believers to seek fellowship with others in the Body so all can mutually profit from one another.

Those who wish to preserve Body "unity" should ask the following questions: **'Am I going to promote the scriptural view that each believer has equal value or am I going to fall prey to the Corinthian Folly of demeaning fellow Body members?'** And, **'Am I going to fellowship across the Body to encourage new friendship, mentorship and counseling possibilities?'** The payoff for becoming an asset in Body ministry yields independent, stable members capable of building up the Church and sharing the gospel with the world (Rom. 10:15).

I believe each of us needs to decide if we're going to be part of this solution or part of the division-problem. We should ask, **'Am I going to settle for humanly devised structures and trust they can work better than God's "new creation"?'** Please consider how **Policies Elevating organizations or persons above the Rest of The Body Systematically Hamper God's Operational Design from taking place**.

To partake in this solution, we need to first concentrate on personal growth by the difficult process of dying to our fleshly "old man" and putting on behavior consistent with the "new man" (Rom. 13:12-14; Eph. 4:20-24; Phil. 3:9-11; Col. 3:5, 9-10; 2 Tim. 3:12). To the degree each believer is transformed by spiritual renewal, he or she gains the capacity to contribute to the "increase of the body which results in the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Note, this same verse states *Body-Wide Advancement Happens* "through the supply of every joint according to the energizing in the measure of each part". This means, **Efforts of Individual Believers is the Primary Source which Stimulates Growth in**

The Body of Christ (cf. Col. 2:19). So, if anyone feels they're too insignificant to make a difference, please recognize how vital you and every other member of the Church are in God's purpose. After all, He's specifically chosen and gifted each one of us! (1 Cor. 12:18; Eph. 4:7)

Some might say, **'Do you believe in a Christian Utopia'**?[14] In fact, I do. For the beautiful reality is, **We're the Actual "fullness" of God in Christ**. We can aspire to this reality or continue to replace it with our own and **'settle'** for *Less-Than-The-Best*. Which do you think is "foolish", and which pleases God?

So, how can this reality be implemented? We need to **'imagine'** it; or in Paul's words, we should "consider" ourselves "to be dead indeed to sin and living in relation to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:10). To accomplish this feat, first we need to visualize and internalize our justification before God and how faultless He sees us in Christ. Then, we must "walk" by the Spirit so we can be conformed to the image of His Son (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 5:1-2; 6:1-6, 15-23; 7:4-6; 8:1-39). This is the way believers who

uncompromisingly try to source 100% of "the mind of Christ" can effect personal and Body-wide progress toward perfection. Remember, this **Present-Day-Goal-of-Perfection** will become a reality for the entire Body when our Savior returns (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 3:10-21).

Final Considerations

Before concluding, I'd like to share a few more passages which demonstrate "oneness" in the Body. In the Book of Romans, Paul addresses "all the beloved of God who're in Rome", then in chapter sixteen he greets several separate assemblies which combined represent their portion of the Church (1:7; 12:5; 16:3-16). Also, the "church" at Corinth appears to have been made up of many congregations physically detached by that city's vast size.[15] Not only gatherings there were addressed as a portion of the **Universal Church**, but "saints" or churches in other cities were addressed as part of the same Body (1 Cor. 1:2; 16:19; 2 Cor. 1:1; 13:12; Gal. 1:2).

In fact, every Epistle written to "saints" or a "church" in a single city is directed to **Believers Who are Considered Part of One Entity** (Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). In those days fellowship was limited by geographic distance, still many contexts confirm the commonality of, need for interaction with, and concern for all believers everywhere (Rom. 15:25-31; 2 Cor. 11:28; Col. 4:15-16). Today, with our superior ability to travel, *We Have Fewer Excuses* not to fellowship with more of the Body.

Summarizing, spiritual growth occurs when we don't "shrink back from teaching" or practicing "the whole counsel of God". This means we shouldn't go beyond or fall short of applying every part of this "sound teaching" (Acts 20:20, 27; 1 Cor. 4:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:10-11). Just like banks train employees to spot counterfeit bills by studying real ones; in the same way, believers become competent to evaluate all teaching as we take heart to internalize truth with Spirit-sourced power which enables us to handle anything the world throws our way (Eph. 6:10-18;

1 Tim. 4:6-16). For, **The Sole Energy Propelling God's Single Movement is the Movement of His Spirit**.

On the flip side, our lingering "old man" will never cease to tempt and urge us to compromise or go to extremes. But, if we choose to personalize what we know, we can make significant headway toward **Optimal Spiritual Balance** and become **Maximum Contributors for Unity** in the Church. This same approach can simultaneously protect any believer from falling victim to Humanly-Introduced Tradition which should be seen for what it is – **A Growth-Stunting Device**.

Comparable Counsel from: Philippians

"Paul . . . to the saints . . . in Philippi with the overseers and deacons . . . I desire you to know brethren that the things relating to me (his sufferings and imprisonment) have happened rather for the advancement of the gospel . . . according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be made ashamed, but in all boldness as all the time, also now, Christ will be magnified in my body whether

through life or through death . . . Only, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ in order that whether having come and having seen you or being absent I might hear things concerning you that you're standing in one spirit, in one life-essence (or, *soul*), working together like athletes in the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:1, 12, 20, 27).

"Therefore, if there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any comfort associated with love, if there's any commonality of the Spirit, if there're any compassions and mercies, fill my joy so that you might think the same thing, having the same love, *existing* together in life-essence (or, *soul*), thinking one thing, also *thinking* nothing according to selfishness or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another as superior to yourselves . . . Think about this attitude among yourselves which also exists in Christ Jesus . . . So that, my beloved . . . with fear and trembling put your own salvation into action . . . Do all things apart from grumblings and disputes in order that you might become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in the midst

of a crooked and perverted generation while actively holding to the Word of life" (Phil. 2:1-3, 5, 12,14-16).

"Although, I while possessing a reason to have self-assurance in the flesh, if any other thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I more . . . But which things were gain to me, these things I consider loss . . . in order that I might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my righteousness out of the law but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ . . . with the outcome to know Him, both the power of His resurrection and the commonality associated with His sufferings, being conformed with His death if somehow I might attain to the resurrection out of the dead . . . Brethren, I myself don't consider to have taken hold of *it*, but one thing, while forgetting the things behind and extending out to the things before, with an objective, I pursue in the direction of the prize associated with the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus . . . Moreover, unto which we've attained, *we're* to walk in the same" (Phil. 3:4, 7-11, 13-14, 16).

"So that, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, likewise stand in the Lord, beloved.

I encourage Euodia and I encourage Syntyche to think the same thing in the Lord. And, yes, I ask you, genuine yolk-fellow, to help them . . . Finally, brethren, as much as is true, as much as is respectable, as much as is right, as much as is pure, as much as is lovely, as much as is of good report, if anything is virtuous and if anything is praiseworthy, consider these things. Which things you've learned and received and heard and seen in me (Paul), practice these things and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:1-3, 8-9).

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New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek texts. Old Testament quotes are from the King James Version unless otherwise specified. All Bible Versions cited can be found on the internet by use of the noted abbreviations.

Footnotes:

1 The infinitive "ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι" consists of the preposition "ανα", meaning *up*, prefixed to the verb "κεφαλαιοω", which has the same root as the noun "κεφαλη" translated "Head" in Ephesians 1:22. Therefore, the action expressed is *to head up* or *sum up* all things in Christ, the Head. The only other occurrence of this word is in Romans 13:9, where the Law "has been summed up" (ανακεφαλαιουται) in the phrase "you shall love your neighbor as yourself".

2 In Ephesians 4:4-6, the cardinal number "one" occurs in all three genders. Masculine forms are derived from "εις", feminine forms are derived from "μια", and neuter forms are derived from "εν". However, all forms in all genders still simply mean *one*.

3 In the Greek text, this verb of being is absent in the phrase "also likewise *is* Christ". However, it's understood to be present because the grammatical intent is that it's distributed from the former phrase, "many *exist* (εστιν – emphasis mine) as one body". This feature of distributing one word or phrase to subsequent words or phrases is common in New Testament Greek. This's why most Translations add the verb of being here unless they're designed to be a 'very literal' Version.

4 The definition of "αναγκαιος" is '*of* or *with force* . . . *constraining* . . . *necessary*': The Abridgment of *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, pg. 47.

5 The specific meaning of these verses based on grammar and context will be detailed later in this series in an article on the topic of 'Election'.

6 In Colossians 2:11-12, the word "baptism" (βαπτισμῳ) is a noun. The two action verbs are "you were circumcised" (περιετμηθητε) and "you were raised with" (συνηγερθητε). The action word directly connected with "baptism" in verse 12 is the aorist participle "having been buried" (συνταφεντες). By grammatical rule the action of an aorist participle precedes that of the main verb, so "after having been buried in the baptism" (our association with Christ's death), believers were then "circumcised" in His circumcision (separation from sin at the cross) and subsequently "raised with" Christ to be able to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). Then, the word, "raised with" (συνηγερθητε) is repeated in Colossians 3:1, which introduces our need to "put to death" the flesh and "put on" the "new" man in the same way Romans chapter 6 focuses on Christian growth (Rom. 6:12-23; Col. 3:5-17).

7 This "sound teaching" is to be used by the Elder/Overseers to "encourage" believers and "refute those who oppose" (Titus 1:9). This "sound" message is presented as *Health-Causing Instruction* for the function of the Church, and it's mentioned several more times in Paul's Letters (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:13; 2:1, 2, 8). **Just like the terms 'Body' and 'Mystery', Paul's the only one who uses forms of the verb "sound" (υγιαινω) in reference to truth**.

8 Versions translating this phrase 'I belong to Christ' are: WNT, Riverside, JMNT and ISV. Those translating it 'am a

follower of' are: Lamsa, AUV and JMNT. Also, some translate it 'follow': WEB, NHEB, NSB, BSB and VIN.

9 Although most Translations render "μισθον" *reward*, many translate it with its literal sense (Rom. 4:4; 1 Tim. 5:8; James 5:4). It's rendered 'wage(s)' by: YLT, Geneva, CLV and JMNT. Etheridge translates it 'recompense'. It's rendered 'pay' by: Goodspeed, Williams and JMNT, who also gives 'compensation' as an alternate meaning.

10 The phrase "all things belong to you" in verse 21 is translated this same way by the modern Versions: NASV and NLT. Older Versions rendering it this way are: Moffatt, Goodspeed, Williams, AUV, and ISV. Also, JMNT gives 'pertain to' as a meaning. The exact same Greek phrase occurring in verse 22 is translated 'belong to' only by: NASV, NLT, Williams and ISV. Then, the same genitive case relation to "Christ" and "God" in verse 23 is translated 'belong to' by NASV, NLT, WNT, Williams, AUV, COMMON, JMNT and BSB. Also, many more Versions render this genitive relationship in verse 23 as 'Christ's and 'God's'.

11 "Apostles" mentioned in association with Paul's Church ministry include *Barnabas* (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 9:5-6); *Andronicus* and *Junius* (Rom. 16:7); *Apollos* (1 Cor. 4:6-9); *Silvanus (Silas)* and *Timothy* (1 Thess. 1:1 with 2:7); *Epaphroditus* (Phil. 2:25); and *Titus* in addition to two unidentified brothers (2 Cor. 8:23). Paul, Barnabas and Silas (Silvanus) are also called "prophets" (Acts 13:1; 15:32).

12 It's worth noting, the term "one body" is mentioned first in the list of the seven unity-building-truths in Eph. 4:4-6.

13 The only legitimate reasons for excluding believers from Church life are members who're presently involved in doctrinal heresy or immoral activities. For, in and of themselves, these acts necessitate "divisions", otherwise, they'd cause a departure (division) from morality or doctrinal purity, both of which would corrupt the Body (1 Cor. 5:11; 11:18-19; Titus 3:10-11).

14 The English word 'utopia' combines the Greek words "ευ", meaning '*well off*' or '*good*', and "τοπος", which refers to '*a place*' or '*a spot*'. Definitions for these two words are from: The Abridgment of *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, pgs. 278 and 710.

15 Around 55 AD, the approximate magnitude of the city of Corinth can be seen in comments recorded on *Wikipedia*: 'Ancient Corinth was one of the largest and most important cities of Greece, with a population of 90,000 in 400 BC. The Romans demolished Corinth in 146 BC, built a new city in its place in 44 BC, and later made it the provincial capital of Greece.' In addition to the city's size, First Corinthians 11:17-34 gives the impression believers from different assemblies around Corinth periodically gathered to partake of the Lord's Table. This context indicates some brothers didn't know other believers at these gatherings very well. Their disconnection appears to have worsened a lack of mutual concern, drunkenness, and unwillingness to share food – some of the happenings at that event.

TRADI-TION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Our Spirit Connection — Accessing His Power

Explores the relationship between Believers and the Holy Spirit with regard to how we produce good works. This 'Sanctification' Process is developed from Scripture, then compared with other current viewpoints on this topic.

Chuck Schiedler

Our Spirit Connection
— Accessing His Power

Our link with the Holy Spirit is one of the most basic working realities in the Christian life. For that reason, we should be motivated to understand the dynamics of this interface since it governs how each individual believer, leader, and assembly is "led" as we serve the Lord (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18).

Nonetheless, we've all heard the conflicting views which throw a monkey-wrench into how Christians perceive our Spirit connection. These mixed messages cause some to be confused about how they're personally empowered while others are unsure how to communicate with fellow Body members who hold differing opinions on the subject. Then, a point further muddling the water is virtually every perspective of how the Spirit performs can be supported from examples found somewhere in the Bible. So, what is the answer for this predicament? To me, it lies in the

question: **'What does Scripture directed to the Body of Christ teach about our relationship with the Spirit?'** Proceeding on this path, my goal is to define the nature of this bond from the Church Epistles.[1]

This exposition isn't intended to be a comprehensive documentary on the Holy Spirit. I won't focus on His Person, deity, relationship with the Father and Son, or actions outside of His current link with believers. Accordingly, two themes will be deliberated. In an upcoming article I'll cover the array of activities in which Christians are empowered by the Spirit. But first, this article seeks to define the process by which we gain access to His power for a productive resurrection life. Specifically, it addresses the question: **'Do believers have a choice in generating good works, or does the Spirit cause them in us?'** From revelation given to the Church, I'll show we play an integral part in producing godly deeds. For, since we were made alive in Christ, now we can choose to tap our indwelling Spirit for the capacity to perform.

At the end of the day, I believe Christians simply want to be confident our actions are empowered by the

Spirit and not generated by the other possible source – our flesh. Therefore, each of us should ask, **'Is my concept of how I obtain divine power Prompted by Appropriate Application of Scripture and Not Just Based on What I was Taught?'** Because any thought or act in which we engage outside of the Spirit's current method of assistance **Will Handicap our Networking with Him and Hinder our Spiritual Growth**.

With reference to discrepancies of how the Spirit functions throughout the Bible, those who attempt to decipher every way He operates and combine these into a guideline to describe His present-day interaction with believers are destined for an impossible task. For, the Vantage Point that **All-The-Bible-Teaches-The-Same-Thing** inevitably leads to assign a less than literal interpretation to some passages or to ignore puzzling contexts altogether. Consequently, this outlook forces a person to side-step portions of the divine record and backs them into an untenable corner.

Yes, all sixty-six Books of the Bible are inspired. And I acknowledge many truths are universal which can

be applied to all of God's interactions with mankind. Counted among these are the Father's Nature, the Deity of Christ, the sinful state of man, Christ's payment for sin, mankind's need for salvation, Jesus' eventual return, glory for the saved, and judgement for the Lost. When all's said and done, *The Father Has One Ultimate Purpose which is To Glorify Himself*.

But He attains this goal by fluctuating in how He relates with men, and these differing agendas are laid out in His Word. The two most prominent are His dealings with the Nation of Israel, both past and yet future, and His present purpose with the Body of Christ. In reference to the topic at hand, contexts delineating **These Two Programs Illustrate the Spirit Works in Markedly Different Ways.**

Comprehending the nuts and bolts of how Body members connect with the Spirit requires a detailed examination of numerous contexts. Over the years, I've sought to understand the various theological positions on this subject, but most of my time has been occupied navigating the Greek text. Through this exercise, my own theories have been put to the test and

I've been compelled to make lots of adjustments. This need for repetitive modification has become a brutal reminder that Spirit-indwelled believers don't naturally grasp divine truth. On the contrary, our sin-corrupted minds must undergo endless change if we wish to arrive at God's way of thinking.

In summary, I'm confident most Christians want to have a firm grasp on how the Holy Spirit guides our lives. For, if we claim to be Spirit-led, but really at times we're not, these acts will be directed by the world, the flesh, or the Devil (Eph. 2:2-3; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 2:16; 4:4). Personally, I don't want to be entangled in this kind of debacle and I don't know anybody else who wants this either. So, my prayer is that you'll take time to investigate this commentary, some of which may be new to you. Bear in mind, if even a few concepts help you engage with the Spirit more creatively, your testimony will be strengthened by His fruit.

Section 1: Activating the Spirit's Power

This section considers passages which describe **The Mechanics of The Spirit-Believer Relationship**. To define this interaction, I frequently cite grammatical forms, word meanings, and sentence structure from the original texts which contribute the info needed to develop a command of this topic. Also, my wish is to communicate with all believers, so I've done my best to write in a clear manner. If I could adequately explain how the Spirit functions without taking this approach, I would. But I can't. So, these explanations are composed in the simplest way I know how, and I encourage you to allocate the time needed to comprehend them. This may involve rereading parts, checking footnotes, or studying an appendix. I'm confident your effort will be rewarded with a better grasp of **Our Spirit Connection** and, in turn, impact your service to the Lord.

Before moving forward, you should be aware **Appendix I** contains definitions of basic meanings of *Greek Tenses, Voices, and Modes*. It also provides verbiage for how these points of grammar are translated in

Scripture quotes throughout this article. However, for brevity's sake and less confusion, these expanded translations are only used when they help elucidate a topic or principle.

Ephesians 5:18

"And you're not to continuously choose to be made drunk in relation to wine, in which is debauchery, but you're to continuously choose to be filled in the Spirit."

Those familiar with this verse probably wonder why I translated it this way. This rendering emphasizes the *sense of both the middle and passive voices* contained in the form of each verb. In Greek grammar, the middle voice indicates *the subject acts upon itself* which means it becomes the functional object of its own action. This is why I rendered it with the English word "choose" because this term expresses the idea of what one who acts upon himself actually does – *he causes himself to make a choice.* When this meaning is applied to the first verb with the negative, it indicates "you're not to continuously choose" (μη

μεθυσκεσθε), *cause yourselves* or *be irresponsible* to get "drunk" with "wine".

Since the form of "μεθυσκεσθε" is also passive, this meaning should be equally applied. The passive voice indicates *the subject is acted upon by a force outside itself* which in effect makes the subject the direct object of the verb action. Applying this concept, the subject "you" (plural – referring to believers) becomes the direct object and, thus, will "be made drunk" *by the outside influence of alcohol.*

When the relevance of both voices is included, this verb portrays a very graphic picture of what happens in the process of intoxication. For, it stresses *believers need to make a responsible choice* (middle) "not" to drink in excess, so alcohol won't *make them drunk* (passive). Therefore, to obtain the full impact portrayed by this verb, both voice concepts ought to be applied.

Like the first verb, the second, "you're to continuously choose to be filled" (πληρουσθε), also appears in a middle/passive voice form so it should be defined

in the same way. Assigning the relevance of this dual form indicates when we "choose" *to put ourselves under* (middle) the influence of "the Spirit", we'll experience *His supernatural filling* (passive – Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:16-19; Col. 1:9).

The immediate context elaborates on the benefits received from this co-op. For, the Spirit's power enables us to use time prudently (Eph. 5:16); understand what the will of the Lord is (v. 17); and walk in a wise manner while conversing with one another, singing in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks to God and practicing mutual subordination (vv. 15, 19-21, cf. Col. 3:16-17). Added to this dual-voice impact, the present imperative form of both verbs specifies we're "continuously" *commanded* to avoid drunkenness as well as be Spirit-filled.[2]

When this passage is understood in light of both voices, it accentuates **The Responsibility Believers Have to Make Godly Choices** as well as **How We Acquire Power From The Spirit to Put These Choices into Action**. Also, when an imperative mode is combined with the middle voice, they indicate we're *command-*

ed to choose what's right. And, *We're Truly Capable of Responding to God's Demands* since at the point of salvation we were made alive, received the Spirit, and thereafter have access to His power so we can *make positive moral choices to live holy lives* (Rom. 5:5; 6:2-4; 8:11-14; Eph. 1:13-14; 2:1-10). Lastly, at least five other Translations recognize this middle/passive combo by including the sense of both voices when rendering these verbs.[3]

The reason for belaboring this point is **the Meaning Conveyed by This Dual Middle/Passive Form is a Key Point of Grammar** *Validating the Concept Christians are Obligated To Make Godly Choices* plus *It Explains How We're Able To Carry Them Out.* In this verse, emphasis on responsibility is intensified since this Dual Form occurs with an Imperative Command. Still, by itself, this Voice Combo provides an indispensable component in the formula which defines how we access power in the Spirit/believer relationship. For, it indicates, **We Need to Exercise The Catalyst-of-Choice** (middle voice) **so Spirit-Caused-Enablement** (passive) **Can Happen**.[6] This practical, powerful, win-win

outcome allows each Body member to understand the Word and produce good works.

Ephesians 5:18 is just the first of many passages which will be covered and contain verbs, participles or infinitives occurring in a middle/passive voice form. But before we proceed to others, I'd like to share an experience which solidified my own appreciation for this facet of Greek grammar.

Getting Hold of the Dual-Voice-Sense

Half a dozen years ago I was in a Book study of First Peter when a brother named Clint taught chapter 5 verse 9. He began by saying he'd checked about 20 different Translations, half which rendered this verse in one way and half in another. Based on these findings, he presented both readings without favoring one over the other. At that moment, I was thoroughly confused.

So, the following week I went back and discovered the infinitive "επιτελεισθαι" in this verse occurs in the middle/passive voice form. Then I realized why

Clint found differing Versions, for some translate it with the middle voice sense while others emphasize the passive. He didn't specify which Versions he'd seen, but I easily found some which stressed either the middle or passive voice of this infinitive.[4] Also, I found four Versions rendering the relevance of both.[5]

In my study, I learned the subject of this infinitive is the neuter personal pronoun "the same things" (τα αυτα – 1 Pet. 5:9). So, a translation including the sense of both voices would be, "In reference to whom (the Devil) you actively stand against as solid ones in the faith having known the same things associated with the sufferings **are causing themselves to be made complete** (επιτελεισθαι) in reference to your brotherhood in the world" (emphasis mine).

In this context, believers are directed to humble ourselves "under" the Lord's *mighty hand* so we can vigilantly stand "solid" in "the faith" and, thus, against our "adversary", the Devil (1 Pet. 5:6-9). While doing this, we should *know* this stance will precipitate "the same . . . sufferings" *to be completed* upon us just as *persecution is happening* to our comrades in the

Body elsewhere. So, our obedience is what begins the effect of *things associated with suffering causing themselves* (middle voice) "to be made complete" (passive) by the outside agent of persecution spurred on by the Devil.[6]

Applying these principles, believers should stand for the Lord while *knowing suffering is inevitable*, but also with the realization if we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, "He will perfect, establish, strengthen, *and* foundation" us (1 Pet. 5:6-7, 10). Conversely, those who compromise their faith will mostly avoid persecution but also miss out on the spiritual benefits which go together with taking a godly stand.

While learning Greek, I was taught it was possible to decipher which voice in a middle/passive form should be applied in any given passage based on its context. And many reference books teach this same principle. However, this methodology lacks support from Greek grammar and syntax since neither provide any **Contextual Indicator** to justify such a choice.[23] Yet,

for many years I continued to incorporate this model when sharing the Word as well as teaching Greek.

Then, over time, I progressively realized when emphasizing one voice over the other, often my choice was prejudiced by my own theological bias. So, more and more, I began to include both options for words in this middle/passive form. But my real **Aha-Moment** came when I heard this brother teach First Peter 5:9. That occasion marked a turning point. Going forward, I was convinced when passages include this dual form, I should apply both possibilities in order to *glean what God intended*.

For, **He Chose To Reveal His Truth with Word-Forms Conveying Dual Ideas** in this verse and many other portions. So why shouldn't we include both concepts? And how can these grammatical forms be unintended? Because I agree with those who hold the Greek text is inspired down to its individual letters. Consequently, why shouldn't we apply the sense conveyed by both voices as a foundational principle to arrive at what God meant to express? Since that *Aha-Moment*, I've tested this concept on innumera-

ble occasions. As a result, this point of grammar has become a significant contributing factor for how I view **The Spirit's Cooperative Partnership with Believers**.

Ironically, it took a brother who knew very little about Greek to teach me this lesson. My initial take-away was I discovered this principle by accident. After re-evaluating, I realized I'd been stimulated by a Body member who used available resources to do his God-given job.

Galatians 5:16-18

"Also, I say, you're to actively continuously walk in relation to the Spirit and you won't complete the desire of the flesh. For, the flesh continuously desires against the Spirit, also the Spirit *continuously desires* against the flesh, for these things are continuously causing themselves to be made opposed to one another in order that whatever things you may continuously want, these things you may not continuously do. Also, if you continuously choose to be led in relation to the Spirit, you're not existing under law."

These three verses provide a concise explanation of how believers can utilize the Spirit's power. To begin with, the verb "you're to actively continuously walk" (περιπατειτε) is in the active voice and present tense which indicate we're to *vigorously* and "continuously" live life "in relation to the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). This *command* (imperative mode)[2] occurring with the conditional statement, "if you continuously choose to be led" in verse 18, describes the process by which this Person of the Godhead empowers our "walk".

The verb, "you continuously choose to be led" (αγεσθε – Gal. 5:18) is in the same middle/passive voice form as the verbs just covered in Ephesians 5:18. Combining the dual form with this verb's meaning directs believers to *make a choice to place ourselves* (middle) in a position where we can *be guided* (passive) by the Spirit.[6] "If" and as we *habitually* (present tense) draw upon this supernatural assistance, we can be enabled to obtain the life-style changes delineated in the following context (Gal. 5:22 – 6:10). In addition, note other Translations which render both the middle and passive voice sense of this verb.[7]

The primary point of this passage is those who "actively" and "continuously walk" by the "Spirit . . . won't complete the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). On the other hand, those who disobey this command enter the war between "flesh" and "Spirit" with futility. For, during this Christian-Walk-Battle, each time we fail to depend on our indwelling Spirit, predictably, these encounters are won by the flesh (v. 17). To avoid this outcome, the "if" in verse 18 indicates we can have victory over the flesh *when we initiate a conditional choice* to be led by the Spirit. But, "if" instead one *places themselves under the Law*, he/she won't be able to overcome "the desire of the flesh" but will succumb to generating "the works of the flesh" (vv. 16, 19-21).

This passage presents a specific outline for how Christians can conduct a holy lifestyle. And, in the greater context of the Book, Spirit-guidance is stated to function in accord with principles contained in the gospel message proclaimed by Paul (Gal. 1:11-12; 3:1; 4:11, 16-20). In contrast, verse 18 specifies **The Holy Spirit Doesn't Work in Conjunction With the Law of Moses** which was instituted by God for Israel. For that

matter, He doesn't work in concert with any other mortally-generated philosophy either (Rom. 5:20-21; 6:1-16; 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-9; Col. 1:24 – 2:3, 8; 1 Tim. 6:20-21).

Romans 8:14

"For as many as continuously choose to be led (αγονται) in relation to the Spirit, these exist as sons of God."

This verb is the same present tense, middle/passive form found in Galatians 5:16, so it carries the same meaning. The prior context focuses on whether a person actually possesses the Spirit and those who do are labeled as believers (Rom. 8:9-10). Then, verses 11-13 contain several action words used to describe how Christians will be seen conducting themselves. Since the conjunction "for" (γαρ) begins verse 14, this connector shows Paul *provides pertinent background information* needed to help put these behavioral actions into effect.

When the dual voice form of "αγονται" is applied, it indicates we must *choose* (middle) *to be guided* (passive) by the Spirit "if" *He's to lead* us toward "putting to death the (fleshly) practices of the body", a procedure which accompanies divine life rising in our "mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11, 13).[6] I couldn't find any other Translations which include the middle voice sense in their rendition of this verb. I only found Versions which exclusively apply the passive sense, even the ones that include its middle voice relevance in their translation of Galatians 5:18.[7]

Now, a common method used to define meaning portrayed by any grammatical form is to observe how similar forms are used in other contexts. Forms of this same root verb "αγω" (to lead) which contain a **Middle/Passive Voice Combo** occur in two other settings unrelated to Christian growth and help throw light on the thought conveyed by this action word.

Second Timothy 3:6

"For, out of these exist men who're entering into houses and taking captive little women who have

chosen to begin and continue to be heaped with sins, continuously choosing to be led by various desires."

This context alerts Timothy to avoid secular men who take advantage of women. Who are these women? I translated the noun "little women" (γυναικαρια) since it's the *diminutive form* of the word "woman" (γυνη).[8] Bible Versions render this noun in many ways such as 'weak-willed', 'immature', 'gullible', 'foolish' and 'vulnerable'. These designations added to the action words describing these women indicate they're morally loose, similar to present day prostitutes.

The first action word is a middle/passive participle "who have chosen to begin and continue to be heaped" (σεσωρευμενα). This term occurs in the perfect tense which indicates *the action was completed and accomplished effects continue* so it's rendered "begin and continue". In addition, the dual voice combo indicates they *chose to be under the control* of something – the encumbrance of being "heaped with sins". [6] These women are presented as having put themselves under a sin-laden pile which includes the negative moral pressure of "continuously choosing

to be led (αγομενα) by various desires". This second participle is also a dual voice form which is why both *personal choice* (middle) and the *outside controlling factor* (passive) of "various desires" are included.[6]

Adult Christians should be able to relate to this portrayal of sexual desire since everyone knows once a person puts themselves in a position to be controlled by passion, he/she will get caught up in its grasp (2 Cor. 10:4-6; Gal. 6:1). This is an excellent example specifying what this middle/passive combo conveys and why the relevance of both voices should be included when it's taught.

Several Translations exist which include personal choice (middle voice) when rendering this form of "αγω" (to lead) in Second Timothy 3:6.[9] Although, most of these same Versions exclude the middle voice sense when translating similar verb forms in Galatians 5:18 and Romans 8:14. Why is this? In general, when earlier Versions translate a word form in a certain way, most subsequent Translations follow suit. And we've observed this trend in the contexts touched on

so far, though a few Versions do offer more all-inclusive renditions.

First Corinthians 12:2

"You know that when you were gentiles, you were continuously choosing to be led away toward dumb idols as you were continuously choosing to be led."

This verse reminds the Corinthians about their pre-conversion condition. It includes two action words which contain the same root verb "αγω" being examined. The verb, "you were continuously choosing to be led" (ηγεσθε), appears in the imperfect tense which denotes *continuous action in past time*, the period prior to salvation. Since this verb is middle/passive in form, at that time they *were choosing to put themselves* (middle voice) in a position to *be controlled* (passive) by "dumb idols".[6]

While in idolatry, they were "continuously choosing to be lead away" (απαγομενοι). This participle is built from the verb "αγω" prefixed by the preposition "απο", which means *from*. Since it occurs in

the middle/passive form it describes *their volitional participation* (middle voice) in *being led away from* (passive) the true God.[6] So, both action words in this verse illustrate how an unbeliever chooses to be under the control of false gods, whether they venerate themselves or worship someone and/or something else. Numerous Translations render both terms with personal choice (middle voice).[10] Yet, most of these same Versions don't represent the middle voice when rendering similar verb forms in Galatians 5:18 and Romans 8:14.

By now, you've probably noticed I'm routinely citing comparative Translations in reference to passages under consideration. This is for three reasons. First, it's to demonstrate the benefit of checking out other Versions. For, examining alternate readings will meaningfully augment anyone's conception of many passages. Second, referencing other Versions helps substantiate that my renderings are within the reason of others who're proficient in Greek and came to similar conclusions. Finally, I want to encourage Christians to dig deeper in their study of the Word. Those who still desire more than they can glean from available refer-

ence materials should consider learning New Testament Greek.

Philippians 2:12-13

"So that, my beloved, according as you always completed obeying, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, with fear and trembling you're to continuously choose to be made to produce your own salvation, for God exists who continuously energizes in you with the outcome to continuously desire and continuously energize on behalf of the good pleasure."

In verse 12, virtually all Translations render the middle/passive verb solely *with the relevance of the middle voice* and leave out the passive voice aspect altogether. This is entirely opposite to how all passages covered so far are translated by these same Versions. So, again, I've rendered this verb in a way which highlights both voices "you're to continuously choose to be made to produce" (κατεργαζεσθε). This means believers are to "continuously" (present tense) *make conscious choices* (middle voice) to be "filled"

or "led" by the Spirit so He can *cause the production* (passive) of their "own salvation" (see Phil. 1:28-29; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:18).[6]

Often, this verse is rendered with the phrase **'work out your own salvation'**. This is appropriate as long as it's understood to mean *putting salvation into effect.* For, "κατεργαζεσθε" shouldn't be construed to mean *working for salvation* since it doesn't convey that thought (Rom. 5:3; 7:8; 2 Cor. 4:17; 7:10-11; 9:11; 1 Pet. 4:3). Instead, this verb's imperative mode combined with the middle/passive voice emphasizes believers are *obliged to make the obedient choice of tapping available power* from the Spirit in order to yield fruits of salvation, some of which are specified earlier in the Book (Phil. 1:9-11; 2:1-11, 14-16).[2]

So, how can Christians accomplish this imperative? Verse 13 begins with the conjunction "for" (γαρ) which means it *contains background information* needed to fulfill the command in verse 12. Therefore, after considering the meaning of verse 13, I'll discuss how its content connects with our ability to obey the order in verse 12 to produce the fruits of salvation.

The phrase "God exists" uses a present tense form of the verb of being to target *His constant presence* "in" believers. A few passages in the Church Epistles indicate God or Christ is "in" us, but usually the Spirit is the Member of the Godhead stated to be "in" us. For that reason, I believe He is the Person intended here.

This verse goes on to say He's the one "who continuously energizes" (ενεργων) in us. This participle is composed of the preposition "εν", which means *in* or *inside*, affixed to the verb "εργεω", meaning *to work* or *do labor*. This same root word is used to depict the work of God or the Spirit in numerous passages (1 Cor. 12:6, 11; Gal. 2:8; 3:5; Eph. 1:11, 20; 3:20; Col. 1:29). It's also used regarding the Word's activity and fruits produced by the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:6; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 2:13). Combining these thoughts, **God-the-Holy-Spirit Produces Fruit In Believers in Close Concert with The Word**.

Next, we find an infinitive "with the outcome to continuously desire" (θελειν). Since this part of speech points to *an end action performed by its subject*, it's rendered "with the outcome". The first *continuous*

(present tense) end action of the indwelling Spirit is a "desire" or *want* to carry out God's "good pleasure". A second resultant action is expressed by the infinitive "to continuously energize" (ενεργειν – present tense), which contains the same root word as the participle "ενεργων" in this verse. These infinitives and the participle are all active voice and present tense, so they indicate the Spirit *vigorously* and "continuously" enables us to "desire" and "energize" what God wants us to do (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:6; 6:19).

Having deliberated verse 13, let's return to the significance the conjunction "for" (γαρ) holds since it directly links this verse's truth with the command verb in verse 12. Thus, "γαρ" *pinpoints Spirit-initiated desire and ability to do God's will as the outside force* specified by the passive voice of "κατεργαζεσθε". And we've already seen this verb's *middle voice* and *imperative mode* specify **A Believer's Obedient Choice is the Factor which Unleashes this Divine Power** (Rom. 5:5; 6:15-16).

Consequently, when all aspects of this passage are considered, it defines the Spirit/Believer Partnership

in the same way seen in lifestyle contexts already covered (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Eph. 5:18). Lastly, I didn't find any English Bible Versions which include the passive voice sense when rendering this middle/passive verb.

Principles of Philippians 2:12-13 in Action

Second Corinthians chapters 8 & 9 provide a real-life example of Christian choice. A year before receiving this Letter, these believers had "not only previously begun to do but also to continuously desire" to aid the poor saints in Jerusalem (8:10). Addressing this matter, Paul states their *continuous desire* (θελειν – same word as in Phil. 2:13) had faded which caused their giving to fall short of past pledges.

This context *delivers one of the strongest appeals* seen in any Epistle as they're pressed to be re-involved in this work which "profits" or *benefits* all who participate (2 Cor. 8:10). This plea contains godly models of obedience that contrast with the Corinthians' negligence. These include the all-in Macedonian

believers, Paul and his comrades, and Titus with two unnamed brothers. Like the zeal of these faithful brethren, they're to re-energize their *desire* by drawing inspiration from the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18; 4:16).

Romans 7 also provides an example for how Spirit enablement works, but in reverse. For, while struggling against sin, Paul states his "desire" (θελω) to do "good" as defined by the Law of Moses. In total, he uses the term *desire* seven times to represent the Spirit's *energizing* in his "inner man" (vv. 15-21, εσω ανθρωπον – 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16). But, since he was trying to keep the Law and today the Spirit doesn't work in conjunction with it, Paul couldn't *produce* "good" to *put his own salvation into effect* (κατεργαζεσθε – Phil. 2:12).

Instead, this same action word is used five times to describe how he was *producing* the sin he didn't "desire" (κατεργαζ + ομαι, εσθαι, or ομενη – vv. 13-20). The lesson: Even though divine "desire" exists in us, **We Need to Follow The Model Laid Out in Scripture** which directs us to choose to draw power from the

indwelling Spirit, for this is the way we're enabled to produce life-altering fruit (Phil. 2:12-13).

Again, it's noteworthy that most commonly used Translations render the Passive Voice Sense of the middle/passive verbs in Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:18, and Romans 8:14, then translate this same dual form with just the Middle Voice Sense in Philippians 2:12. Although this is inconsistent, all of these Bible Versions followed precedents set by past Versions, which evidently subsequent Translators were hesitant to revise.

Colossians 3:5-12

Several other contexts demonstrate the role Body members have in the course of spiritual growth. However, I chose this section as a final sample for two reasons. First, it is complex, yet this complexity provides a clear, concise, and coherent description of how the Spirit/Believer Connection works. Also, for many years I've seen the need to share information from the Greek text about verse 9 because many Translations render it in a way which can give the

reader a misconception of what this passage teaches. This matter is addressed when the exposition reaches that point.

"Therefore, you're to actively complete putting to death the members upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which exists as idolatry; on account of which things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience, among whom you once walked when you were continuously living in these things." (Col. 3:5-7)

The conjunction "therefore" (ουν) introduces *the next step* believers are to take based on earlier truths presented in the Book. To this point, Paul recorded how Christians at salvation were filled with Christ's fullness, separated from sin by His circumcision, baptized into His death, and raised with Him then await to be glorified at His return (Col. 2:9 – 3:4). Since we now occupy a righteous position before God and are promised future conformity with His Son, "therefore", *God wants His elect to* "actively complete putting to death the members upon the earth". For, only to the extent we rid ourselves of ungodly traits can we

effectively serve Him during the remainder of our time on earth.

In this passage, most of the commentary will focus on action words since they describe the functional path toward a holy life. So, the verb "you actively complete putting to death" (νεκρωσατε) occurs in the imperative mode, which means it's a *command*, and in the aorist tense infers *this action is to be completed* (Col. 3:5).

Before discussing this verb's relevance, it's crucial to understand what the Greek Aorist Tense signifies. Frequently its meaning is equated with *our English past tense*. If this were always true, *it would regularly designate completed action*. However, often this isn't the case. For, the Aorist Tense conveys a Past-Tense-Sense *only when it's united with the indicative mode*. Otherwise, when paired with imperative, subjunctive, or optative verbs as well as participles or infinitives, *the completion of its action depends on other factors*.[11]

Applying this principle to the aorist imperative verb "νεκρωσατε", *we're ordered to complete the act* of

putting to death sinful character. When believers are addressed with this form, it stipulates **God Holds Us Accountable to Have Completely Overcome our Flesh**.

This expectation isn't unreasonable since He's already supplied us with everything needed to avoid sin: resurrection life along with the indwelling Spirit who provides moral discernment, the ability to comprehend His Word, and power to obey under any circumstance. But, as I see it, no one ever achieves this goal; or else, we could reach sinless perfection. Not even Paul, our example of Christian living, ever claims to have completed his pursuit of perfection (Phil. 3:11-16; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 1:15-16).[12] Therefore, since God wants us *to mortify evil behavior*, yet none of us totally can, realistically *this endeavor turns into a perpetual pursuit* (Rom. 6:12-16).

Recapping verses 5-7, God commands believers to be fully accountable to "put to death" or *eradicate* the deviant sex-based activities listed in verse 5. For, they entrap participants in "idolatry" and are the primary

contributing factor for why the "wrath of God" will condemn the lost.

"And now, also, you choose to complete putting aside (αποθεσθε) all things, wrath, anger, evil, blasphemy, shameful speech out of your mouth." (Col. 3:8)

This verb combines the preposition "απο", which means *from*, with the verb "τιθημι", meaning *to place* or *put*. This term occurs in the aorist imperative form just like "νεκρωσατε", so it's also a *command to complete the act* of setting aside the wicked attributes listed. But, unlike the first command, this verb is in the middle voice which emphasizes the same need to perform as the active voice does but also specifies *the subject is to target itself* to accomplish that feat. Therefore, believers are *charged* (imperative mode) *to complete the elimination* (aorist tense) of ungodly qualities by *choosing* (middle) to make it happen.

Then, the next few verses provide a formula for how we can fulfill this directive, along with the one in verse 5, by outlining a *procedure for putting off* the trait of lying. Forms of the verb "αποτιθημι" occur

several more times in reference to *setting aside evil traits* in the Christian growth process (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:1).

"You're not to continuously choose to be made to lie unto one another after having chosen to complete putting off the old man with his practices and after having chosen to complete putting on the new *man*, which causes itself to continuously be made new again toward full knowledge according to the image of the one having completely created it; where there isn't Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but, Christ *exists* as all things and in all things." (Col. 3:9-11)

The only action verb and command (imperative mode)[2] in these three verses is "You're not to continuously choose to be made to lie" (μη ψευδεσθε).[13] This Greek root transliterates into our term 'pseudo' and conveys the idea of "not" (μη) *speaking falsely* or *deceitfully*. Also, its middle/passive voice form indicates the subject "You" is to *act upon itself* (middle) so we won't be influenced by *an external energy which causes us* (passive) "to lie".[6] To identify this

outside force, Paul cites "the old man" (παλαιον ανθρωπον) which is the venue through which Christians are tempted. So, it needs to be put off. If not, driven by secular philosophy and/or the Devil's lure, this "old man" *will team up with our flesh* and *cause us to lie* (Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19, 27; 6:10-16).

The word "man" (ανθρωπον) is a generic term referring to *any person*; man, woman or child. So, in effect, all believers are ordered to "continuously" (present tense) cease lying. Finally, the reciprocal pronoun "one another" (αλληλους) indicates we're to renounce telling fibs or half-truths, for all deception *harms oneself* and *other Body members*, not to mention our joint testimony to the Lost.

The flow of action showing how we can achieve truthful behavior can be traced through the three participles which follow. The first, "after having chosen to complete putting off" (απεκδυσαμενοι), is built from the prepositions "απο", meaning *from*, and "εκ", meaning *out*, affixed to the verb "δυω", which means *to bind* (Col. 3:9). This triple word blend occurs only twice in the N.T. (Col. 2:15), however, forms of

"εκδυω" occur five other times and convey the idea of *stripping, unclothing,* or *taking off* (Matt. 27:28, 31; Mark 15:20; Luke 10:30; 2 Cor. 5:4).

When this meaning is applied, believers are to *divest ourselves away from* the lying ways of the "old man". And, since this is a nominative plural participle, the "You" in the verb "ψευδεσθε" (to lie) serves as its subject. Also, when the sense conveyed by the middle voice is added, it specifies Christians are to *act upon ourselves* or *choose* to put off the old man.[6]

Last, this participle occurs in the aorist tense which stipulates its conveyance of undressing action *is to be completed*.[11] In addition, since aorist participial action (or being) *always precedes the action (or being) of other words it modifies*, the translation of "απεκ-δυσαμενοι" begins with the phrase "after having".[14] Together, these two concepts indicate believers must *first complete putting off* impulses of the "old man" before we can successfully stop fabricating lies.

Opening this section, I suggested some Translations can give a misconception about what verse 9 teaches.

This is because **They Indicate Christians Have Already Put Off The Old Man**. The KJV and ESV render this Aorist Participle with its Direct Object, **'seeing that ye/you have put off the old man/self'**. Also, the NASV translates this phrase **'since you have laid aside the old self'**, and the NIV renders it **'since you have taken off your old self'**. These renderings change the meaning of this passage considerably.

Many other Versions, including Young's Literal Translation, The Godbey New Testament, and The Darby Translation contain renderings similar to mine, **'having put off** (or ***laid aside***) **the old man'**. And these renditions don't imply the act of "putting off the old man" has already been completed, but *they appropriately designate the thought believers still need to get rid of this negative influence*. Again, since I believe no Christian ever completes this process, we need to habitually undertake "putting off" sin each time we're tempted.[12] More Versions validating how this verse should be translated are listed in **Appendix II**.

Furthermore, the KJV, ESV, NASV, and NIV render this same construction – a Middle Aorist Participle paired

with an Imperative Verb – differently in all other contexts I've been able to identify than they do in Colossians 3:9 (Eph. 4:25, 6:13, 6:14-15; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:13; 2:1-2). In these six additional contexts, **All Four Versions Render the Aorist Participle(s) as Unfinished Action**. This point plus additional evidence demonstrating how these and similar constructions should be translated are detailed in **Appendix II**.

This matter is important because some Bible teachers use these English renderings of Colossians 3:9 to prove Christians no longer have the "old man", or its influence has been effectively cancelled. Moreover, this context is sometimes used to support the belief: In conjunction with the annulment of our "old man" at salvation, believers are constantly and automatically led by the Spirit to produce good works. These positions will be examined in the conclusion of this article.

Therefore, to accentuate the meaning portrayed by the aorist middle participle "απεκδυσαμενοι" (to put off), Christians need to *complete the act* (aorist tense) of *choosing* (middle voice) to reject lying's lure as *the*

first step (aorist participle) in developing a morally-driven-conscience to tell the truth. And, since we still sin, *this activity needs to become our routine*. **The Context Supports This Continuous-Action-Concept** since *this participle is paired with the present tense verb* "ψευδεσθε" (to lie).

In conclusion, the tenses of both action words teach two meaningful principles. First, the participle's aorist tense *requires us to have the action of* "putting off" *completed*, which underscores our accountability to God. Then, the present tense verb speaks to the reality of Christian growth: *Our Character Has Constant Need For Renewal* as long as we occupy these mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11-13).

Having meticulously dissected the first aorist participle, let's look at the second to see how it aids in telling the truth (Col. 3:10). This word, "after having chosen to complete putting on" (ενδυσαμενοι) unites the preposition "εν", meaning *in*, and the verb "δυω", which means *to bind*. This term's connotation is exactly opposite to the meaning of the first participle, so it denotes *being bound in* or *clothed with* the

"new *man*" (νεον). The word "*man*" (ανθρωπον) doesn't occur in the Greek text, but the intent is for it to be distributed to the word "new" from the prior phrase, **"the old man"**. Linguistic support for this practice is found in the conjunction "and" (και) which connects these two phrases.

Since "ενδυσαμενοι" is also an aorist participle, it emphasizes *this act must be completed before* one can stop lying, which is why it's also translated "after having".[14] And, just like the first, this second participle occurs in the middle voice which specifies believers *are to cause themselves* or *choose* (middle) to put on the "new *man*".[6] Therefore, this term adds the practice of "putting on the new *man*" to "putting off the old man" since both actions are needed to implement honesty. The following portions apply this same verb "ενδυω" (to put on) to acts of spiritual growth (Rom. 13:12, 14; Eph. 4:24; 6:11, 14; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:8).

The third participle involved in this pursuit-of-truthfulness is, "which causes itself to continuously be made new again" (τον ανακαινουμενον). Since this participle is in the accusative form like "the new *man*"

(τον νεον), it designates "the new *man*" as its subject "which causes itself" (middle voice) "to continuously be made" (passive) new again".[6] Before evaluating how this present middle/passive participle relates to the context, we must first identify its meaning.

The word "ανακαινουμενον" consists of the preposition "ανα", indicating *repetition*, joined to the verb "καινοω", which means *to make new* or *innovate*.[15] It portrays the thought a believer's character *needs to be renovated* back to its original created state which existed prior to the introduction of corrupting sin. This term appears only one other time and occurs in a similar present middle/passive form, so the renewal happening in our "inner" (εσω) *man* is described in the same way it occurs in our "new *man*" (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10). Also, this concept of renewal is seen in two passages which contain a noun form of this same root and one time in a synonym (Rom. 12:2; Titus 3:5; "ανανεουσθαι" in Eph. 4:23).

So, how does the meaning of "ανακαινουμενον" relate to the action words which occur before it? And, what initiates the "new" man's continual renewing

effect within us? Grammatically, "the new *man*" (τον νεον) is in the accusative case which makes it the *direct object* of "ενδυσαμενοι" (to put on). Since this aorist participle appears in the middle voice, it indicates *Christians need to first act upon ourselves* or *choose* to put on "the new *man*" before we can experience its renovating properties.[14]

In conclusion, how does this quartet of action words interrelate? The verb "ψευδεσθε" which commands us to stop lying occurs first in order but is actually the operative end-goal of the aorist participles "απεκδυσαμενοι" and "ενδυσαμενοι" since their action must happen first.[14] Therefore, this entire-honesty-makeover is facilitated by these aorist middle participles which identify *Believers' Choice as the principal factor initiating the acts* of "putting off" and "putting on". So, **As Subjects of these Participles, Our Decisions Launch this Spirit-Enabled New-Man-Renewal** (ανακαινουμενον). Last of all, this present tense participle and verb "ψευδεσθε" both suggest we can expect our transformation to be *ongoing* and, thus, *progressive*. So, we're truly **'A Work in Progress'** Phil. 3:10-16).[12]

Next, let's consider the "full knowledge" (επιγνωσιν) to which we're being renewed (Col. 3:10). This word is used to represent *mystery truth* which details how we become members in the Body and how we're to successively behave (Col. 1:9-10; 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Tit. 1:1, cf. Heb. 10:26; 2 Pet. 1:8). Incorporating this thought, the noun "επιγνωσιν" represents *the body of truth* which describes both Christian qualities and the restoration process by which they can be obtained.

Then, this "full knowledge" is said to be "according to" (κατ') or *in line with* the "image" (εικονα) of the one who created the "new *man*" (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:15). Thus, **This Mystery Truth is The Standard which Contains Detailed Procedures to Aid Conformity with The Savior** (Rom. 6:16, 19, 22).

As already discussed, when Christians attempt to pursue sanctification by means of the Law of Moses or any humanly generated philosophy, we'll fail miserably. For, the Law makes us feel condemned and men's theories offer no spiritual benefit, so both reap the

same consequence – a corrupting default delivered by our "old man" (Rom. 6:14; 7:14-25; Gal. 5:16-18, 23; Eph. 4:14, 17-24; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20-21). Though God initially gave the Law for Israel to follow, it no longer directly applies to Body members other than specific principles the Spirit repeats from it recorded in the Church Epistles. For, today the essence of the Law isn't facilitated by the Spirit but is now defined as "the commandments and teaching of men" (Gal. 2:17-21; Col. 2:22).

Next, Paul divulges how "the new *man*" originated. The participle "the one having completely created" (κτισαντος) is active in voice indicating God was the *vigor* or *energy* behind the new man's emergence (Col. 3:10). When He's involved in an act of creation, it always consists of *something coming into existence out of nothing*, just like the original creation recorded in Genesis. (Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 11:3). Nevertheless, Paul isn't speaking about that creation. For, he exclusively uses terms regarding a "new creation" in reference to the Body of Christ. This is a separate spiritual entity which wasn't part of the revelation describing

God's original creation of or intent for the universe (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10, 15; 3:9; 4:24).

But God revealed this purpose of *the newly created man* when He "made known" the formerly un-prophesied "mystery" truth (1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:1-12; Col. 1:24 – 2:3). And, since His creative act is expressed here by another aorist participle, "κτισαντος", this action was *fully completed* because, unlike us, what God does *He can do perfectly* (Col. 3:10). Furthermore, this word-form indicates *His design of the* "new *man*" *was accomplished before* its renewing ability existed for believers to draw upon.[14]

The phrases "new man" and "His body which is the church" are inseparable since both describe the "new creation" in which all believers have access to the Father (Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 1:24). And Colossians 3:11 provides additional information explaining t*he diversified makeup of this Body*. So, in the Church, there're no ethnic or religious differences between "Greek and Jew"; the Law required practice of "circumcision" no longer has meaning; a "Barbarian" or "Scythian" are equally welcome; and social status such as being

a "slave" or "free" has nothing to do with our identity. **"But Christ exists as all things and in all things"** (emphasis mine).

When Christians engage to put on the new man, we implement God's prescribed solution for getting rid of "old man" scourges and becoming clothed with the qualities of Christ (Rom. 13:14). **This Endeavor Should be Central to The Focus of All Believers**. For, when we conform to our Savior's image, who is the "fullness" of God, we can experience the "all things" He represents – everything holy, righteous and good (Col. 1:19; 2:9-10; 3:11). And becoming Christ-like is the way we fulfill our purpose to represent Him to the world.

In conclusion, the teaching of Colossians 3:5-11 completely harmonizes with the procedures for spiritual growth observed in other contexts (Rom. 8:11-14; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 5:18; Phil. 2:12-13). For, all these portions designate that Christians first need to make a choice to "be filled in" and "walk" by the Spirit, then He'll provide the heavenly capacity to

understand, obey and apply all biblical instruction intended for us.

In this context, verses 9-11 are sandwiched between verses 5-8, which *target eradicating sin*, and verses 12 and following which *list godly behaviors we should adopt*. For, these three verses contain a bridge-of-divine-methodology which provides access to achieve both goals. And the fact Paul showcases the sin of lying as an example of discarding evil works should catch our attention since truth-telling is also identified as the first trait we're told to put on in a parallel passage (Eph. 4:25).

Whether between husbands and wives, Body members, us and God, or among unbelievers, **Real Friendships are Always Founded on Honesty**. Contrariwise, when our activities are two-faced, we'll cultivate phony relationships. Happily, with God's approach we're able to develop qualities which please Him, aid in the cessation of our own sin, help unify Body members, and demonstrate "the truth in love" to all (Eph. 4:3-15; 5:23-33; 6:23-24; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:14).

A Grammatical Exhibition

Having considered Colossians 3:5-11 regarding the Spirit/Believer Interface, now let's contemplate an expanded translation of the following section since it helps cement many of the points of grammar just covered. A targeted spotlight will be placed on the abundance of *active, middle,* or *middle/passive voices; aorist* and *present tenses;* and *imperative commands*. For, these forms are the way the Greek language stresses a *Christian's responsibility to yield to the Spirit* so we can be renewed by gaining the qualities of Christ.

Col. 3:12-15: "Therefore, as the elect of God, saints, and ones having been loved, you choose to complete putting on (ενδυσασθε – **middle, aorist-command**) compassions of mercy, kindness, humility of mind, gentleness, long suffering, continuously choosing to be caused to hold up (ανεχομενοι – **middle/passive**) one another and continuously choosing to be caused to forgive (χαριζομενοι – **middle/passive**) yourselves if anyone might have a fault against anyone; and according as the Lord completely forgave you, likewise

you *completely forgive*. Also, on top of all these things *put on* (implied from v. 12) love which exists as the bond of perfection; and continuously let the peace of Christ actively rule (**active, command**) in your hearts unto which you were called in one body, and you're to continuously choose to be made (γινεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) thankful ones."

Col. 3:18-21: "Wives, you continuously choose to be made subordinate (υποτασσεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) to the husbands as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, you actively continuously love (αγαπατε – **active, command**) *your* wives and you continuously choose not to be made bitter (μη πικραινεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) against them. Children, you actively continuously obey (**active, command**) the parents according to all things, for this exists as well pleasing in the Lord. Fathers, you aren't to actively continuously aggravate (**active, command**) your children in order that they may not lose heart."

Col. 3:22-25: "Slaves, you're to actively continuously obey (**active, command**) the fleshly masters according to all things, not in eye service as men pleasers,

but in singleness of heart, while continuously choosing to be made to fear (φοβουμενοι – **middle/passive**) the Lord. Whatever you might do, from the soul, continuously choose to be caused to work (εργαζεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) as to the Lord and not to men, while knowing that you'll cause yourselves to receive (απολημψεσθε – **middle**) the repayment associated with the inheritance from the Lord. You actively continuously serve (**active, command**) the Lord Christ! For, the one continuously doing injustice will cause himself to receive back (κομισεται – **middle**) the unjust thing he completed doing, and no partiality exists."

Col. 4:1-4: "Lords (κυριοι), you continuously choose to be caused to present (παρεχεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) the right and equal treatment to the slaves while knowing that you continuously have a Lord (κυριον) in heaven. You (believers) actively continuously persevere (**active, command**) in relation to prayer while watching in it in thanksgiving and, at the same time, continuously choosing to be caused to pray (προσευχομενοι – **middle/passive**) concerning us in order that God might open a door associat-

ed with the message for us to speak the mystery of Christ, because of which I (Paul) have chosen to begin and continue to be made bound (or *imprisoned*, δεδεμαι – **middle/passive**), in order that I might manifest it as it's necessary for me to speak."

Col. 4:5-6: "You actively continuously walk (**active, command**) in wisdom toward those outside while continuously choosing to be made to buy up (or *purchase*, εξαγοραζομενοι – **middle/passive**) the time. Your message *is* always *to be* in grace, as those having chosen to begin and continue to be made seasoned (ηρτυμενος – **middle/passive**) in relation to salt, with the outcome for you to know how it's necessary to continuously choose to be made to answer (αποκρινεσθαι – **middle/passive**) each one."

Believers should take note of **This Barrage of Directions-Calling-For-a-Response** packed into such a short context as we strive to implement godly traits. In particular, **Middle and Middle/Passive Voice Forms Underscore Our Need to Make Volitional Choices in The Process of Accessing The Spirit** so we can put these behaviors into practice (Gal. 5:16-18;

Eph. 2:10; 5:18). Expanded and highlighted Translations of ten other contexts which relate to sanctification are chronicled in **Appendix III**.

Section 2: Does the Spirit Cause Our Good Works?

Many Christians hold the view: **We have no part in the production of good works; instead, the Holy Spirit causes us to do them. And, though it seems like we decide between right and wrong, in reality, the Spirit fully controls all our thoughts and choices**. However, I'm certain the contexts covered so far provide ample support specifying *Body Members Play a Definite Part in The Process of Spiritual Growth.*

On the other hand, **This Causation View has Wide-Ranging Support from Many Passages** in the Old Testament, earthly teachings of Jesus, and the Acts period. These portions explain how the Spirit will function when all of God's New Covenant promises made to His Chosen People come to fruition. Numerous contexts from these parts of Scripture will be

addressed later, but first let's focus on more passages from Paul's Letters which are sometimes used to support the belief: *Christians don't have a decision-making-role in our spiritual journey . . .*

. . . 'Because Our Old Man Has Been Crucified'

This concept is derived from Romans 6:6. But, if this truth means the "old man" no longer has an influence on believers, why are we still instructed to put it off (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)? In similar manner, Galatians 5:24 says "the ones associated with Christ completed crucifying the flesh", so what should we make of exhortations not to walk in the flesh (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:12-13)?

Along this same line, Ephesians 2:15 says believing Jews and gentiles were created "into one new man", so why are we still taught to "put on" the new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 2:10)? Finally, if Galatians 3:27 means everyone who was baptized into Christ has "put on Christ" in every way, why are we still encouraged to "put on" His traits (Rom. 13:14; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10)? Join my examination of these four passages to

determine how these seemingly incompatible concepts can co-exist.

Romans 6:6

"While knowing this, that our old man was completely crucified with *Christ* in order that the body of sin may be completely deactivated with the outcome for us to no longer continuously serve sin."

This verse states our "old man was completely crucified with (συνεσταυρωθη) *Christ"*. This verb is composed of the preposition "συν", meaning *with*, and the verb "σταυροω", which means *to crucify*. The word *"Christ"* is inserted because the "old man" part of us was crucified "with" (συν) someone, who is Jesus when we "died", "were baptized", and "buried with" Him (Rom. 6:2-4).

Together, this verb's indicative mode and aorist tense *state its action has been completed.* This combination of grammar conveys a thought equal to our *English past tense*, so it emphasizes our "old man" was crucified *by God* (passive voice) *at the point of salvation.*[11]

The full ramifications of this **Aorist Indicative Form** with regard to how the crucifixion of our "old man" relates to spiritual growth will be elaborated in a few paragraphs after we analyze the entire meaning of this verse.

Paul goes on to say our old man was crucified "in order that" (ινα) or *for the purpose that* "the body of sin may be completely deactivated" (καταργηθῃ). The subjunctive mode of this verb indicates its activity is *contingent upon* something triggering it. The divine act which caused our "old man" to be crucified fulfills this conditional requirement for "the body of sin" to have been "completely" (aorist tense) *rendered inoperative.* The sole reason this aorist tense action was able to be *completed* is because *God accomplished it*, for it bypassed sinful man who lacks the capacity to fully complete any spiritual act.

This finished divine action is followed by the phrase, "with the outcome for us to no longer continuously serve (δουλευειν) sin". This infinitive contains the same root found in the noun "slave" (δουλος) and, as such, means *to render service as a slave.* Infini-

tives specify "outcome", so this form combined with its present tense designates we're in a *resultant* and *continuous state* of not having to serve sin. Note, this phrase doesn't say we won't sin or can't sin; it simply means *we're now in a position we don't have to sin*, unlike our former state when we were bound by evil as unbelievers (Rom. 8:7-8; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26).

A lot of Scripture either says or implies Christians can "sin" which is why we're repeatedly told not to (Rom. 6:12-16; 14:23; 1 Cor. 8:12). So, what God simply accomplished by crucifying and deactivating our old man is: **Sin No Longer has a Strangle-Hold on Us**. But now, *We're Able to Choose to Do Right* in our new Spirit-Livened-State where we possess the ability to "desire" and "energize" His "good-pleasure" (Rom. 6:16; 8:9-16; Gal. 2:18-21; Eph. 2:1-5; Phil. 2:12-13). In addition, comparable to our responsibility to put off the "old man", Christians are to choose not to live under the Law for it too has been *crucified* and *deactivated* in relation to us. Verses supporting this scenario are detailed in **Appendix IV**.

Now let's return to the significance the **Aorist Indicative Verb** "συνεσταυρωθη" (was crucified with) has in this verse. Since This Grammatical Combo portrays the same meaning as our English Past Tense, it *'indicates'* (indicative mode) *this act of crucifixion was completed* (aorist tense) *at a past point of time* by God. This concept of finality with regard to what He accomplished at salvation stands in stark contrast to the lack of finality in a Christian's ongoing need for spiritual growth. So, this is the reason **We Haven't Seen Aorist Indicative Verbs in Portions which Describe Our Part in The Sanctification Process**.

Furthermore, while writing this article, I came to realize **Aorist Indicative Verbs** *are Absent in All Instructions that Direct Believers About Acquiring Holiness.* This Blanket Statement would be incredible if it weren't true. However, I'm confident it is both observable and establishes the principle: **Life-Style Portions in the Church Epistles Never Teach a Christian Ever Completely Puts Off the Old Man or Puts On the New Man**. Therefore, *This Single Grammatical Structure Separates Scripture Portions* which define God's accomplished acts in our salvation from ones

describing the endless practices believers need to implement for spiritual growth. This *Same Principle of Grammar* will be confirmed in several more upcoming expositions.

In addition, the context surrounding Romans 6:6 indicates Christians need to make choices, so we won't "serve sin". First, the saved are told, "You continuously choose to be made to consider" (λογιζεσθε) yourselves as "living to God" (v. 11). This verb *commands* (imperative mode) us to be in *an ongoing process* (present tense) of *exercising choice* (middle voice) *to be caused* (passive – from the Spirit's power) "to consider" we're dead "in relation to sin" and living "in relation to God".[6]

Then, the following context contains *numerous imperative mode commands to entreat believers* to master the sin-tendency in our "members" as we present our bodies as "instruments of righteousness to God". By responding to these directives, we can achieve the end results of "righteousness" and "holiness" in character (Rom. 6:11-16, 19, 22, cf. 6:4).

Summarizing, Romans 6:6 is the first passage where we observe an **Aorist Indicative Verb** describing what God accomplished when He, as the catalyst, initiated our saved condition of not being slaves to sin. And other **Aorist Indicative Verbs** in the immediate context which validate this same principle are "απεθανομεν" (we died), "εβαπτισθημεν" (were baptized), and "συνεταφημεν" (were buried with – vv. 2-4).

Then, directly following these, no less than **Five Imperative Mode Verbs** occur to emphasize how He holds us accountable to make obedient choices so we can advance in holiness (Rom. 6:11-13, 16, 19, 22; Gal. 6:8; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19). Two of these Commands are in the Aorist Tense which requires the action to be completed. However, just like other contexts where Aorist Imperative Verbs express God's desire for us to be fully transformed, practically speaking we find ourselves in the constant pursuit of perfection (Eph. 6:11, 13-14; Col. 3:5; 2 Tim. 2:3).[12]

Galatians 5:24

"Also, the ones associated with Christ completly crucified (εσταυρωσαν) the flesh with the passions and desires."

This is also an **Aorist Indicative Verb** which refers to *the completed action happening at the past time of our salvation.*[11] Just like the concept "our old man" was crucified but we still possess the need to put it off; in the same way, our "flesh" was crucified when we died with Christ yet we must decide not to conduct our "walk" in concert with it.

This idea is corroborated just a few verses earlier in a portion already covered which explicitly describes how our post salvation lifestyle works. It states we won't "fulfill the desires of the flesh" when we "continuously walk" in the Spirit, but this reality can only happen "if" *we first choose to be led by the Spirit* (Gal. 5:16-18). When we follow this formula, our conscious choices will lead us to produce the "fruit of the Spirit" (vv. 22-23). When we don't, *we'll be dominat-*

ed by the flesh and produce the "works of the flesh" (vv. 19-21).

In addition, verse one of this chapter contains an **Aorist Indicative Verb** expressing another fully accomplished act which took place at salvation, "Christ completely freed (ηλευθερωσεν) us in relation to freedom" (Gal. 5:1). Then, immediately Paul says, "Therefore, you're to actively continuously stand (στηκετε) and you're not to continuously choose to be restrained (ενεχεσθε) again by the yoke of bondage". These two commands in the Imperative Mode necessitate an obedient response before their verb action can occur. And their present tense forms indicate we need to "continuously" stand and restrain ourselves from the lingering "bondage" of sin (Rom. 6:16).

Observe how the noun "bondage" (δουλειας) or *slavery* in Galatians 5:1 is built on the same root as the infinitive "to serve" (δουλευειν) in Romans 6:6. Then, notice how both contexts connect this slavery with being under the Law of Moses. When believers interact with the Law, "sin" takes advantage and

does its dirty work (Rom. 6:6 – 7:25; Gal. 5:1-26). Two conclusions are apparent from these passages. First, when we put ourselves under the methodology of the Law, sin will follow since, in this dispensation, the Law always works in conjunction with and promotes the "flesh" (Rom. 13:14). Second, we should recognize today the Holy Spirit doesn't function in combination with the precepts of the Law. Consequently, if we want to obtain Christian behavior, we need to employ *methods outlined in the Church Epistles* which explain how our Spirit-connection works (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18, 23).

Galatians 3:27

"For, as many as were completely baptized (εβαπτισθητε) into Christ, you chose to completely put on Christ."

Again, this **Aorist Indicative Verb** is another *past tense concept* describing what took place at the point of salvation.[11] Additionally, its passive voice indicates *an outside source* (the Spirit) *caused our baptismal port of entry* into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13;

Gal. 3:28). This concept is followed by the verb, "you chose to completely put on" (ενεδυσασθε) which is in the **Aorist Indicative Middle Form.** So, it specifies a *statement of fact* (indicative mode) *indicating believers participate* (middle voice) *in this completed act* (aorist tense).

This observation may incite the reaction, **'But believers don't play any part in salvation since God does all of that work!'** In response, I would say, **'Yes'** and **'No'**. **'Yes'**, believers do have a part in salvation, that is, we *believe* or *exercise faith* to initiate the process, which is what the middle voice suggests. This idea is supported by at least 20 prior appearances of the noun and verb forms of the word "faith" or "believing" (Gal. 2:16 – 3:27). Also, I would reply **'No'** since at our Baptism I'm convinced God's elect willingly and gladly *exercise Saving Faith initiated by the Holy Spirit* (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:28-29; 1 Tim. 1:14).

In conclusion, at salvation we "put on" (ενεδυσασθε) Christ. This verb's **Aorist Indicative Form** denotes *we completely received* His righteousness but only in *a positional sense*, for we still need to "put on the Lord

Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14, cf. Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:24; 6:11, 14; Col. 3:10, 12; 1 Thess. 5:8).

And none of the eight passages just cited, which all contain forms of the verb "ενδυω", convey the idea *putting on* the "new man" has been completed since none of them include **Aorist Indicative Verbs** to refer to the process of Christian growth. Instead, all the aorist tense action words are paired with **Imperative** or **Subjunctive Verbs** or within **Participles** and **Infinitives.** None of these combinations in themselves designate completed action.[11] Also, since all eight contexts contain **Middle Voice** action words, again *Christian Choice is Stressed As Central to The Practice of Sanctification* (Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:10).

Ephesians 2:15

". . . after having deactivated the law of commandments in ordinances in order that in Himself He might completely create the two into one new man while making peace."

This verse is nestled in a passage describeing how Jesus's work on the cross "deactivated" the "law" – the "wall" which separated Jews and gentiles (Eph. 2:14-15). Here, the "new man" (καινον ανθρωπον) is identified as a *completed creation* and equated with "one body" (ενι σωματι) – the Body of Christ (vv. 16-22; Eph. 1:23; Col. 3:10-11). The existence of this finished-organism hinges on the **Aorist Subjunctive Verb**, "He might completely create" (κτισῃ). Though this verb is in the subjunctive mode which specifies *contingent action*, unlike men, *God can complete* any act needed to fulfill this mode's *requirement*.

So, after stating the construction of the "new man" was finalized by God, the ensuing context details *the resultant condition Body members have* such as "peace" with and "access to" the Father as well as being the "dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:18-22). Although this passage focuses on *the new man's standing before God* and not on our lifestyle, other portions instruct us to "put on" traits consistent with our newly created "new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Summarizing: Romans 6:6
Galatians 3:27; 5:24
Ephesians 2:15

In these four contexts, our "old man" and "flesh" were crucified when the "new man" was created and we "put on" Christ. These divine acts are primarily expressed by **Aorist Indicative Verbs** which like our English Past Tense describe *Completed Action*. And, since we're spiritually alive as a result of these acts, God wants us to respond by tapping into power from His Spirit who we've received to bring about character change.

At this point, I believe it's profitable to consider an opposing theological view which circulates in Christendom. For, it arises from applying teaching from the above four passages as well as other contexts to *support the idea we're presently in a Perfect Righteous State before God* instead of simply occupying a Positional, Righteous Standing.

The claim: 'God doesn't See Us as Sinners'

Some Christians hold the conviction we shouldn't view ourselves as sinners since God accepts us as "holy" and "blameless" in Christ (Eph. 1:4). Regarding this idea, years ago a brother approached me since he knew I had some knowledge of Greek grammar. He had previously seen the verb of being "I am" (ειμι) in First Timothy 1:15 occurs in *present tense form* which would indicate Paul identified himself as the "chief" of "sinners" when he penned the Letter. And, if this is the intention, it would mean we too are "sinners" since the context teaches Paul is the pattern for all those saved (v. 16). When I confirmed this element of grammar does refer to *his present saved state*, this brother was troubled and verbalized he didn't think this could be correct. Then, he stated he believed this *label of sinner* defined Paul's pre-conversion condition.

After hearing his reply, I redirected our chat to the latter part of Romans 7 where Paul describes himself as a sinner multiple times. He again responded he

didn't think this section refers to Paul's saved state either. The reason for sharing this exchange is to make the point: **If we come to see textual evidence which challenges a current conviction, after studying and if pertinent Scripture warrants, we should be willing to change our stance**. Sadly, all too often, believers tend to discount new data in favor of defending existing beliefs. Having said this, let's take a close look at this portion to see what it teaches concerning Paul's spiritual condition.

Romans 7:7-25

Beginning in verse 7, Paul explains when he lived in Judaism he knew what "sin" was because the Law of Moses defined it. The particular sin he cites as an example is "lust" (επιθυμιαν – Gal. 5:16) or *covetousness*, which is the tenth commandment. Then, he says when he saw the Law's true meaning, "it produced all lust in me for apart from the law sin is dead" (Rom. 7:8).

Proceeding in this spiritual autobiography, he states, "at one time I was continuously living (εζων) apart

from the law." This imperfect tense verb denotes *continuous action in past time*. So, even though the Law existed some 1400 years prior to Paul's birth, he's saying until God opened his mind to its real definition of "lust", *he was living apart from grasping the Law's message of condemnation*. However, *his eyes were opened at conversion*, so "after the commandment had come, sin completely livened up" (ανεζησεν – **Aorist Indicative** – Rom. 7:9; Acts 9:1-19). Before that time, he was deceived and essentially living "apart from the law" since he viewed himself as "righteous" and thought he kept it blamelessly (Rom. 7:8; Phil. 3:6).

Then, he says, "I died" (απεθανον – Rom. 7:10). Just like the verb expressing sin "completely livened up", this second **Aorist Indicative Verb** also refers to a *completed statement of fact*.[11] And, both verbs describe what happened to Paul at salvation since they refer to the moment he realized "the commandment" didn't award him "life" but, instead, condemned him to "death" (Rom. 7:10; Phil. 3:6; Deut. 30:1-10, 15, 19).

At that point, he no longer had prideful ego leading him to think he was perfect, "for sin having taken opportunity through the commandment completely deceived (εξηπατησεν) me and, through it, completely killed (απεκτεινεν) me" (Rom. 7:11). These third and fourth **Aorist Indicative Verbs** augment the first two to conclude Paul's description of *actions completed at his conversion*.

The primary goal of this context is to help Christians appreciate the true essence of the Law of Moses and how it affects us today. So, the next statement encapsulates its core-principle, "So that indeed, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). Then, the rest of this chapter illustrates how the Law represents God's perfect righteousness and how sinful man can't measure up. In this presentation, Paul's sinfulness is displayed as exhibit-number-one to prove this fact. Though some view verses 14-25 differently, I see three reasons this section exemplifies *Paul's saved condition*.

First, prior to conversion, Paul didn't think he sinned which contrasts with his present view of seeing fault

in himself. For, in the past, he thought he was good enough to satisfy the Law's requirement for earning eternal life (Rom. 7:9; Matt. 10:22; 19:16-22; Phil. 3:6; Deut. 30:15).

Second, the use of *thirty present tense* verbs, participles and infinitives in this context confirm his *constant awareness* of his own sinfulness, which is opposite to how he formerly viewed himself as persistently self-righteousness (Rom. 8:7-8; Phil. 3:4-6).

Finally, Paul says he delights in the Law in his "inner man" (εσω ανθρωπον – v. 22). The adverb "inner" (εσω) occurs three other times which all represent the "new creation" of the Body and its "new man", *the place where spiritual renewal takes place in believers* (1 Cor. 5:12; 2 Cor. 4:16; 5:17; Eph. 2:15; 3:16).

Having established this passage speaks of Paul's restored state, he says "I continuously exist as fleshly, having been sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). The present tense verb of being "I continuously exist" (ειμι) is the same term found in First Timothy 1:15, so it refers to his *present condition* which is also described as

"fleshly" (σαρκινος). Therefore, this section begins by underscoring Paul's "flesh" (σαρξ) and "sin" (α-μαρτια) to **Define Who He Is** (vv. 17, 18, 20, 23, 25).

Next, he says, "For I know that good doesn't continuously dwell in me, that is continuously (εστιν) in my flesh" (Rom. 7:18). This present tense verb of being again emphasizes *Paul's Present State of Being* – he *persistently has no* "good" in his "flesh", just sinful tendencies. Finally, verse 24 says, "*I am* a wretched man." Even though a verb is absent in the Greek text, in cases such as these, a *present tense form of the verb of being is understood*.[16] Therefore, *this verse also brands Paul* as **A Vile Sinner Saved by Grace** (v. 25). It's no accident the famous hymn *Amazing Grace* endures, for it captures this Bible based thought in its first stanza.

Consequently, First Timothy 1:15 and Romans 7:14-25 give credence to the doctrine believers should still identify ourselves as "sinners". And, along with confirming our *prevailing sinful condition*, Romans 7 also teaches the remedy to obtain righteous character has nothing to do with keeping the Law. Therefore,

we need to look elsewhere for a solution. And, we've been seeing this remedy portrayed in the Church Epistles which explain our judicial righteousness before the Father along with Spirit-revitalizing-techniques for how we can flex our moral muscle against sin to successfully put off our "old man" and put on the "new" (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2; 6:14-16; 7:4-6; 8:1-4; Gal. 2:15-21).

Summary: How the Spirit's Power is Activated Today

As "sinners", our "old man" was crucified when we became a living part of the "new creation". Since then, we possess the "new man" or "inner man" where the indwelling Holy Spirit challenges us to live pleasing to the Father. In Christ, we're already fully righteous before and acceptable to God yet, since we're still defined by the desire to sin, we need to focus on "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new". To accomplish this, *the revealed mystery truth* records traits we're to put on and specifies the formulas and procedures by which we can activate divine power to implement them.

Moreover, as a Final Significant Literary Refrain, **More Than Two Hundred Middle** and **Middle/Passive Voice Action Words** exist in the Church Epistles which serve as an **Avalanche of Evidence illustrating how Christians play an integral part in The Sanctification Process**. Although much more could be said, the Scriptures covered are adequate to show **Our Volition is a Mandatory Factor Required to Take Each Step** down the sacred trail God wants us to "walk" (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:10).

Section 3: New Covenant = Spirit-Caused Works

Now let's shift to parts of the Bible which teach works are caused by the Holy Spirit. I'll show these Scriptures were intended to govern the Nation of Israel and define God's past and future work among them. Why is this important? Because if Christians are to develop spiritually and conduct effective ministry, our lifeline to His "power" needs to align with how He functions today. So, the practice of applying revelation to Body members which was given to describe His future work with Israel won't result in di-

vine-based actions but will negatively affect our ability to perform the mission we were sent to do. Therefore, this section contemplates prophecies delivered to God's New Covenant People which define both the Kingdom He promised them and events which will surround the advent of its associated Spirit.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

This is one of the most frequently cited passages describing God's promises to Abraham's descendants, most likely because it's quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12. That context will be touched on later, but first let's concentrate on what Jeremiah says. God will institute a "new covenant (διαθηκην καινην) with the house of Israel" which replaces **the Old Covenant, the Law** recorded in Books of Exodus through Deuteronomy (Jer. 31:31-32 – LXX [Jer. 38:31]).[17] To conceptualize what this New Covenant entails, we can observe what Jeremiah's thirty-first chapter reveals about the time Christ returns to reign over His people. After finishing this overview, we'll focus on other O.T. passages which center on the Spirit's relationship with these "new covenant" believers.

God's overall purpose for the Nation of Israel is stated in Jeremiah 31:1, "'At that time', declares the Lord, 'I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.'" Later in the chapter, He reiterates this same truth, "after those days . . . I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (31:33). To accomplish this, He'll exercise "mercy" on this "faithless (KJV – 'backsliding') daughter" and says, "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more" (vv. 20, 22, 34). Historically, God established the basis for this "mercy" when He sent Messiah to secure redemption for their sin (Rom 3:25; Heb. 9:15).

After satisfying His own demand for perfection through the cross, God will look past the faults of those who He had "scattered" and regather a "remnant of Israel" (Jer. 31:7, 10). At this assemblage in "Zion" (Jerusalem), He'll "restore their fortunes" (or c*aptivity*) then call "the land of Judah" an "abode of righteousness" and a "holy hill" (vv. 12, 23-24). At this point, Israel's "hope" will be realized: "Again I will build you" and "'I will turn their mourning into

joy, and will comfort them, and give them joy for their sorrow . . . My people shall be satisfied with My goodness', declares the Lord" (vv. 4, 13-14).

When this regathering occurs, God says, "I will **put my law within them, and on their heart I will write it**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33 – emphasis mine). Note how His ultimate purpose of being Israel's "God" and them being His "people" is connected with the Law of Moses being written "on their heart" (Lev. 26:12; Rev. 21:3). With these promises in mind, let's examine other O.T. contexts which disclose additional events that will happen during this national renewal.

Ezekiel – 36 & 37

These chapters give a unique perspective on Israel's return to the Promise Land (Gen. 15:18-21; 26:3-5; Exod. 23:31). Ezekiel 36:26-27 states, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you . . . And **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes**, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (emphasis mine). In conjunction with

the "new heart" promised in Jeremiah, this passage teaches the Jewish Remnant will also receive a "new spirit" and God's "Spirit". Then, the Holy "Spirit" will "cause" their "new" human "spirit" to keep the "statues" and "ordinances" of the Law which is in their "new heart".

Next, the end-product of this spirit/Spirit and heart renewal is stated, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt" (Ezek. 36:33). In addition, those observing this miraculous occasion will say, "This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden" (v. 35). The primary idea portrayed by the phrase "garden of Eden" is *The Perfection of Creation* prior to when it was corrupted by sin. Therefore, this restoration won't only include a makeover of the Land, but **Its Occupants will Be Cleansed from "iniquities"** and, hence, **Able to Keep The Law of Moses** (36:27-32).

Directly following this section, similar truths related to this historic occasion are illustrated by a vision Ezekiel received of **Dry Bones Being Made Alive**,

"these bones are the whole house of Israel . . . Behold, I will open your graves . . . And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land" (Ezek. 37:11, 12, 14). Then, God declares, "And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (v. 23).

Then, verse 24 adds, "And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them." And, "the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" (Ezek. 37:28). Summarizing, **Israel Will Conduct a Spirit-Empowered Life Apart From Sin When Christ Returns to Rule Over Them "forever"** (v. 25, cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Jer. 33:14-16; Joel 2:28-29).

When these O.T. lessons are united, they sketch a fundamentally different picture of the relationship

these Kingdom converts will have with the Spirit than the connection Body members have with Him today. For, these contexts state when Israel receives the Spirit, He'll "cause" them to keep the Law without sinning (Ezek. 11:17-21). And there's no indication these disciples will exercise any choice in this course of events. As a consequence, when Christians try to apply passages like these, it results in massive confusion since the Spirit doesn't work this way today. So, when these contexts and the Church Epistles are both taken at face value, **it's clear the believer/Spirit bond under The New Covenant is significantly different than the Christian/Spirit relationship in the Church**.

'But Isn't the New Covenant Already Fulfilled?'

This question is multi-faceted, so the answer is both **'Yes'** and **'No'**. **'Yes'**, since two aspects of the New Covenant have been fulfilled, the Messiah's death on the cross enabling God to forgive sin and the coming of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6).[18] Otherwise, **'No'**. For, **most New Covenant promises have yet to be fulfilled**. These include Christ's physical

return to earth, His eternal reign as King from Jerusalem, the God-caused return of Israel to the Promise Land, this Land's transformation from desolation to fruitfulness, the sinless condition of God's people, believer's ability to keep the Law, universal recognition of Israel's prominence, and subordination of all earthly authority under Christ's feet.

Also, the two parts of the New Covenant which have come to pass only apply to the Church in a limited sense. First, **Today Christians Only Have Judicial Righteousness before God**, for He "considers" us righteous even though sin still dwells in our members (Rom. 4:2-24; 6:12-13; 7:18). In contrast to our condition, the saved in the Kingdom will be sinless and *won't have an* "old man" (or old nature) to put off. For, they'll instantly return to man's original created state of perfection by way of their "new" heart and "new" dual spirit/Spirit.

Second, there's a major difference with reference to how the Spirit operates in Church members when compared with future New Covenant believers. Based on passages from the Epistles which describe our

growth process, **Currently, The Spirit Doesn't Cause Our Works or Function Jointly with The Law.**

'And Aren't We Under the New Covenant?'

Contrary to popular belief, we aren't, and there's no evidence to support this view. Those who believe Christians are under the New Covenant often point to Hebrews 8 where the entire text of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted. However, when this section is carefully reviewed, even though the truth God will write His Law on the heart of believers is contained in the quotation, *this fact is never applied to those who received the Letter* (8:10). Instead, the author applies just one concept from this lengthy quote, The Perfect Once-For-All Sacrifice of Christ, which is also *declared to directly fulfill this prophecy* (cf. Heb. 10:14-18).

Based on its content, one issue the Book of Hebrews addresses is the question some Jewish believers had about whether Jesus' redemption should be considered a fulfillment of the New Covenant. For, most of its other promises hadn't yet occurred and one of these is specifically mentioned: The subordination of

all things under Christ's feet (Heb. 2:5-8; 10:13). Today, Christians should recognize **the subjection of all earthly rulers still hasn't taken place**, although Christ has triumphed over *all heavenly spiritually wicked entities* at the cross. And this victory can enable us to thwart their attempts to influence our life (Eph. 1:20-22; 3:10; 6:10-20; Col. 2:13-15; 1 Pet. 3:21-22).

Furthermore, no statements in Hebrews or other Letters exist indicating Church members are *under the New Covenant.* Quite the opposite. Three times Scripture states we're not "under (υπο) the law" and twice it says we're "under (υπο) grace" (Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:18, cf. Gal. 4:5, 21). As the phrase "under grace" is used, it means we're governed by the *standard of unmerited truth* contained in the "administration of the grace of God" which became available when the "mystery" message was revealed and recorded (1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 3:2-9; Col. 1:24 – 2:3).

For, this gospel preached by Paul repeatedly teaches we're not to rely on the Law in any way since it*'s replaced by this newly revealed body of truth* (Rom. 6:14; 16:25-26; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Tim. 1:3-11).

Also, though Spirit-indwelt New Covenant believers will one day systematically keep the Law, today this same Law causes only one result – bondage to condemning sin (Rom. 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:15-21; 5:1; Eph. 2:15; 4:24).

We've already seen Paul describe himself as one "sold under (υπο) sin", and when he tried to keep the Law, he simply sinned more (Rom. 7:14-25). In contrast, we've seen how our new morally-alive-condition acquired at salvation enables us to access power from the Spirit to overcome sin in our daily lives.

'Then, Why are We called "Ministers of the New Covenant"?'

This is a great question. For, this phrase is a direct quote from Second Corinthians 3:6, which reads, "who (God) made us completely sufficient ministers of the new covenant,[18] not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter actively continuously kills but the Spirit actively continuously makes alive." Now, since we've already observed two aspects of the New Covenant partially apply to Body members, Christ's

payment for sin and our reception of the Spirit, these truths should be included in our proclamation of the gospel.

In this verse, the word "letter" (γραμμα) refers to the Law of Moses which was written on stone tablets (Exod. 31:18; 2 Cor. 3:3). But the key point that unlocks the intended meaning of this context is found in the last two verbs. Both verbs, "actively continuously kills" (αποκτεννει) and "actively continuously makes alive" (ζωοποιει), are in the indicative mode and present tense which indicates they *represent statements of fact about the present reality* produced by their subjects, "the letter" and "the Spirit".

So, the first Present Indicative Verb describes the *constant death causing effect the Law*, the "letter", *currently produces* in Christians who try to keep it. In contrast with the condemnation we presently experience if we engage with the Law, when God restarts His program with Israel, *His people won't be condemned by the Law but have* "glory" since they'll no longer sin (2 Cor. 3:7, 10-11).

Conversely, the second Present Indicative Verb, the "Spirit actively continuously makes alive" (ζωοποιει), illustrates *believers have a constant source to activate divine life in our members* when we choose to utilize the Spirit's power (Rom. 6:19-23; 8:11-14; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18; Gal. 6:7-8; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19). Second Corinthians 3 sends two distinct messages: The Spirit we possess is the same one promised in New Covenant prophecy (Luke 24:49; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13); and the Holy Spirit presently functions in Church members totally separate from the Law.

'Also, What about the Spirit's Advent at Pentecost?'

This is another excellent question for, in Acts 2, Peter cites the Prophet Joel to explain the miraculous events which had just occurred. On the Day of Pentecost, he prefaced this quote by saying, "this is the thing having been spoken through the prophet, Joel" (Acts 2:16; Joel 2:28-32).

The neuter demonstrative pronoun "this" (τουτο) is commonly used to *represent a concept*, and in this in-

stance, it refers to *the Spirit-caused events of that day* which were observed by all present. Also, the verb of being "is" (εστιν) occurs in the present indicative form which together with its subject "τουτο" indicate *that day's events existed as a factual reality* of what Joel's prophesy portrayed. In other words, these Spirit-generated-events didn't partially represent what Joel predicted nor were they similar to it, but **They Were An Exact Fulfillment** (Isa. 29:18; 61:1-3).

Now, have you ever noticed *sin is absent from the affairs of these thousands of converts* during the early Acts period (chaps. 2 – 7)? Some may think the sin of Ananias and Sapphira disputes this point. However, I believe their defiant act of not contributing all proceeds from the sale of their "land" indicates they lacked the indwelling Spirit (see Luke 12:32-33; 18:18-30; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37). For, the common translation where Peter asks Ananias what caused him to 'lie to the Holy Spirit', I consider correctly rendered 'to falsify the Holy Spirit'.[19] So, the reason for their death sentence was faking belief in Christ (Matt. 3:10; Luke 13:6-9; John 15:6).

Also, some construe the *grievance* between Hellenistic and Hebrew Jews as sin based, however, the text doesn't support this conclusion. In fact, this incident was dealt with as a logistical problem associated with rapid growth and was quickly resolved to the satisfaction of all (Acts 6:1-6).

Essentially, if the Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah had been joined by enough of their countrymen and leaders, this section indicates Christ would've returned to earth and established the prophesied Kingdom just illustrated by texts from Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Acts 3:11-26; 7:51-60). Obviously, the record of Acts affirms this didn't happen. Instead, God changed course and put another program into effect, His "new creation" of the Body of Christ. Descriptions of this spiritual entity can't be found in O.T. prophecy or Jesus' earthly teachings. For, the revelation which explains all aspects of the Church is found in the "administration (or *dispensation*) of the mystery" (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 3:8-9; 6:19).

Furthermore, "mystery" truth contained in Romans 11 explains how Israel's rejection of Jesus as their

Messiah propelled the Nation into a "partial hardening" (vv.11-27). Consequently, **To This Day, God Has Suspended His National Dealings with Israel** *until a future time when He'll reinstate all New Covenant promises* with a "remnant" (Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10; Rom. 11:5, 11-32; Eph. 3:2, 9; Rev. 11:1-6). Then, a resurgence of miraculous events prophesied by Joel and seen in early Acts will once again occur along with the sinless state of believers.

'Besides, Doesn't Jesus Teach Grace?'

Yes, but only in the sense of what the word "grace" (χαρις), in itself, means. This Greek word is used 124 of its 157 times in the Epistles of Paul, Peter and Hebrews with regard to God's "grace" which is in effect at the present time. Also, twelve more occurrences refer to the Body of Christ in Acts 11 – 28. Of its twenty-one remaining uses, most refer to the general idea of **'favor'**. The only passage in all four Gospel Accounts where "χαρις" is used in reference to truth which administers God's people is John 1:16-17, "Because out of His fullness we all received, even grace in the place of grace; because the law

was given through Moses, grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ." Before the nature of this "grace" can be identified, it's necessary to define the word's basic meaning in addition to some Greek terms and grammar which surround it.

The word "grace" (χαρις) is commonly recognized to mean *unmerited favor* because it's a *gift no one has earned*. Since this term in and of itself doesn't designate the nature of this unmerited favor, each context must be consulted to arrive at its intended application. So, let's look at the grammatical and historical setting of these two verses.

John's Gospel records events in the earthly ministry of Jesus which are significant to those who "received" (ελαβομεν) out of His fullness (John 1:16). This verb is an **Aorist Indicative Form** which emphasizes *completed past tense action*.[11] Then, the word "fullness" (πληρωματος) refers to Christ's *completeness* and symbolizes everything He is – His deity, holiness, righteousness and "truth" (John 14:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9).

Now, what has John and his readers already received from Christ's "fullness"? One of the nouns, "grace" (χαριν), occurs in the accusative form which makes it the *direct object*, so this is what they received. This "grace" is linked with another "grace" (χαριτος) by the preposition "in place of" (αντι). Therefore, before we can assess the specific nature of the words translated "grace", it's important to understand what the preposition that connects them means.

The preposition "αντι" is transliterated into our English prefix 'anti' and indicates one thing is *against* or *opposed to* something else. It can be consistently translated *instead of* or *in place of*, so this is **Its Basic Meaning**. For, in Matthew 2:22 it designates Achelous' reign in Judea was "in place of" his father Herod. Also, it describes Christ giving His life a ransom "in the place" many (Matt. 20:28). In Luke 1:20, many Versions translate it 'because' since their usual rendition, 'for', doesn't fit. But, when its primary meaning is applied, this verse reads, "and, behold, you shall be silent and not able to speak until which day these things may come to pass in place of (αντι) which you didn't believe My words." Also, believers are exhorted

not to repay evil "in place of" evil, and long hair was given to women "instead of" a covering (Rom. 12:17; 1 Cor. 11:15).

Please know, this rendering of "αντι" isn't original with me. For, in John 1:16, some Versions translate it "in place of" (NIV, ALT, JMNT); others, **'over against'** (YLT, Rotherham); and some, **'in exchange for'** (MLV, JMNT). The reason for focusing on this word is because the phrase "grace in the place of grace" indicates one kind of "grace" *takes the place of* another type of "grace". And the next verse begins to clarify what the nature of these two kinds of "grace" is, for the conjunction "because" (οτι) *connects the causal meaning* of verse 17 as a description of verse 16.

Therefore, when the basic meaning of "χαριτος" is plugged in, the *unmerited favor* replaced is designated to be "the law" which "was given through Moses". Many feel uncomfortable associating the term "grace" with the Law of Moses since the "administration of grace" is regularly contrasted with it (Romans 6:14; Eph. 3:2-3; 1 Tim. 4-11). However, the Law, which epitomizes His righteousness, wasn't given to

Israel because they deserved it, but God f*reely provided this Revelation-of-Favor* to Abraham's descendants in order to achieve His purpose with that Nation (Deut. 33:23; 1 Sam. 2:26; Ezra 9:8; Psalms 30:5; 89:17; 106:4; Prov. 3:1-4, 33-35; Isa. 60:10; Rom. 3:1).

Next, the phrase, "grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ" defines the other "grace" (χαριν) they had "received" which *took the place of* this Mosaic-Law-Grace (John 1:17). Note, there's no contrasting conjunction in the Greek text like 'but' between this phrase and "the law was given through Moses", although some Versions add one. So, *instead of contrasting these two mentions of* "grace", this verse introduces a central point of this Gospel – *the two are related.* And I believe this "grace" received through Jesus Christ is the prophesied New Covenant "grace" which includes the Law being placed in the "heart" of believers.

Think of Jesus' life and how He personified "truth" (αληθεια – John 1:17). Then, note how "truth" is directly linked with the Law of Moses in three contexts of this Gospel alone (7:18-29; 8:12-20; 15:25-

26). Keep in mind, the teachings of Jesus encompass an in-depth and literal application of the Law (Matt. 5:17-48; 19:16-22). Also, He lived under the Law as an exemplary Jew who never once broke it, for He was "without sin" (Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). And since He didn't sin, His time on earth actually complied with God's offer to award life to anyone who perfectly kept it (Deut. 30:1-10, 15-16; Matt. 19:16-22; Rom. 8:2-4; Gal. 2:16).

Although Jesus is God and was already faultless, through the course of living His life under the Law and without sin, He qualified Himself to be a sacrifice which fully satisfied the Father's righteous requirement of perfection (Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; 3:10-14; 4:4-5). So, even today, when people trust in His work on the cross, the "righteous standard of the law" is fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:1-4). When this same redemption saves New Covenant believers, their Messiah's "grace and truth" will be the basis for the Law being placed on their "heart" and receiving the "Spirit of truth" who enables them to keep it (John 14:17; 16:13).

Therefore, the "grace" mentioned in John 1:16-17 which replaces the "grace" of the Law should be understood to mean the *unmerited favor prophesied in the O.T.* For, "mystery" truth which *explains how God's grace applies today* wasn't known when Jesus lived on earth, but everything distinct to the Body of Christ was still "hidden in God" (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:9). To emphasize this fact, Paul says if the "rulers of this age had known" God's "wisdom" contained in the "mystery", "they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:6-8).

In conclusion, **The "grace" Exemplifying Jesus' Earthly Instruction is the New Covenant, Law-Natured "grace" prophesied in the O.T.**: "And, I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace (πνευμα χαριτος - LXX)[17] and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37).

Just like Zechariah, Peter also connects the Messiah's sacrifice for sin with Spirit empowered "grace" connected with Kingdom glory, "the prophets, who prophesied about the grace (χαριτος) for you, dili-

gently sought and searched concerning this salvation" which includes "the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these things" (1 Pet. 1:10-11). When this "grace" appears, everyone will know God kept all of His promises to Israel so He alone will get the glory (Ezek. 36:32, 36; 37:26-28).

Jesus Teaches New Covenant 'Works'

Having confirmed John 1:16-17 links Jesus' instruction with New Covenant "grace", let's look at more passages in the Gospel of John which explain His core teaching on this subject. The following contexts will demonstrate how the Lord defines salvation, what happens to those who receive the Spirit, and how these believers produce godly works.

John 3:16-21 – Salvation & 'Works' are Linked

John 3:16 is one of the most familiar Bible verses since it expresses the simple fact "eternal life" is given to everyone who believes. If this was the complete message taught in the section, there wouldn't be

reason to consider it further. However, the following verses provide extra information which help define what this faith involves.

John 3:19 says when God's "light" came into the world through the Son, "men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were continuously evil". In this verse, the noun "works" (τα εργα) occurs the first of three times in this context, and each occurrence contains the article "τα" which *highlights* "εργα" *as a term of central focus* (vv. 19-21).[20] In addition, an article is paired with the nouns "light" (το φως – occurs three times), "evil" (ο φαυλα), and "truth" (την αληθειαν) as well as the participle "the one continuously doing" (ο . . . ποιων). This also brands these *substantives as expressions of central focus* (vv. 20-21).[16]

"For, everyone continuously practicing the evil continuously hates the light and doesn't continuously come to the light in order that his works might not be exposed." (John 3:20)

In this verse, the word "continuously" is used to represent the *present tense form* of the first three action words. Adding the fact all three words are in the active voice, Jesus stresses how an unbeliever *constantly* and *unreservedly* operates to produce "evil . . . works" (ο φαυλα . . . τα εργα) which keep him from coming to "the light" *so the nature of these works won't be exposed*.

"But the one continuously practicing the truth, continuously comes to the light in order that his works might be made manifest that they continuously exist as having caused themselves to begin and continue to be made to work in God." (John 3:21)

Essentially, the words possessing articles in John 3:20-21 provide a linguistic trace which contrasts *the evil works of an unbeliever* and *the works of those who practice the truth*.[20] Since the participle "the one continuously practicing" (ο . . . ποιων) is in the present tense just like the participles "continuously believing" (πιστευων) in verses 16 and 18, both convey the *unceasing actions* of a true disciple. With *vigilant* (active voice) and *constant* (present tense) effort, they

come to "the light" (το φως) and are seen practicing "the truth" (την αληθειαν). So, what's behind this attentive approach to "the light" and production of "works" aligning with "the truth"? The reason stated is "in order that" (ινα) or *for the purpose that* "his works might be made manifest".

In verse 21, the verb of being "continuously exist" (εστιν) describes the first way these "works" become *evident*. Pairing this verb's active voice and present tense indicates its subject, "the works", *vibrantly* and *constantly have their essence* "in God" (εν θεῳ). The preposition "in" combined with the noun "God" forms an *adverbial phrase*. Its function together with the present tense verb of being indicate these works *are constantly existing within an in-God-manner*, that is, *God constantly activates the existence of these works*.

Also, the participle "having caused themselves to begin and continue to be made to work" (ειργασ-μενα – John 3:21) describes these "works" since it occurs in the same *neuter plural form* as the noun "τα εργα" which shows the "works" are its subject.

Next, its perfect tense conveys the idea *the action is both completed and has continuing results*. Additionally, this word's dual middle/passive voice indicates "the works" *act upon themselves* (middle) *to be made* (passive) "to work".[6] Finally, the adverbial phrase "in God" also modifies this term. Therefore, the joint impact of this participle with the verb of being "εστιν" indicates **The Essence of These Works was Initiated and Continues to Be Enacted by God**.

Summarizing, John 3:16-21 teaches these believers' initial and ongoing faith as well as subsequent works are categorically caused by God. Later in the Book, these "works" are defined as keeping the Law of Moses. These points indicate **Jesus' Earth-Delivered Lessons Equate with New Covenant, Law-in-Heart Theology which Includes Spirit Caused Faith and Works** (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Consequently, if this passage applies to Christians, it provides solid backing for those who hold the stance *the Spirit causes all our works*, and I know numerous brothers who adhere to this view. For, if Body members are supposed to follow the teaching of John

3:16-21, it would mean we have no choice in the production of works which contradicts lots of teaching set forth in the Church Epistles. Now, let's explore other places in this Gospel which contain further data revealing what Jesus taught about *faith* and *works*.

John 6:26-71 – Faith is a 'Work' of God

After performing a miracle to feed multi-thousands, Jesus tells those who continue to follow Him they're just seeking physical sustenance and not interested in the spiritual bread He offers which results in eternal life (John 6:5-15; 26-27). Some responded, "What should we do in order that we might work the works of God?" (v. 28). Jesus answered, "This exists as the work of God in order that you might believe in whom (Christ) that one (the Father) has sent" (v. 29).

In this verse, the phrase "the works" (τα εργα) is exactly the same as found in John 3:21, but "the work" (το εργον) differs in that *it's singular in form* rather than plural. This passage introduces two truths. First, *believing is a work* "of" or *associated with* "God" (θεου – genitive case). Then, the rest of this chapter

constructs a definition of how God causes this work of belief in men.

Jesus begins His explanation by saying, "everything which the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I'll never cast out the one coming to Me" (John 6:37). Also, He connects those who "the Father" has given to Him and "will come" to Him with God's "will" (θελημα – v. 38). Then, this "will" is further defined, "Also, this exists as the will of the one who sent Me in order that everything which He has given to Me, I may lose none of it . . . in order that everyone beholding the Son and believing in Him may have eternal life and I will resurrect him in the last day" (vv. 39-40). These verses encapsulate the thought, the people the "Father" gave to Jesus according to His "will" (θελημα) *are the same ones who decide to come to and believe in Him*.

In line with this narrative, later in the chapter Jesus speaks to the Twelve, "Didn't I cause Myself to choose you?" (John 6:69-70). The verb "I cause Myself to choose" (εξελεξαμην) transliterates into the word **'elect'**, and its middle voice form specifies Jesus

acted upon Himself to select them.[6] This is just another way *the divine cause of their belief* is defined which coincides with what God's "will" includes – **their saving faith is a work produced by God** (3:21; 6:29, 37-40).

The context between, John 6:40-65, clarifies the Twelve were just a few of those who the Father had given to the Son, for it confirms *all who believe in Jesus are His elect*. This is first taught in verse 44, "Also, no one chooses to be made able (δυναται) to come to Me except the Father who sent Me might drag him, and I will resurrect him in the last day." This verb is singular in form which emphasizes *this action is true of every individual*. Also, its present tense coupled with the negative "ου" indicates *every person continuously lacks ability* to come to Him. Finally, its dual voice means *no person on their own can cause themselves* (middle) *to be empowered* (passive) to come to Jesus.[6]

Therefore, only the ones the Father "might drag" (ελκυση) are able to come. This subjunctive verb *requires a conditional act to occur* before its action

of dragging can happen. And *God is able to and does perform this contingent act* each time He *prompts a person* to exercise faith in Christ. Also, this verb's active voice emphasizes His *vigor* in conducting this task. Therefore, the full impact of this verb signifies **The Father Totally Facilitates Each Person's Belief in Christ.**

Then, Jesus strategically puts this assertion into a historical perspective, "It has been written in the prophets, 'And, all will exist as taught ones of God'; everyone having heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45). So, we see Jesus coordinates His teaching with an O.T. quote which describes what will happen when Israel is regathered for "peace" and "righteousness" in the Promise Land (Isa. 54:13-14). Note, this restoration is made possible by Messiah's payment for sin foretold in the prior chapter, Isaiah 53.

Furthermore, the phrase "all will exist as taught ones of God" is very similar to the wording found in the chief passage about the New Covenant. For, after God puts His "law" on their "heart" and makes them

His people, "they shall not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them". For, then all the saved will be "taught ones of God" (Jer. 31:34; John 6:45). Also, at that time all unbelievers will've been judged, so only God's elect "remnant" will remain with no need to evangelize (Zech. 8:6, 11-12). Again, with this citation, **Jesus Directly Ties His Teaching to New Covenant Theology**.

These intense lessons prod a reaction from His disciples, "This message exists as hard; who can choose to be made able (δυναται) to hear it?" (John 6:60). This verb is the same word just seen in verse 44, and it appears a third time in verse 65. This triple use accentuates the fact, **It's Absolutely Impossible for Men to Come to Christ Apart From Intervention**. And the Father only intervenes if a person falls within His "will" then chooses *to draw* them. The infinitive "to hear" (ακουειν) means *to hear with understanding*. There's also a double emphasis on this term since its participial form, "having heard" (ακουσας), occurs in verse 45. Together, these show *Christ's elect will respond*

when invited, but those who aren't chosen will never "hear". In John 10:27-29, this same truth is expressed in an illustration about *sheep the Father has given to Jesus*, for they will "hear" (ακουουσιν) His voice and the rest won't.

Closing this discourse, Jesus states, "'But certain ones exist out of you who don't believe', for Jesus had known from the beginning which ones exist not believing and the one existing who will betray Him. And He was saying, 'Because of this I have told you that no one can choose to be made able (δυναται) to come to Me except it might have been given to him from the Father'" (John 6:64-65). This chapter records a clear dialogue describing the act of faith which is the first "work" of the total amount of "works" God the Holy Spirit will cause in those who enter the Messianic Kingdom (3:21; 6:29).

The Spirit Generates the 'Works' of Kingdom Converts

Before proceeding, I think the way John 6 describes faith being spawned in New Covenant believers by

God is exactly how it originates in elect Body members today. However, I see a big difference between how present-day Christians produce "works" as compared with future Kingdom converts. This difference is on display in contexts where Jesus expounds the coming time when the Holy Spirit indwells His followers. So next, sections of John's Gospel will be examined which contain these lessons.

Connecting these latter portions of the Book with passages already covered in regard to "works" produced in believers (John 3:21; 6:28-29), note how Jesus repeatedly indicates His "works" (τα εργα) have their source in the Father, are consistent with the truth, are miraculous in nature, and demonstrate who He is (7:3, 21; 9:3-4; 10:25, 32-33, 37-38; 14:10-12; 15:24; 17:4). At the same time, these divine deeds are contrasted with "the works" (τα εργα) of unbelievers to whom Jesus says, "you cannot choose to be made able (ου δυνασθε) to hear (ακουειν) My word". Instead, they'll continue to do the bidding of their father, the Devil, (8:43-44 + 7:7; 8:39, 41).

Excerpts from John 14

Let's begin where Jesus asks Phillip, "Don't you believe that I *am* in the Father and the Father exists in Me? The words which I continuously speak to you I don't speak from Myself, but the Father who continuously abides in Me continuously does His works" (John 14:10). In short, this verse equates Jesus' "words" with the "works" the Father "continuously" causes in Him. Then, verse 11 says, "Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father *is* in Me; but, if not, believe because of the works themselves." Here, Jesus defines the acts He does as "the works" (τα εργα) God *constantly* (present tense) produces in His life.

Then, our Lord zeros in on His intent, "Truly truly I say to you, also that one who believes in Me will do the works which I'm doing, and he'll do greater than these because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). Combining what verses 11-12 teach: **Just as the Father causes miraculous "works" in Jesus, these believers will produce similar and greater works**.

How can this be? Jesus continues to explain, **When the Spirit Indwells Them**, they'll acquire an ability equal to Him which enables them to speak God's message, do miracles, and receive whatever they ask (vv. 13-17). This teaching fully aligns with prophecies related to the New Covenant which indicate capabilities like this would be possible after believers receive their "new heart", "new spirit", and Holy "Spirit" (Isa. 29:18; 44:3; 61:1; Ezek. 36:26-27; 39:29). Furthermore, we observe these same manifestations when the Spirit historically came on the Day of Pentecost.

Next, Jesus addresses those who "keep" His "commandments . . . I'll ask the Father and He'll give another Councilor to you in order that It might be with you forever, the Spirit of truth . . . you know It because It continuously abides beside you and will be in you" (John 14:15-17). At times, I'll use the term "It" (αυτο) with reference to the "Spirit" (πνευμα) since both this noun and pronoun are *neuter in gender*. This rendering shouldn't be taken to mean the Spirit isn't a Person, but in certain contexts this representation simply helps differentiate His actions from those of the Father and Son.

The Spirit they'll receive is called "another Councilor". The word "another" is used since the Spirit's future presence in them will replace Jesus' current presence with them (v. 12). The title "Councilor" (παρακλητον) comes from the preposition "παρα", meaning *beside*, affixed to the noun "κλητος" which means *a called one*. Some Translations render it 'Advocate' which emphasizes the Spirit's support role – *called along one's side*. So, like a lawyer advocates in human law, this "Councilor" will provide divine judgement to believers in regard to "the truth" (1 John 2:1).

Then, Jesus says the Spirit "continuously abides beside you" (John 14:17). The present tense verb "continuously abides" (μενει) or *remains* describes the Spirit's *constant bond* with them. This connection is further defined as being "beside" (παρα) them, which is the same phraseology used for their proximity with Jesus, "abiding beside (παρα) you" (v. 25). This relationship is comparable to how the Holy Spirit came "upon" believers throughout O.T. times but, in those days, He could also be taken away (1 Sam. 11:6; 16:14; Eccl. 8:8; Psalm 51:11). To alleviate that dreadful possibility, Jesus assures them when the Spirit

comes this time, "It" will be "in (εν) you" and they'll have "It . . . forever" (εις τον αιωνα – John 14:16-17). This indwelling is expressed by the same Greek preposition "εν" as for believers in the Body (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 12:13).

Moving on, Jesus promises He won't leave them as "orphans" (ορφανους), but "in that day you'll know that I *am* in My Father and you *are* in Me and I *am* in you" (John 14:18-20). The phrase "in that day" identifies the timeframe when this "in" relationship happens and is *known* by them; it's the day the Spirit comes, which turned out to be Pentecost.

Next, verse 21 characterizes their condition after receiving the Spirit, "the one continuously having (εχων) My commandments and continuously keeping (τηρων) them, that one exists as continuously loving (αγαπων) Me; also, the one continuously loving (αγαπων) Me will be loved by My Father and I'll love him and manifest Myself to him."

To grasp the Lord's point, notice the order of events. The action of the three present participles; "having"

the "commandments", "keeping" them, and "loving" Jesus; "will" result in being "loved" by Him and the "Father". So, *these ongoing deeds are preconditions to gain the Father and Son's love* (see John 14:15).

The only way this verse can be interpreted not to teach that humans earn God's acceptance by generating works is to recognize *the Spirit* "continuously" *causes these actions in them*. Remember, the Spirit "will be in" them and Jesus will be "in" them just like He and the Father are "in" one another (vv. 10-11, 20). This description of **New Covenant Intimacy shows God's People will Display Spirit-Caused, Perfect Behavior in the Messianic Kingdom** (1 John 3:9).

Some may question whether the "commandments" (εντολας – John 14:21) Jesus mentions here are the same ones contained in the Law of Moses, for He had just expressed, "I give a new commandment to you in order that you might love one another; and just as I loved you in order that you might love one another" (John 13:34-35, cf. 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11, 23).

In reality, God has always been described by the trait of "love", and "keeping" the Law is likened to a perfect act of love. For, when Jesus was asked what the most important commandment is, He replied, "the first commandment (εντολη - from v. 28) is, Hear, O Israel . . . you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength; this *is* a second, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There isn't another commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

Therefore, when these believers have the Law written on their "new heart" and receive the "Spirit", they'll be able to perfectly love in fulfillment of what the Law teaches. This aligns with what Jesus expressed when He spoke of a "new commandment" characterized by "love". Even Paul affirms the "fullness" of the Law is "love", although his statements appear in contexts which stress Church members can't achieve love by keeping it (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15). In contrast to us, **after the New Covenant is inaugurated, the Law won't condemn believers** since they won't be capable of sinning (Ezek. 11:17-21; 36:25-31).

The Lord continues, "the Councilor, the Holy Spirit which the Father will send in My name, that one will complete teaching you and complete reminding you of all things which I spoke to you" (John 14:26). In verse 16, in addition to identifying their future "Councilor" as "the Spirit of truth", Jesus says "It" will "complete teaching", or *finish instructing*, and "complete reminding", or *finish making you remember*, "all things" He taught them during His earthly ministry. The word "complete" is used to render these future tenses since *they specify consummated action at a future point of time*.

Also, the phrase "Spirit of truth" occurs a third time in John 16:13, "whenever that one might come, the Spirit of truth, It will complete leading you in [some texts read "into" (εις)] all truth; for It won't speak from Itself, but as much as It continuously hears It will speak and announce coming things to you." Then, the following verses clarify this "truth" consists of what the Spirit receives from Jesus and the Father (16:14-15). So, in this future setting, **These Disciples Will be Spirit-Led to both Grasp and Obey "all truth"** (αληθεια πασῃ – see Isa. 29:24; 1 John 2:20-21, 26-27).[21]

Now, if this type of Spirit-enlightenment is literally applied to Body members today, it would absolutely eliminate the need for teachers or any other sources of edification.

So, what does Jesus mean when He speaks of "truth"? In John 1:17, we saw "truth" (αληθεια) describes His essence and the same is portrayed in 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Also, we just observed "truth" three more times is what the Holy Spirit *is associated with* (αληθειας – genitive case, 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Then, this word is used to refer to Jesus' speech and the Word of God (16:7; 17:17). Finally, other noun, adjectival and adverbial forms of "truth" are used to represent content from the Law of Moses (1:17; 7:18-29; 8:12-20; 15:25-26). *This is the "truth" the Spirit will teach, remind them of, and lead them into* when they're empowered with paranormal ability. Likewise, in this Gospel, the term "word" (λογος) or *message* of God and Christ is directly associated with the Law (10:34-35; 14:21-24; 15:3, 20, 25; 17:14-17).

Excerpts from John 15

This chapter begins by Jesus sharing an analogy, "I am the vine, you *are* the branches, the one who continuously abides in Me and I in him, this one continuously bears much fruit because apart from Me you can't continuously choose to be made able to do anything" (John 15:5). What enables them to "continuously" abide or *remain* in Him, bear fruit, and do what they should? The present tense verb "you can't continuously choose to be made able" (ου δυνασθε) is in the middle/passive form and, with the negative "ου", means *they can't cause themselves* (middle voice) "to be made able" (passive) "to do anything" apart from Jesus; then, after He leaves, apart from the Spirit.[6] Consequently, *these believers won't be able to produce any works apart from divine causation* just like they weren't able to generate saving faith (6:44).

In this lesson, Jesus warns, "If anyone might not continuously abide in Me, he is cast outside as a branch and burned", which is the fate of unbelievers (John 15:6). Again, if this conditional declaration could be accomplished by the effort of continuous abiding, it

would teach *human-generated* "works" *are involved to gain salvation* as well as *give credence to the conviction salvation can be lost* (John 8:31, 51; 12:26; 13:17; 14:23; 15:14). However, when this statement is taken in context, it's clear the Spirit initially causes these "works" in them and His work will "abide".

Then, Jesus states another conditional, "If you might continuously abide in Me and My words might continuously abide in you, whatever you might desire, ask and it will completely come to pass for you" (v. 7). Keep in mind, in the Kingdom, prayers from the faithful will emerge from an unblemished, Spirit-controlled "heart", so everything they ask "will . . . completely come to pass" (γενησεται – John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24; Matt. 7:7; 21:22; James 5:14-16; 1 John 3:21-22; 5:14-15). There's no indication these answers *might materialize* or *just some will*, but *everything they ask* will receive a favorable answer. In contrast to this promise, **the Epistles of Paul, Peter and Hebrews Contain No Guarantees of Receiving Positive Answers to Prayer**. For, Body members can't appeal to God from a wholly pure heart since we still sin.

Next, the context discloses how these divine abilities originate, "You didn't cause yourselves to choose Me, but I caused Myself to choose you and I positioned you in order that you might go and continuously bear fruit and your fruit might continuously abide in order that whatever you may ask the Father in My name I may [some texts have the future tense – "will" (δωσει)] give to you" (John 15:16).

Here, Jesus says, "I caused Myself (middle voice) to choose (εξελεξαμην) you".[6] This **Aorist Indicative Verb** indicates His choice *became an accomplished fact* when He called them to salvation (see John 6:70).[11] Also, "I positioned" (εθηκα) or *appointed* "you" is another **Aorist Indicative Verb**, so it too *represents what happened* at their regeneration. The text goes on to say *Jesus' acts of choosing* and *appointing fulfill the conditions* required by the following three Present Subjunctive Verbs which is *why they can* "continuously go", "bear fruit" and *have remaining fruit*. Once more, since the Spirit "continuously" causes these virtuous post-salvation-works in them, "whatever" they "may ask" they'll receive.

John 17:22-23

Chapter 16 contains more instructions reaffirming many of the principles we've already seen about how the Spirit will cause His "works" in Kingdom believers. So, instead of rehashing these points, let's focus on one final text in chapter 17 which helps give insight into Christ's teaching. While praying for His disciples, He says, "And I have begun and continue to give them the glory which You (the Father) began and continued to give Me in order that they might continuously exist as one just as we *are* one; I in them and You in Me, in order that they might continuously exist as ones having chosen to begin and continue to be made perfect resulting in *being* one" (John 17:22-23).

In verse 22, Jesus prays His disciples will be "one" just as He and the Father are "one". Initially, by use of two perfect tense verbs, He expresses how *He had begun and continued* "to give" (δεδωκας and δεδωκα) them the Father's "glory" which is the basic component enabling them to *occupy this state of divine oneness*. Then, in verse 23, His prayer further defines this unified state by combining a present tense verb of being

with a perfect middle/passive participle (ωσιν τετελειωμενοι), the exact construction seen in John 3:21 regarding "the works" God causes in believers.

Here, the subjunctive verb of being "they might continuously exist" (ωσιν) describes the *essence* of these believers' *state of unity* (John 17:23). Also, the *conditional aspect* of this subjunctive is already satisfied since the text states *Jesus acted to* "give them . . . glory" so they could enter this state. And He did this "in order that (ινα) they might . . . exist . . . perfect".

As subjects of the participle, these believers are the "ones having chosen to begin and continue to be made perfect" (τετελειωμενοι). This term's perfect tense specifies *a completed action with ongoing results*, and its middle voice designates this action is being done by the disciples. However, since the associated verb of being already indicates Jesus placed them in their present state, this is the sole reason they're now capable of *acting upon themselves* (middle voice) *to choose to believe and carry on* toward this perfected state (see John 6:29, 37, 70; 15:16). Furthermore, the passive voice aspect of this

participle alludes to *the outside influence* of both Jesus' present petition and future power provided by the Spirit for them to "be made perfect".[6]

Consequently, the grammar in this climactic summation points to divine factors "resulting in" (εις) Jesus' sheep being "one" (εν). Ultimately, this context defines "oneness" as *perfect unity between the Father, the Son, and these New Covenant converts* which is one final way of illustrating how the Spirit's immaculate "works" will affect them when He comes. Therefore, since "τετελειωμενοι" in John 17:23 describes **The Spirit-Perfected Condition Kingdom Believers will Occupy** just like O.T. prophecy predicts, Christians shouldn't use this passage to define our current relationship with God.

And though similar forms of "τελειοω" are used in the Book of Hebrews, these describe our *positional, perfect standing* in the presence of God because of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (2:10; 5:9; 7:28; 10:14). This truth plus the fact Hebrews specifies *the saved can still sin* are two primary points which demonstrate the Epistle is written about the current condi-

tion of Christians (4:11, 14-16; 10:19-25; 12:1-2; 13:1-6, 17). Also, this same term is used by Paul to assert he *hadn't yet reached perfection* in his Christian walk (Phil. 3:12).[12] So again, in contrast with us, the way Christ's sacrifice and the indwelling Spirit will apply to Kingdom believers is very different since *these two heavenly effects will instigate immediate and complete sinless perfection in them*.

Acts 1 – 7: Inauguration of the New Covenant

By probing the early chapters of Acts, we can observe how the Spirit affected those who first believed Jesus is the Lamb of God. It states He spent "forty days" with them after His resurrection "speaking about the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3, cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44-49). During this period, they asked, "Lord, is it at this time you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He advised them to await the promised "Holy Spirit" who'll give them "power" to be His "witnesses" (1:4-8). This is the last incident recorded before He ascended into heaven.

Then, "Pentecost" (πεντηκοστης) came which means *fifty*, representing the number of days between Passover and the Feast of Weeks (2:1). So, when Jesus' time in the grave is added to the 40 post-resurrection days He appeared, roughly a week remains (Lev. 23:15-21; Deut. 16:9-12).

During that time, "they were persevering in one accord" (Acts 1:14). The noun "one accord" (ομοθυμαδον) consists of the adverb "ομου", meaning *together*, paired with the noun "θυμος", which means the *soul* or *life*. It signifies *being of one mind* and denotes the idea of *absolute togetherness*. Based on what we learned in John, this comradery was possible because they were under the influence of Jesus' miracles and instruction while He was "beside" (παρα) them (John 14:17, 25). Prior to the Spirit's arrival, "ομοθυμαδον" occurs just once, then it appears three more times to describe the *togetherness* of these initial believers as well as all who joined them (Acts 2:46; 4:24; 5:12).

To see how "ομοθυμαδον" represents a highly unified state, note its use to describe other groups including the ravenous mob who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:57;

8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29). Then, in contrast to how these Kingdom converts were "in one accord", this adverb is used in Romans to signify *the goal of mutual concern* Body members should aspire to (15:6). But the greater context sheds light on why these believers weren't "in one accord", for they had sinful shortcomings urging them to gravitate away from good natured unity (Rom. 12:14-21; 13:8; 14:1, 10-12, 22-23; 15:1).

This is the reality Christians live in today, for unless we make daily choices to walk by the Spirit, we won't progress toward being "in one accord" or any condition close to the bond these early Jewish believers enjoyed. This amiable unity seen in early Acts is the first symptomatic example of **Supernatural Activity Linked with the Onset of the New Covenant.**

Chapter one ends with the disciples choosing Matthias as the twelfth apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1:16-26). Then, when the Spirit came upon the approximate 120 gathered, **"all were filled with the Holy Spirit"** (1:15; 2:1-4 – emphasis mine). This enabled each disciple to communicate with everyone who

came to celebrate this Jewish Feast by using foreign languages they hadn't learned. So, *they* "all" *became miraculous witnesses* and spoke "the great things of God" (1:8, 15; 2:7, 11).

Then, in his first recorded discourse after receiving the Spirit, Peter connects this occasion with a passage in Joel which prophesies the "Spirit" will come "upon all flesh" who believe (Acts 2:14-21; Joel 2:28-32). Also, this context indicates the Spirit's presence will be evidenced by those who "prophesy", have "visions" and "dreams", or are accompanied by "wonders" and "signs". By citing Joel to connect Pentecost with prophecy, Peter links these events with the time God fulfills His promise to restore Israel to the Land (Joel 3:1-5, 17-21; Acts 1:6; 3:17-26). Therefore, the events of early Acts are consistent with Israel's miraculous regathering, reception of the Spirit, and Messiah's return taught in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Gospel of John (John 1:41, 49; 4:25; 12:12-16; 19:19-21).

During this time, four of Peter's bold and remarkable messages are documented as he was filled with "power" from the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 4:8 – speeches:

2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32). Stephen, also Spirit-filled, does the same (6:15; 7:55). Furthermore, Peter issues swift capital punishment upon Ananias and Sapphira for falsely claiming they were believers (5:1-6).[19] Both of these men's messages and this execution of justice *show how leaders were led by the Spirit* in this divinely energized assembly (Matt. 16:18-19).

This same miraculous behavior wasn't limited to Peter and a select few, but **"all" were being led by the indwelling Spirit**. This is evidenced since "all" were constantly and joyously engaged in the practice of contributing the entire amount they received from sales of possessions to support the physical needs of multi-thousands of disciples (Acts 2:44-46; 4:34-37).

Nevertheless, to me, the most astounding example of Spirit-leading detected in this group was *their corporate response* after Peter and John were threatened to stop speaking in the Name of Jesus (Acts 4:17). For, "having heard, they lifted up their voice *in one accord* to God and said" (4:24 – emphasis mine). Then, their response-in-unison is recorded *in a seven-verse chant* (4:24-30). *There's no way thousands of people*

could've spontaneously and simultaneously accomplished this feat in real time without the Spirit causing it within them. Finally, after this prayer "the place they had been gathered was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness" (v. 31). **This New Covenant Manifestation of Spirit Leading** rivals what is seen in Peter, John and Stephen.

In every way, the first chapters of Acts represent the practice of wholesome Judaism while these believers awaited Christ's return in accord with *their competent understanding of prophecy* (Luke 24:27, 44-49; Acts 1:3, 6; 3:19-26; 7:55-56). For, daily, all observed Jewish feasts, worshipped in the "temple", and shared all things in common (2:46; 3:1, 3; 5:20-21, 25, 42). Most were Jews, and gentiles who believed were still recognized as "proselytes" (converts of the Jewish faith – Exod. 20:10; Lev. 16:29 [LXX][17]; Matt. 23:15; Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43 – the 4 occurrences in the N.T.). As God's witnesses, all these disciples were totally engaged in evangelizing the masses with the goal they too would accept Jesus as their Messiah.

Furthermore, **these chapters are void of any distinct truth regarding mystery revelation** which defines the Body of Christ. To my knowledge, there're only two points set forth in support of the idea this period refers to early days of the Church. First, the Holy Spirit's coming is cited. But I think enough Scripture has been covered to prove the events surrounding His advent align with prophesies about the inauguration of the New Covenant and Messianic Kingdom.

Second, the word "εκκλησια", usually translated **'church'**, is found in this context (Acts 5:11 & 2:47 in the TR). However, in itself, this word simply means a *called-out group* so it can represent any *assembly* or *congregation*, the nature of which is defined by each context where it appears (Deut. 23:1-3; Jud. 20:2; Psalm 25:5; Joel 2:16 – [LXX]; Acts 7:38; 19:32, 39, 41). So, the meaning of "εκκλησια" in early Acts should be determined by its historical setting.

And, prior to Acts, it occurs only twice in the N.T. In Matthew 16:18-19, **"εκκλησια"** is connected to the "kingdom of heaven". Then, two chapters later, it's used twice for an *assembly* which treats a disobedi-

ent member like a "gentile". This practice is consistent with the Jew-gentile distinction set forth in the Law and would be customary in all Jewish *synagogues* (Matt. 18:17; Gal. 2:11-21).

Furthermore, in both passages, **Heavenly Leading is Coupled With this "εκκλησια"**, for *the apostles will bind and loose God's dictates on earth* (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18; John 20:22-23). These predictions about *New Covenant power* are consistent with how the Spirit is seen functioning in Peter, the Twelve, and God's Kingdom Assembly in early Acts. Unfortunately, for centuries this principle has been adopted by sectors of the Church, and it has resulted in seriously misguided doctrines such as legitimizing *Popes* and other *supposed Spirit-led Individuals/Leaders*.

Section 4: The New Covenant Vs. The New Creation

Just like the term "church" (εκκλησια) doesn't always refer to an *assembly* of Christians and the term "grace" (χαρις) doesn't always allude to the same

way God allocates *unmerited favor*, similarly, the word "new" (καινη) doesn't always refer to the New Covenant. Though, this term is used several times in the N.T. with reference to God's promises to Israel (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8, 13; 9:15). And we've analyzed the two parts of it which have already come to pass and apply to the Body of Christ. However, in contrast with the New Covenant's link with the Law, **Today, The Spirit has No Connection with the Law but Operates by Principles of the New Mystery-Revelation**.

Therefore, let's focus on how the term *new* is used in relation to the Church. First, it's noteworthy the phrases "new heart" and "new spirit" aren't found in the Church Epistles which describe the *current state of a Christian's heart* and *our spirit/Spirit relationship*. Also, none of the four Gospels contain these phrases, yet many Body members still think they apply to us even though we're not "under" the New Covenant.

So, moving forward we'll investigate how terms such as *new* and *newness* are used regarding the Body, God's "new creation", along with how they're similar

to and different from their use in Jewish prophecy (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:15).

The phrases "new heart" (καρδιαν καινην) and "new spirit" (πνευμα καινον) are found exclusively in the Book of Ezekiel (11:19; 18:31; 36:26 – LXX).[17] Additionally, the phrase "another heart" (καρδιαν ετεραν) is used once to describe what New Covenant believers will receive (Ezek. 11:19). Nowhere in the Church Epistles is anything ever said about us getting *a new heart* or *another heart*. Moreover, today the Spirit doesn't cause Christians to be sinless like how Israelites will be when they receive their promised "new spirit" and "new heart" along with God's "Spirit". For, these amenities will enable them to perfectly keep the Law (Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:27-32; 37:23-28).

In contrast, Christians are repeatedly told not to indescrimately apply principles from the Mosaic Law since just one sin will condemn us (Rom. 4:15; Gal. 2:18-19; 3:10-13; 5:3; James 2:10). On the other hand, the Law won't condemn future Kingdom believers since they'll fully keep it by means of their "new" spirit and heart being led by the Holy Spirit. Instead, it'll produce

"glory" in them (Isa. 46:10-13; Ezek. 39:21-25; 2 Cor. 3:7-11). It's important to keep in mind the Law of Moses isn't wicked in any way, for "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" since it mirrors the "righteousness of God" (Rom. 3:21; 7:13). Even today, those who trust in Christ are declared "righteous" according to the "standard of the law" (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-2; 8:1-4; Gal. 4:4-6).

New Covenant / New Creation – Salvation is Identical . . .

Both Christians in the "new creation" of the Church and future believers under the New Covenant are saved by God's "grace". This *unmerited favor* given to His "elect" generates belief/faith/trust in our heart by the Spirit. The following contexts validate how God saves people today in the same way He will in the upcoming Kingdom, which was detailed in the exposition of John chapter 6.

First, Romans 8:15 says we recognize God as our "Father" because we've "received the Spirit". Similarly, Galatians 4:6 links the *Spirit* to our *heart* saying,

"God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying 'Abba, Father.'" Also, Acts 16:14 records "the Lord opened the heart" of Lydia "to receive the things spoken by Paul".

Furthermore, in regeneration, all come to God in the same manner, "If you might confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of the dead, you'll be saved" (Rom. 10:9, cf. Acts 15:9). Finally, "the god of this age" effectively blinds "the minds of the unbelieving" until *God turns on a light in the midst of our darkness*, "who shone in our hearts toward illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:3-4, 6; Eph. 2:2, 4-5; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

. . . But the Production of Works is Markedly Different

After being "baptized into one body" and "made to drink of one Spirit", He becomes our "earnest" or *pledge* and "first fruits" of future glory. For, as a "new creation", we aren't instantaneously glorified (made sinless) like New Covenant believers will be (Rom.

8:23; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:13-14). **The Reality We Possess The Spirit, Yet Still Sin** is proven by the statement, "if we live in relation to the Spirit, we should continuously walk in relation to the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25). For, He embodies the power which helps transform us into the "glory" of God by "putting to death the practices of the body" (Rom. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:17-18).

Presently, we're only considered righteous by the Father since He sees us *in Christ*. Following justification, He wants us to take advantage of our standing by accessing the Spirit's power to put on the Lord's qualities while we await His return. For, when He comes, He'll finish changing us into His sinless image (Rom. 6:11-23; 13:11-14; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20-21).

In the meantime, the Spirit affords believers an opportunity to experience "renewal" (ανα + καινωσει) of both mind and "heart" so "we can (subjunctive mode) walk in newness (καινοτητι) of life" by the "newness of the Spirit" (Rom. 6:12-16; 7:6; 12:2; Eph. 2:4-6; 4:23). This reality is possible since we're morally alive as a result of our death, burial and resurrec-

tion with Christ (Rom. 6:1-4). But, when we sidestep our God given duty, we "actively continuously grieve" (active voice, present tense) the Spirit, subject our "hearts" to deception, and fail to "glorify God" in our bodies (Rom. 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:19 [cf. 1 Thess. 4:8]; Eph. 4:30).

Moreover, since Church members need ongoing reform, Paul prays "in order that He (God) might give to you according to the richness of His glory by power to be strengthened through His Spirit toward the inner man for Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:16-17). This passage centers on how God's "power" is continually available through His "Spirit" so the qualities of Christ can "dwell" or *live in* our "hearts" (καρδιαις). This verse alone confirms **Our Heart Isn't Fully "new" But Still Needs Renewal**. And, this same idea is repeated in Paul's earlier prayer, that "the eyes of your heart" might be enlightened (Eph. 1:17-18). So, both prayers petition God to increase our focus on the "inner man" (εσω ανθρωπον), which is our "new man", for *ongoing renewal* (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16).

This *process of renovation* is available to all members of the Church since we're God's "new creation" (καινη κτισις) and can access the Spirit's transforming power within our "new man" (καινον [or νεον] ανθρωπον), which "continuously causes itself to be made new again" (ανα + καινουμενον). Therefore, each time a Christian employs this powerful formula of *putting on the new man*, he/she takes another step in the slow progression of becoming like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:15; 3:17-18; 4:23-24; Col. 3:10).

Again, until Israel rejected their Messiah in early Acts, all prophecy pointed to the establishment of Kingdom "glory" on earth after the Christ would suffer (Dan. 9:25-28; Mark 13:26; 1 Pet. 1:11). However, God had other plans and initiated a new program which He had kept secret or a "mystery" (μυστηριον – Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 3:2-9). Today, during this un-prophesied time in biblical history, **God has suspended relations with His Covenant People which centers on the Law being perfected in their new heart** (Rom. 11:11-25; Eph. 1:9-10). Although, now individual Jews are saved as Body members in the

exact same manner as gentiles – by "the mercy" of God (Acts 15:6-11; Rom. 9:16-18; 11:30-32; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:13-16).

Someday, *after this surprise plan runs its course*, God will resume dealings with Israel and fulfill all His promises to them (Rom. 11:26-29). Note how this section of Romans quotes the New Covenant passage, "and this is My covenant with them whenever I might send away their sins" (v. 27; Jer. 31:34). By having Paul cite this passage, the Spirit reiterates God will never default on His promise to send the Messiah and return Israel to the Land. For, at that time, He'll establish a "new Jerusalem" (καινης Ιερουσαλημ) from which Jesus will reign forever. Then, after another 1000 years, He'll renovate His creation by making a "new heavens and new earth" (καινους ουρανους και γην καινην) where everything will be restored to a Garden-of-Eden state (Isa. 65:17; Ezek. 36:35 [LXX][17]; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:12; 21:1-2; 22:1-5).

Furthermore, when God temporarily abandoned the Nation of Israel to begin His "new creation" of the Church, He had to get rid of the condemning effects

of the Law. So, in the process of "creating . . . one new man" (καινον ανθρωπον) He "deactivated the law" since it excluded gentiles and declared the Jews to be His People (Eph. 2:11-15). Yet, He couldn't deny Himself by forsaking **His publicized standard of righteousness**. So, He sent His Son who, by living a sinless life under the Law, qualified Himself to be an acceptable sacrifice for all sin. And this is how God's *mystery scheme* allows "the righteous standard of the law" to be *judicially* "fulfilled in us" (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:22-25; 8:1-4).

So now, God desires Church members to spend the rest of our days putting on the qualities of Christ. Any advancement will earn rewards at the Judgment Seat, then God will make up for what we still lack when He conforms us into His Son's image. And, based on how the Word portrays our Father's holiness, I believe the gap between our present level of maturity and what we'll ultimately become *Will Be Far More Expansive Than Any of Us Could Ever Imagine* (1 Cor. 3:12-17; 4:5; 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:3-4;1 Pet. 4:1-4).

Essentially, Christians have an *old man* (nature) and a *new man* which are in conflict (Rom. 7:14-25; 8:12-13; Gal. 5:17). **The Reality of Two Concurrent Natures Didn't Exist Before God Created the Body of Christ**, for the first time this inner struggle is mentioned or explained occurs in the Book of Galatians. Other than the Spirit's limited and intermittent control over a few individuals during O.T. times, the Jewish people were constrained by their old nature before receiving God's power at Pentecost. Then, for a brief time, they experienced being *Led by the Prophesied Single New Nature* – **a new heart + new spirit + Holy Spirit** – until God suspended relations. When He reconnects, Israel will again permanently revel in New Covenant glory with *their new righteous nature*.

Section 5: The Spirit's Work in Body Members

How is "grace" defined as it relates to Christian growth? All agree, the manner by which the Spirit works under "grace" is revealed in Scripture; however, there's much disagreement about which contexts

describe His present-day operation. And it's evident, unless we follow the methods the Spirit currently uses to empower us, *we'll yield a flesh-based lifestyle*. So, each of us should think long and hard about this **Fundamental Building Block** at the base of the spiritual triangle **which Constitutes How We can have Victory over Sin.**

When it comes to defining how "grace" functions, I find many Body members still think the "grace" mentioned in John 1:16-17 is *the same grace expounded by Paul*. Remember, the word "χαρις" simply means *unmerited favor* and its nature is determined by the surrounding context. In that exposition, I pointed out God's *unmerited favor* in giving the Law of Moses was replaced by *grace allied with the New Covenant*.

For, God had initially offered His People the opportunity to gain salvation by performing the works of the Law. All along, He knew this system would cause mortal men to fail, which was also a huge part of His purpose. Also, this human predicament enabled the Father to set His redemptive plan in motion by sending His Son to keep the Law and become an accept-

able sacrifice to supply the righteousness needed for the Kingdom's arrival. Accordingly, when the New Covenant is reinstated, His Remnant will believe and be capable of keeping the Law with their "new heart" and "new spirit" energized by the Holy "Spirit".

In contrast with His program with Israel, **The Definition of how God's Grace Affects Believers Today is Twofold:** Initially, in reference to salvation "grace" is "a gift of God, not out of works in order that no one might boast" (Eph. 2:4-5, 8-9; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Tit. 3:4-7). So, our **regeneration is one hundred percent the work of God effected by His "love", "mercy" and "grace"**.

Then, after rebirth, **divine "grace" intersects with sanctification each time a child of God chooses to activate his or her newly livened state by drawing power from the Spirit to produce "good works"** (Rom. 6:12-17; 12:1-2; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 4:7; Col. 3:5, 8, 12; 1 Pet. 2:1-2). "For, we are His workmanship, after having been completely created in Christ Jesus on the basis of good works which God

previously completed preparing in order that we might complete walking in them" (Eph. 2:10).

The conjunction "for" (γαρ) indicates *this verse gives background information* to explain more about why God saved us by "grace" (vv. 8-9). Then, the first part of verse 10, which includes the aorist passive participle "after having been completely created" (κτισθεντες), expresses how *God* (passive voice) *completed creating* (aorist tense) us as His "workmanship".

Then, the preposition "on the basis of" (επι) addresses our relation to *the foundation upon which* we were created. And this basis is described as God's *previously prepared good works* which He wants to see in our lives so our present "walk" might conform to the positional reality we occupy as His "workmanship" (Gal. 5:16). Although most Translations render "επι" either 'for' or 'unto', Rotherham reads **'upon a footing of good works'** and JMNT says '**upon good works'** which are both similar to mine. In essence, Ephesians 2:10 conveys the concept: Before the foundation of the world, God prepared an ethical and moral contin-

gent of "good works" with which He now wants us, His "new creation", to transform our walk.

This same thought is expressed in Titus 1:1-3 where "good works" are referred to as "the full knowledge of the truth in accord with godliness based on (επι) the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised prior to times eternal (προ χρονων αιωνι-ων); also, in His own time, He manifested His Word in preaching which I (Paul) was entrusted".

Also, Second Timothy 1:9-11 states God is "the one who saved and called us in relation to a holy calling . . . in Christ Jesus prior to times eternal (προ χρονων αιωνιων) . . . through the gospel, unto which I (Paul) was placed as a preacher and apostle and teacher." Finally, we're told "God's wisdom in a mystery" was "predestined prior to the ages (προ των αιωνιων) unto our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7). All three passages directly link our "calling", "godliness", and ultimate "glory" with the good works conveyed by God's "wisdom" contained in "mystery" truth which He established "prior to times eternal", then ultimately made known through the "gospel" which "was entrusted" to Paul.

Lastly, in Ephesians 2:10, the verb "we can complete walking" (περιπατησωμεν) occurs in the subjunctive mode which *requires the condition of obedience* if "good works" (εργοις αγαθοις) are to be implemented. Furthermore, its aorist tense indicates we're responsible to perform until *our lives are completely changed* by these "good works" (Rom. 12:1-2).

To summarize, this verse encapsulates the role those saved by "grace" have in producing "good works" – we need to "walk" in them (Gal. 5:16). And, this conduct is revealed and defined in a variety of mystery-truth-contexts throughout the Church Epistles.

Sometimes this verse is interpreted to mean God "previously completed preparing" (προητοιμασεν) "good works" which He then causes believers to produce. For, this verb's only other occurrence in Romans 9:23 states He "previously completed preparing" elect "vessels of mercy . . . for glory" (Rom. 8:29-30, 33; 9:11-24). That context refers to *God's work in regard to salvation* which is the same category of truth just expounded in Ephesians 2:8-9 – we were "saved by grace". However, verse 10 changes gears

and specifies *the actual production of* "good works" *is conditioned on* (subjunctive mode) *whether or not a believer walks in them*.

The next passage detailing how *God's grace applies to Christian good works* is Second Timothy 3:16-17, "God-breathed" Scripture was provided "in order that the man of God might continuously be equipped, fully equipped toward every good work" (see 1:9 & 2:1 for contextual references to "grace"). First, "God-breathed" or *inspired* revelation, labeled elsewhere as the *mystery*, defines the nature of these *previously prepared good works* which equip us for service (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 2:10).

Also, the present, subjunctive verb of being "might continuously be" (ᾖ) indicates we *always have the potential* to produce every "good work" (ἔργον ἀγαθόν). So, whether or not *good works* are generated depends on the choices believers make to obey the dictates God revealed. And, as this Book discloses, these decisions can be very hard choices (1:8; 2:3, 14-18, 22-26; 3:1-5, 12-13).

A third passage helps describe how *the production of good works is linked with God's grace*, "the saving grace of God was manifest to all men which continuously teaches us in order that, after having chosen to complete denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we can live sound-mindedly and righteously and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12).

The adjective translated "saving" (σωτηριος) *describes the nature of* this "grace" (χαρις). This aspect of "grace" has nothing to do with initial salvation, which is an operation of God, but it refers to *how believers can be saved from the power of sin* (1 Cor. 15:2; 1 Tim. 4:16). Additionally, the participle "which continuously teaches" (παιδευουσα) or *trains* "us" is in the same person, number, and gender as "χαρις", so it also serves as an action-adjective *describing the life changing nature of* this "saving grace".

This *ongoing effect* (present tense) of "grace" is available "in order that" (ινα) or *for the purpose that* "after having chosen to complete denying" (αρνησαμενοι) the sinful tendencies of our old man, we can live holy lives. This middle aorist participle

indicates we *first have to make a choice* to reject our flesh in order to *complete the process* of laying moral groundwork necessary for leading sensible and godly lives.[6,11,14] Furthermore, the verb "we can complete living" (ζησωμεν) *requires acts of Spirit-aided obedience* to fulfill its subjunctive-mode-conditional *so we can* bring about good character.

This subjunctive verb joins the two others just considered in Ephesians 2:10 and Second Timothy 3:17 to form a **Three-Pronged Limelight which illuminates obedience as the condition Body members need to fulfill** if we're to produce any "good works". Also, the aorist tense of "ζησωμεν" implies God has provided everything we need to *complete* putting on godly attributes. Though no Christian ever accomplishes this goal, each of us will have to account for our efforts (1 Cor. 3:10-17 [εργον – "work" occurs 4 times]; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Col. 3:10).[12]

This spiritual renewal fueled by *disciplining grace* (Tit. 2:11) is to endure while we await Christ's return in "glory" when He'll consummate our transformation into His image (Tit. 2:13; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4).

Until then, we should recognize *God's desire for our sanctification is entwined with His reason for redeeming us*, "in order that . . . He might completely cleanse for Himself a people-possession, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).

Brethren, this section teaches **The Purpose God Saved Us is for the Fervent Production of Good Works** (Eph. 2:10). He didn't intend for us to only anticipate eternal life in heaven, although that's our wonderful assurance. But also, He saved us to be shining lights so, through us, mankind might perceive the reality that **Christ can transform sinners into Spirit-Led-Beings** (Phil. 2:12-16; Tit. 2:5, 8, 10). And so, we further our role in this Divine Production *each time we utilize the Spirit's power to obey*.

Concluding how Ephesians 2:10, Second Timothy 3:16-17, and Titus 2:11-14 define the production of "works" under "grace", as Bible Teachers often stress, "εργον" is repeatedly used to describe the "work" of God in salvation. However, the fact this same Greek word is used to exemplify acts in the process of spiritual growth is seldom emphasized.

So, to stress this point, beyond passages already covered, the terms "work" or "works" occur at least 28 more times in the Church Epistles to represent **The Christian-Work-Facet of The Gospel** (1 Cor. 3:13-15; 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:8; 10:11; Gal. 6:4; Eph. 4:12; Phil. 1:22; 2:30; Col. 1:10; 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:10; 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:21; 4:5; Titus 2:7; 3:1, 8, 14; Heb. 6:10; 10:24; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:12).

Furthermore, Galatians 5:6 uses the verb form of "εργον", "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith continuously working (εν + εργεω) through love" (cf. Gal. 6:10). Finally, the verb in Philippians 2:12 which expresses responsibility to "produce" (κατα + εργεω) qualities of salvation occurs three more times to represent Christian works (2 Cor. 7:11; 9:11; Eph. 6:13). Based on this vast amount of evidence, how can anyone say, **'Works have no place in God's grace program today'**?

Romans Overview – Overcoming Sin by Grace

The Book of Romans is commonly cited to explain the "grace" formula for sanctification, and rightfully so. In light of this awareness, plus the influence this portion has had on my life, in three short paragraphs I'd like to *Summarize the Impact* chapters 6 – 15 hold in relation to the course of spiritual growth.

Based on the revival occurring in believers when we died and were raised with Christ, we're repeatedly told not to let sin control us. Also, the need to "present" our members to God is stressed since this act results in "righteousness", "holiness", and putting on qualities of "eternal life" (Rom. 6:12-16, 19, 22-23). Have you ever noticed *the Spirit isn't mentioned once in Romans 6*? I believe this omission was purposeful for it **Underscores a Believer's Need to Exercise Choice for Renewal to Happen**. Yet, divine power needed to reach this goal is implied since the word "newness" in verse 4, which describes the new way we're to live, is repeated in 7:6, where it states Christians are released from bondage to the Law so we can "serve in newness of the Spirit".

In keeping with this thought, after discussing what happened at Paul's salvation, the remainder of chapter 7 displays him as a spectacle of utter failure in his pursuit of holiness as long as he kept trying to follow the "oldness of the letter" – the Law (Rom. 7:6, 14-25). Then, chapter 8 explodes with a story line which explains how all believers who possess the indwell-ing Spirit can triumph over sin through His power (vv. 1-17). This same Spirit enables us to navigate the "sufferings" of life and will never leave the "elect of God" (vv. 18-39).

Next, after three chapters which show how God's purpose has always been enacted by the extension of "grace" and "mercy" to save His "elect", chapter 12 picks up with appeals and instructions for how He wants Body members to live (Rom. 9:10-18; 11:1-6, 30-32). These lifestyle guidelines continue through chapter 15.

Overall, within the text of chapters 6 – 15, we're coached to exclude the Law from Christian practice. Plus, earlier in the Book, Paul had warned against trusting our ability to do the "works of the law" to

obtain the "righteousness" needed for acceptance and "justification" in our Father's eyes. For, Christ had already satisfied this requirement when He kept the Law and qualified Himself to be a suitable sacrifice in our place (Rom. 3 – 5; 8:1-4).

Other Popular Definitions of 'Grace'

In Christendom, there're two prominent definitions of 'grace' in reference to how believers integrate power from the Spirit which significantly vary from the explanation presented in this article. So, I'm going to provide an overview of both perspectives then analyze the ramifications of each. Please know, my purpose isn't to merely be critical or nit-pick. Yes, I'm convinced these views are inaccurate, but more importantly I believe they have a detrimental effect on the spiritual wellbeing of those who embrace them.

The First View: Some Christians believe God causes our "good works". This position, for the most part, is based on attributing truths about the Spirit's work in the O.T., Gospel Accounts, and Book of Acts to the Body of Christ. With regard to revelation received

prior to the cross, sufficient time has been allotted to demonstrate these lessons refer to how the Spirit will operate in the Messianic Kingdom.

Also, I've commented on passages from the Epistles, including Colossians 3:9, to counter the claim the impact of our "flesh" and "old man" has been eliminated in a functional sense, which is a belief often connected with this view. Finally, many taking this stance assert Galatians 5:18 and Romans 8:14 teach the Spirit always and actively leads believers, but earlier expositions show He doesn't lead us unless we first seek His guidance.

Furthermore, those holding this position often apply the *Spirit's causative movements seen in the Book of Acts* to the Church. However, we can know *these types of actions ceased* because they're absent in all the Epistles written after that historic account ends. And this principle can be verified: **No Post-Acts Letter Supports the idea that Involuntary Spirit-Guidance Continues**. For, *that kind of leading doesn't exist* in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, First & Second Timothy, Titus, and First & Second Peter.

Also, these Epistles contain specific statements which indicate *Spirit-energized gifts like healing and visions are no longer active*.[22]

In line with this concept, I've already pointed out several times the *mystery truth given to the Church* expounded in Paul's Letters is that which explicitly describes the essence and function of Christ's Body. Also, several sections in the Word indicate how this revelation was progressively received, so we should expect to see how the Spirit typically and currently functions in the later Epistles (Rom. 16:25-26; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7, cf. Eph. 3:4 with Acts 20:20, 27).

Moreover, we know Peter didn't contribute any truth to supplement the gospel Paul preached nor did anyone else, for he received its entire content directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12; 2:6; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). Therefore, when seeking to ascertain any aspect of how God works today, we should always reference Paul's writings.

In addition, it's important to recognize *the Book of Acts isn't mystery truth*; it's simply the one inspired

account of the timeframe this new mystery revelation began to be disclosed. For, it highlights events which enable the reader to comprehend God's transition away from the Nation of Israel and toward His purpose for the Body.

Specifically, Acts contains an offer to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom, the Jewish Nation's rejection of this offer by denying their Christ, Paul's conversion, then God's use of him to evangelize all men and edify believers with the revelation he received. Some truths distinct to the Body are seen in Acts, but so are *Left-Over New Covenant Realities*. And many of these lingering manifestations were **To Verify the Divine Source of and Proliferate the New Message of Grace** (Acts 15:4, 7-12; Gal. 2:7-9; Heb. 2:3-4).

Lastly, some who hold the conviction God causes our "good works" *also believe He causes our Evil Works*, usually with the stipulation this activity helps Body members develop spiritually. In fact, this thought is certified by several O.T. contexts (Judges 15:14-16; 16:23-31; Isa. 45:6-7; 63:17; Amos 3:6). However,

no Scripture supporting this stance is found in the Church Epistles.

The Second View: Some believe "grace" means Christians just need to concentrate on the finished work of Christ and good works will automatically follow. Thus, there's no real need to focus on obedience. This position arises from amalgamating the Spirit's causative actions from New Covenant theology with Paul's exhortation to "consider" ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11). By maintaining this mental focus, these brothers believe they'll be spontaneously guided to act rightly (John 14:12-17; 16:13).

However, my exposition of Romans 6:11 shows *its command to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God* directs believers to recognize the twofold effect which happened when we were identified with Christ's "death" and "resurrection" (vv. 3-4). For, when God saved us, we were freed from bondage to "sin" and made morally "alive" which is why we can now decipher right from wrong. Then, as we activate these realities, we can choose to submit to the Spirit's power which enables us to overcome sin and

obey the righteous instruction designed to help advance our path to "holiness" (vv. 12-19).

Also, like the first view, this stance emphasizes our "old man" has been crucified. Colossians 3:9 is often cited to indicate we no longer have an active old nature, and some believe Galatians 5:18 and Romans 8:14 teach we're instinctively "led" by the Spirit. Moreover, the following grammatical point is sometimes endorsed: Present Tense Verbs commonly translated with *the imperative mode command sense* should really be understood in *the indicative mode statement-of-fact sense* since this Greek form can be interpreted either way.

When this theory is applied, Romans 12:2 wouldn't be understood to command believers (imperative mode) to flee from being conformed to this age and seek to be transformed. Instead, it would be translated as *a statement of fact* (indicative mode), '*we aren't conforming to this age' and 'we are being transformed*'. Based on interpreting verb forms in this manner makes them facts we need to simply "consider" as realities, then good automatically follows

(Rom. 6:11). More examples of rendering Imperative Mode Verbs as Indicative are: Ephesians 5:18 would read '*we aren't getting drunk with wine but we're being filled*' with the Spirit; Galatians 5:16 would say '*we're walking by the Spirit*'; and Philippians 2:12 would specify '*we're producing our own salvation*'.

However, a closer look at Romans 12:1-2 shows the context entreats believers "to complete presenting" (παραστησαι) our bodies as a sacrifice to God. This aorist infinitive specifies we're supposed *to achieve the outcome of completing the presentation* of our bodies.[11] So, as a **Contextual Indicator of Syntax**, this term sets a focus which *indicates the action in this context is still unfinished*. Therefore, believers are *continuously encouraged* (παρακαλω – present tense) to *continuously follow the commands* in verse 2 (present, imperative verbs) *as a necessary practice of volition* (middle voice) in order to completely present our bodies to the Lord.[23]

Also, in Philippians 2:12, just as these believers always "completed obeying" (υπηκουσατε), now they're to continue. This verb's aorist tense provides

the **Contextual Indicator** which specifies just as they *sought to complete their act of obedience* when Paul was with them, at the time of this writing they're to continue this pursuit with a view of *complete compliance* "with fear and trembling". This aorist verb is then followed by a present imperative verb which *commands* them to "continuously choose" (middle voice) to produce qualities accompanying their rebirth. Of course, as previously discussed, even though believers *constantly endeavor*, we never truly reach *our objective of perfect obedience*.[12]

One final comment about Contextual Indicators is warranted since near the beginning of this article I stated we should translate middle/passive voice endings with the relevance of both. This assessment is based on the **Absence of Contextual Indicators**, for the Greek language doesn't contain any signals which point toward choosing the sense of one voice over the other.

On the other hand, the language structure surrounding a dual imperative/indicative verb form almost always contains other action words and/or verbal

content which points to the intent. Besides, since very few Translations deviate with regard to this grammatical issue, it's easy to avoid pitfalls by simply sticking with commonly used Versions. For, they appropriately adhere to the way these verbs have been routinely translated for centuries.

Evaluating These Stances

Before continuing, I'd like to say everyone I've met who holds either view is honestly convinced that their position represents how God's **'grace'** currently works. With that said, I'm going to share what I believe are some unintended consequences which result from taking these stands.

One **Foundational Principle** I see undergirding the above two definitions is: *Grace Represents a Total Absence of Humanly-Generated-Works*. Also, the practice of teaching Christians are required to produce good works is often given the derogatory label of 'legalism'. However, neither of these concepts can be found in Paul's Letters. To address the conviction **'grace'** is an absence of works, some believe God

gives us initial saving faith, which is a conviction I also embrace. But many of these brethren are also convinced the Spirit causes a believer's post-redemption works, possibly even the evil ones. By this point, a reader should realize I don't agree with either conviction.

Others who hold the Second View of **'grace'** just outlined *don't classify saving 'faith' in Christ as a 'work'*. Similarly, the post-salvation-practice of considering oneself dead to sin and alive to God is *another exercise which frequently isn't categorized as a human 'work'* (Rom. 6:11). I don't understand these last two definitions, for I perceive Scripture defining a 'work' as any thought, choice or act which originates from the human heart or mind.

Those who believe "faith" isn't a "work" commonly cite Romans 4:4-5 for support. However, in that context, Paul explains the "works of the law" have no part in gaining "righteousness" before God, instead, salvation is gained "through law-faith" (δια νομου πιστεως – 3:27). In a nutshell, this passage indicates Christians should apply the principle of "faith", which

was initially taught in the Law, to "trust" in the work of Christ but not the ongoing works-aspect of the Law (Deut. 32:20, 37; Psalm 2:12; 33:21-22; 40:3-8; 56:3-4; Rom. 3:20-22, 30-31; Gal. 3:24).

Then, in chapters 8 through 11, the source of this "faith" is divulged, that is, God's elect are the ones who will believe based on His prompting. In these four chapters, Paul applies the same teaching in regard to saving faith which we saw Jesus develop in the Gospel of John – *the act of believing* is a "work of God" exercised by His "elect" (6:29, 36-37, 40, 64-65, 68-70).

Also, it's important to realize the term 'legalism' was devised to connect a negative connotation with the idea Christians are required to produce "works". However, we've seen dozens of contexts where Paul legitimizes this need and gives in-depth descriptions of how Body members accomplish these "works". When discussing "works", Paul simply separates the deeds we should do by the Spirit's "power" which are recorded in the Church Epistles from "works" specified by the Mosaic Law. And we're repeatedly

cautioned to stay away from "the works of the law" since they appeal to and energize our "flesh".

Another **Foundational Principle** and *Featured Attraction* accompanying the view "good works" are Spirit-caused is: *This Stance Demonstrates True Humility*. The explanation goes something like, **'Our position not only denies we have any part in producing works, but it also gives all credit to God since He's the sole actor behind all of our deeds.'**

If this reasoning was supported by truth intended for the Church, it would be spot-on. However, if this perspective is founded on New Covenant Scripture which isn't in effect today, *this belief would actually produce a false type of humility*. For then, the flesh, not the Spirit, would govern and result in an inclination to justify decisions and actions instead of taking ownership for them. Also, a sense of entitlement would arise with outlooks like, **'The Lord is doing this in my life'** or **'The Spirit is convicting** (or **telling**) **me to do this'**. Basically, this mentality leads believers to think they're always right and routinely defend their actions as Spirit-led.

In conversations with Body members, when I become aware a person holds this perspective and there's interest in chatting about it, I try to make the most of the opportunity. To begin with, I'll ask a question to evaluate where they're thinking is at like, **'Do you sin?'** If this brother admits he does, my follow-up will be, **'So God is causing your sin, right?'** Usually, I'll receive the quick response, **'What?'** Then, I'll elaborate, '**Well, if God causes your good works and you still sin, isn't He causing you to sin each time He refrains from leading you to do good?'** Most frequently, I find Christians haven't considered this dilemma. Sometimes this technique stimulates further discussion. When it doesn't, I pray this saint will continue studying the Word as well as for future potential dialog.

Then, in conversations with those who believe God causes both our "good" and *evil* "works", I try another approach. Initially, I need to assess whether this brother is aware his view creates a basis for justifying decisions and actions. If I gather that he truly believes the Spirit leads him in everything, then my aim is to decipher what Scripture is used to support his thinking.

Most often, parts of Bible directed to Israel are cited for evidence. So, next, I attempt to bring attention to passages that apply to the Body of Christ which simultaneously introduces discussion about where Church members find God's current instruction.

As this exchange progresses, it can become very interesting since the Word contains so many types of Spirit-sourced involvement in the lives of men, and very few Christians think all of these are in effect today. Also, during our chat, I keep in mind everyone believes the Church Epistles are both inspired and intended for us. So, the only question remaining is how these portions which describe the Spirit's work today correspond with other biblical teaching. Where the dialog goes from there is anyone's guess. But one thing I'm sure of, when gracious discussion around the Word is encouraged, everyone profits.

My primary concern about the notion God automatically works His will through us is on many occasions I've witnessed this viewpoint generate a *Defensive Posture of Justifying Non-Christian Behavior*. Also, I've observed believers who downplay accountability

end up noticeably deficient in fending off moral and ethical temptation. For, sinful responses occur when we lack proper checks and balances to gauge and/or control our own thoughts and actions (Rom. 14:22-23; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; 1 Tim. 4:6-16).

So, unless we develop *a healthy level of Spirit-motivated self-critique* to evaluate choices and deeds, we'll retain the tendencies of our old man which prod us toward a staunch mindset of self-justification and keep us on a **Progress-Hampering-Course**. On a personal note, I've seen my "flesh" win out all too often before realizing I hadn't been attentive enough to avoid the enticement of sin.

Furthermore, I believe this passive view of Spirit-caused works minimizes awareness of the Devil's resolve, for he's on the prowl to derail our spiritual growth and testimony. With reference to this, Paul expresses fear for the Corinthians that, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent, they'll be misled by false teaching (2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:14). Also, we're warned not to allow the Devil to occupy a "place" in our life, for if we do, he'll gain a foothold and

convince us to "sin". Instead, we should *take preparatory action in order to be able to battle* wicked spiritual forces and protect ourselves from their vices (Eph. 4:26-27; 6:11-16).

Likewise, Peter cautions Christians to be morally established and sober in order to have the capacity to oppose our "adversary" who "continuously walks seeking someone to devour". For, when believers are *consumed*, we become *obsessed with evil intent* (1 Pet. 5:8-9). So, fittingly, a few verses later Peter states his Letter provides a road for spiritual victory and "this is **the true grace of God**, in which you're to stand" (v. 12 – emphasis mine). This reminder should alert us: **Satan Promotes Everything Counterfeit to How "Grace" Currently Works**.

Final Considerations

This thesis contains a great many thoughts, but I'll close by focusing on a few I consider essential for Christian growth. First, it's vital that believers spend individual time in the Word reading, studying, and

checking out everything we're taught. During this life-directing exercise, we should ask, **'Do I believe in a certain principle because I see it in the Word or because I learned it from someone else?'**

When we simply follow teaching or prepared lessons, we set ourselves up to both evade personal responsibility and escalate the potential of being led off course. This lackadaisical approach will reap the consequences of restricting our growth, opening us up to deception from "every wind of teaching" and **Causing Impotence to our spirit/Spirit Dynamic** (Eph. 4:14).

Therefore, to assist in formulating beliefs, we should supplement instruction from teachers by use of reference materials, alternate Translations, and the Greek text (or an Interlinear).[24] I've found when Christians engage with the actual text God chose to deliver His Word and interpret each section in light of its literary setting, we obtain the most accurate, balanced, and life changing convictions. Then, as this routine becomes our primary source for edification, we'll experience constructive, Spirit-based stimulation

which awakens our inner spirit to God's mandate for our lives (Eph. 5:8-20).

To more specifically outline this method of study, after assessing what a passage teaches, we should allow the text to mean what it says, then analyze it and determine its proper application. This approach may confirm current beliefs, or what we learn may call for alteration. Either way, this process builds a secure foundation for transformation to take place. Bear in mind, if spiritual renewal is to happen, it requires open-mindedness and a willingness to travel the road of change. The other option is **Spinning our Wheels in a Theological Rut of Tradition-Based-Doctrine.**

Second, how we comprehend certain passages is central to the way we will apply biblical truth. In my experience, John 1:16-17 is one of these pivotal contexts since it contains the term "grace". One's conception of this "grace" forms a hinge point which swings them in a distinct direction of how to apply Scripture. If this passage is understood to speak of *God's unmerited favor allied with the New Covenant* and not mystery "grace" for the Body, **This View Frees a**

Person from The Law-Oriented Outlook: All Truth in the Gospels is Intended for the Church. At the same time, an adequate grasp of this portion helps Christians set their sight on the Church Epistles for universal guidance.

Finally, I sincerely believe all Christians want to be led by the Spirit. So, here's a brief restatement of what this article presents about how divine guidance works: After trusting in the blood of Christ the Father "justifies" us in a positional sense to be "acceptable" to Him, He makes us morally "alive" to be aware of right and wrong, and He gives us the "Spirit" for "power" to comprehend His Word and produce "good works". As a result, we possess the ability to "choose" to "walk" by the Spirit. And, when we follow this course of action, we can put on "the new man" for godly living and squelch the sin dwelling in our "flesh" (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:11-13; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 2:4-5).

I hope **This Proposal Outlining the Believer's Responsibility** to produce "good works" **plus Our Ability-to-Respond** by accessing the indwelling Spirit will challenge you to solidify your own alliance with this

Member of the Godhead. For, Romans 6:16 says we can decide to be "slaves of **sin**" or "slaves of obedience resulting in **righteousness**" (emphasis mine). Truly, Christians are free to choose, but **we can't escape the reality each choice we make propels us into greater control by one of these two entities**.

Also, Galatians 6:7-8 tells us, "You aren't to choose to continuously be made deceived (πλανασθε – **present, middle/passive-command**), God doesn't continuously choose to be mocked" (μυκτηριζεται – **present, middle/passive**) for, "the one who sows in the direction of his own flesh will reap corruption out of the flesh, also the one sowing in the direction of the Spirit, will reap (qualities associated with) eternal life out of the Spirit".

So, what're we going to do, and what habits will we develop? Because, if we walk in the flesh we'll be misled, taunt our Father, and produce sin-based works (Gal. 6:6-7). On the other hand, by walking in the Spirit we'll yield fruitful deeds which correspond with the eternal life for which God saved us as His *zealous* "people-possession" (Tit. 2:14; 'peculiar

people' – KJV). The Scripture's clear. Everyday choices we make are of utmost importance to God, for *He wants us to be under His Spirit's control* so we can be happy, productive, and reap rewards.

Therefore, if we want to align ourselves with God's purpose, our only real choice is to walk in obedience. And, to do this, we need to learn the lesson, "My grace *is* sufficient for you, for power causes itself to be made perfect (τελειται – **present, middle/passive)** in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Accordingly, we need to pay attention to deny our ego-driven desire and humbly seek the Spirit's help so we can please our Father since apart from His divine power we're helplessly weak (Rom. 7:18). It's not really that complicated. Our personal advancement, edification value to the Body of Christ, and testimony to the world all depend on how well the Spirit functions through us.

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New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek texts. Old Testament quotes are from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. All Bible Versions cited in this article can be found on the internet.

Footnotes:

1) In my assessment, the central portions of Scripture forming the basis for the *Church Epistles* are Paul's 13 Letters since their content expounds God's present "administration" (οι-κονομιαν), *household management* or *dispensation*, which defines the nature and function of Christ's Body. For, this record is stated to be the revelation of formerly un-prophesied "mystery" (μυστηριον) truth which Jesus made known through Paul (Eph. 3:2-3). Also, I believe the content of Peter's two Letters and The Book of Hebrews fully align with Paul's writings and, as such, should be equally applied to the Church (2 Pet. 3:15-16). My perspective on how John's Letters relate are touched on in several places throughout this article. Lastly, another article in this series is planned to deliberate the content and purpose of the Book of James.

2) The Present Tense Verb(s) in this verse occurs in a form which, by itself, can be interpreted to be either the Indicative or Imperative Mode. How this form should be translated based on its two potentially different functions will be discussed later in the article.

3) These Versions are: **Mace** – 'do not drink to excess, for that tends to dissoluteness, but be regal'd with spiritual enter-

tainments'; **Rotherham** – 'And be not getting drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be getting filled in Spirit'; **Twentieth Century** – 'Do not drink wine to excess, for that leads to profligacy; but seek to be filled with the Spirit of God'; **Williams** – 'Stop getting drunk on wine, for that means profligacy, but ever be filled with the Spirit'; and **WNT** – 'Do not over-indulge in wine--a thing in which excess is so easy--but drink deeply of God's Spirit' (vv. 18-19). These Version renderings are foundat studybible.info.

4) Translations rendering the infinitive "επιτελεισθαι" with the passive voice sense and indicate sufferings 'are (being) accomplished in' believers are: **KJV, Geneva, Wesley,** and **DBY**. Additionally, **CLV** reads sufferings are 'being completed in' believers. Translations rendering this infinitive with the middle voice sense emphasize sufferings 'are being experienced by' believers or that the brethren 'are (is) experiencing' them: **ESV, Williams,** and **AUV**. Also, **NIV** says a believer 'is undergoing' sufferings and **Thompson** renders this as sufferings you (the believers) 'are undergone'. Finally, **NASV** reads experiences of suffering 'are being accomplished by' believers. Renderings from less available Versions listed are found at studybible.info.

5) Early Translations rendering the infinitive "επιτελεισθαι" with the sense of both middle and passive voices are: **Tyndale** – 'whom resist stedfust in the fayth remebrynge that ye do but fulfill the same affliccios which are apoynted to youre brethren that are in the worlde'; **MSTC** – 'whom resist, steadfast in the faith, remembering that ye do but fulfill the same afflictions which are appointed to your brethren that are

in the world'; **Matthew** – 'whom resist stedfast in the fayth remembring, that ye do but fulfill the same affliccions, which are appointed to youre brethren that are in the worlde'; and **Twentieth Century** – 'Stand firm against him, strong in your faith; knowing, as you do, that the very sufferings which you are undergoing are being endured to the full by your Brotherhood throughout the world.' These Version renderings are found at studybible.info.

6) In Koine Greek of the New Testament era, the **Middle Voice form** in verbs, participles and infinitives which express action (or being) basically indicates t*he subject acts upon itself to perform the action (or being)*. This activity can be expressed by the concept of *causing itself* to do (or be) something thus, in reference to people, it's well translated with the idea of *making a choice*. The **Passive Voice form** indicates *the subject is acted upon by a force outside of itself*. This function *effectively turns the subject into the direct object* since the subject is *made to do (or be) something* by that outside force. Action words (or words of being) which occur in a Dual Middle or Passive form convey the meaning of both voices.

7) **Haweis** – 'But if ye are under the conduct of the Spirit, ye are not under the law'; **Twentieth Century** – 'But, if you follow the guidance of the Spirit, you are not subject to Law'; **Moffatt** – 'If you are under the sway of the Spirit, you are not under the Law'; and **MNT** – 'But if you are habitually led by the Spirit you are not under law.' Additionally, the following Versions render the verb "αγεσθε" with the idea of being

'guided' by the Spirit, which represents a less directive act than *being led*: **Murdock, Goodspeed, Williams,** and **BBE**. These Version renderings are found at studybible.info.

8) The meaning, 'a weak, silly woman', is given by: *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 146.

9) **NIV** – 'are swayed by all kinds of evil desires'; **Mace** – 'abetted by their own subtle passions'; **Haweis** – 'actuated by a variety of passions'; **Anderson** – 'influenced by various desires'; **JuliaSmith** – 'led away with various eager desires'; **Rotherham** – 'led on by manifold covetings'; and **Goodspeed** – 'under the control of all sorts of impulses.' Renderings from less available Versions listed are found at studybible.info.

10) **NIV** – 'you were influenced and led astray to mute idols'; **MSTC** – 'went your ways unto dumb idols, even as ye were led'; **Mace** – 'you were seduced by your leaders, to the worship of dumb idols'; **Etheridge** – 'unto idols which have no voice you were led without discernment'; **Sawyer** – 'you followed dumb idols as you were led'; **Rotherham** – 'unto the dumb idols, howsoever ye were being led, ye were seduced'; **TGNT** – 'you were following after dumb idols, as you were led'; **WNT** – 'you went astray after dumb idols, wherever you happened to be led.'; **Goodspeed** – 'you would stray off, as impulse directed, to idols that could not speak'; **MNT** – 'you went astray after dumb idols, wherever he be led'; **ISV** – 'you were enticed and led astray to worship idols that couldn't even speak'; and **VIN** & **BSB** – 'you were influenced and led astray

to mute idols.' Renderings from less available Versions listed are found at studybible.info.

11) Aorist Tenses always represent the concept of *completed action*. However, the timing of this action isn't equal to our English past tense unless an Aorist occurs in combination with the Indicative Mode (only verbs have mode). But, when an Aorist Tense is combined with the Imperative, Subjunctive, or Optative Mode, a responsive action is required for its completed-action-sense to take place. Also, when Participles or Infinitives occur in Aorist form, they don't automatically indicate an action is complete, for completion of the act (or being) depends on whether or not the subject has accomplished it. So, when an Aorist Tense occurs in words of action (or being) which are in any other form than the Indicative Mode, the completion of its action is conditioned upon additional grammatical and contextual factors.

12) In Philippians 3:12, Paul uses the perfect tense verb "I have not already chosen to begin and continue to be made complete" (ουχ . . . ηδη τετελειωμαι – **perfect, middle/passive**) to indicate he hadn't reached perfection. This specifies he hadn't adequately chosen (middle voice) to utilize the Spirit's power to enable (passive) him not to sin.[6] Since this was true, verse 13 includes two present, middle/passive participles to describe the course Paul took in his pursuit of perfection, "one thing, indeed continuously choosing to be made to forget the things behind (or *in the past*), also continuously choosing to be made to extend out to the things before" (or *things to come*). These middle/passive forms represent one more place demonstrating the same principle seen in other passages which

contain formulas for spiritual renewal and teach that believers first need to choose (middle voice) to submit to the Spirit, then He can activate His power (passive) within us.

13) Bible students need to be careful not depend on any one Greek reference source to determine grammatical forms. For, one instance which demonstrates there may be theological bias is when action (or being) words occur in the dual middle/passive form. In reference to "ψευδεσθε", the online Greek interlinear, biblehub.com/interlinear, I often use cites this verb as a 'middle' in voice. However, Perschbacher's *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* cites the same form as 'mid./pass.' (meaning *middle or passive* – January 2006 edition, pg. 442). Then, Zondervan's *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (1975 edition) designates this same form as 'mid.' (*middle voice*) on page 441, but also shows this exact verb ending is 'Passive Voice' in the table of a 'Regular Verb' on page xvii, in its introductory section.

14) In the Greek language, action (or being) conveyed by an Aorist Participle always precedes the action (or being) of verbs, participles or infinitives it modifies, even when these associated words of action (or being) are in the aorist tense. I was first taught this definition in Bible school and have since confirmed it by routinely testing its multi-hundreds of occurrences in the New Testament. The *basic meaning* conveyed by any grammatical form is determined when some contexts require its usage to be understood in a certain way and, in addition, when this same meaning can be applied to every occurrence. A few examples where contexts necessitate aorist participial action (or being) preceding the action (or being)

of associated words are John 12:36; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:9, 13, 20; 2:14-15; Heb. 5:9.

15) The meaning 'innovate' for this word is found in: *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 341.

16) By definition, Greek nouns refer to a person, place or thing just like in English. These designations represent real things containing *essence* or *substance*. So, when a verb is absent in the Greek text, a *verb of being is always understood* since essence (or being) already exists within the noun. This is why nouns, pronouns, adjectives, participles, articles, and infinitives with articles (all parts of speech with declension endings) are called **Substantives** because they possess inherent substance, essence, or being.

17) Citations are from: *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, Zondervan, October 1978. The term 'Septuagint' refers to any edition of Greek texts translated from O.T. Hebrew. It's most often referred to by the symbol LXX, the Roman numeral 'seventy', which is a rounded down designation of the seventy-two – six from each tribe of Israel – scholars involved in translating the Pentateuch from Hebrew to Greek in the third century BC. This definition is derived from thegospelcoalition.org.

18) Sometimes the phrase "new covenant" (καινης διαθηκης) in Second Corinthians 3:6 is interpreted to mean a different new covenant than the One promised to Israel in the O.T. since this phrase lacks a Greek article. However, in the

Greek text of Hebrews 8:8 where Jeremiah 31:31 is quoted, the phrase "new covenant" doesn't contain an article, yet the context clearly designates that phrase as the New Covenant in Jeremiah. The Greek article never changes the essence or meaning of any term it's coupled with, but its grammatical function is simply to highlight that term as *a primary focus*. Its use represents a similar effect to the technique of underlining or italicizing text in English and is just one of many ways the Greek Language can designate a point of emphasis. Many passages contain two or more words with articles, so equal focus should be attributed to each.

19) *Ananias & Sapphira and The Kingdom Community*, Mark Stearns. This point of grammar is covered on page 3 under the exposition of Acts 5:3. This work is found under the 'articles' tab in the 'exposition' section on edifiedliving.net.

20) The Greek article never changes the essence or meaning of any term it's coupled with, but its grammatical function is simply to highlight that term as a *primary focus*. Its use represents a similar effect to the technique of underlining or italicizing text in English and is just one of many ways the Greek Language can designate a point of emphasis. Many passages contain two or more words with articles, so equal focus should be attributed to each.

21) First John contains some instructions consistent with New Covenant teachings in the O.T., Gospels, and Book of Acts. Three notable examples which differ from *mystery revelation* are: Believers don't need teachers because of the Spirit's "anointing" (1 John 2:20, 26-27; John 14:26; 16:13); they

won't be "continuously practicing sin" (1 John 3:9; 5:18 – present tense); and they'll receive whatever is asked in prayer (3:21-22; 5:14-15). However, this Book also seems to contain teachings which align with mystery truth: Believers, who can sin, are indwelt by the Spirit (2:1-2; 4:1-6) and are judicially acceptable to God through the Son (2:2; 5:10-12).

Two of these points appear to contradict since some verses say believers don't sin, then one verse seems to indicate they can. This same dichotomy is seen in the Gospels where it's clear believers can sin, but this tendency will change after they receive the Spirit. But, since this Letter was written after the Spirit was received, these teachings are confusing. And I believe the only way to reconcile issues like this is to realize God intended the revelation recorded by Paul to be the standard of truth for the Body of Christ. Then, in light of this standard, we can judge how all other teaching fits into His present program (1 Cor. 9:15-18; Col. 1:24 – 2:3; Eph. 3:1-9; 1 Tim. 1:4-11; 2 Tim. 1:13-14). I use this same method to determine whether truths contained in the Book of Acts and the Epistles written during that timeframe characterize teaching from the New Covenant or Mystery Revelation. Truths which were both given for the Church and still continue should be applied today.

22) *The "Perfect" Scenario, An Exposition of First Corinthians 13:8-13,* Chuck Schiedler, Appendix V, pg. 25. This work can be found under the 'articles' tab in the 'exposition' section of edifiedliving.net.

23) **Contextual Indicators** are any structure of grammar or syntax which lends evidence to identify the meaning intended by Greek words or points of grammar which occur in the exact same form yet have verifiably different functions. Example: Contextual Indicators determine whether the Greek letter *Omicron* "o" is a *masculine singular article* or a *neuter relative pronoun*. **Grammar** constitutes the form a Greek word occurs in and defines how that form relates with other words or points of grammar within any context. **Syntax**, built from the Greek words meaning *arranged with*, constitutes how words or phrases relate to one another in any context.

24) An Online Greek Interlinear can be found at biblehub.com/interlinear. I routinely use this source since it provides a basic translation, compares that translation with the KJV and NASV, contains a concordance to locate where words occur in the N.T., and includes a parsing guide which details the specific form of each part of speech.

* * * * *

Appendix I – Definition of Greek Tenses, Voices & Modes

The Six Greek Tenses:

Unlike English, *Tenses in the Greek Language* can represent time, but often they designate time only

when combined with other points of grammar or in contexts which specify time. However, **Greek Tenses always signify Kind of Action** (or being) which are: **Ongoing** and **Completed**. Four of the six tenses convey one kind of Action (or being) and two tenses convey both.

The **Present Tense** signifies: *Ongoing Action* (or being). This Tense doesn't specify when the Action (or being) begins or ends. Also, this Ongoing Action (or being) may be staged in a past, present or future timeframe designated by its context.

Translates: "continuously"

The **Imperfect Tense** signifies: *Ongoing Action* (or being) *which occurs in past time* relative to its context's past, present or future timeframe.

Translates: "was/were continuously"

The **Aorist Tense** signifies: *Completed Action* (or being), but in itself doesn't specify the point or segment of time in which this action (or being) becomes complete. When this Tense is combined with the Indicative Mode, it's like our English past tense and spec-

ifies the Action (or being) is Complete relative to its contextual timeframe. But, when it's combined with Imperative, Subjunctive, or Optative Mode Verbs as well as with Participles or Infinitives, the Completion of its Action (or being) is dependent on other factors.

Translates: "complete", "(be) completed", or "completely"

The **Future Tense** signifies: *Completed Action* (or being) *at a future time* relative to its context. The completed Action (or being) of this Tense will occur when that timeframe is reached and all related requirements are accomplished.

Translates: "will complete", "will be completed", or "will completely"

The **Perfect Tense** combines: *Completed and Ongoing Action* (or being). It specifies an Action (or being) is Complete, then this achievement has Ongoing Effects. This Dual Action (or being) may happen in a past, present, or future timeframe designated by its context.

Translates: "begin(s) and continue(s)", "has/have begun and continue(s)"

The **Pluperfect Tense** combines: *Completed and Ongoing Action* (or being) *which occurs in past time* relative to the past, present or future timeframe designated by its context.

Translates: "had/have begun and continued"

The Three Greek Voices:

Voice designates *Who or What Does the Action* (or *being*) of a verb, participle or infinitive.

Active Voice – signifies: *The Subject acts upon a Direct Object*.

Translates: "actively" or "vigorously"

Middle Voice – signifies: *The Subject acts upon Itself, Emphasizing* its *Purposeful Involvement* in the action (or being).

For people – "choose(s)/chose"

For thing(s) – "causes(ed)/causing/will cause" + "itself/themselves"

Passive Voice – signifies: *An Outside Agent acts upon the Subject* which in function *Makes the Subject the Direct Object*.
Translates: "be made" or "be caused"

The Four Greek Modes:

Mode determines *How Verb Action* (or *being*) *Relates to Reality*.

The **Indicative Mode** signifies or 'indicates':
Present Reality.
Translates: as a *Statement* or *Question*.

The **Imperative Mode** signifies:
Reality which Must Be Attained.
In function, it conveys *A Command* or 'imperative' which must be obeyed to reach an ordered goal.
Translates: "you're to" or "let us/them"

[Imperative Modes only occur in 2nd and 3rd person forms]. *For 1st person plural Commands*, the *Subjunctive Mode* is used.
Translates: "we should" or "let us"

The **Subjunctive Mode** signifies: *Reality which Can Be Attained*. This reality occurs only after *an Underlying Condition is fulfilled*.
['Subjunctive' literally means *The Junction Underneath*]
Translates: "might", "may", or "can"

The **Optative Mode** signifies: *A Possible Reality which May Be Attained* – often used in wishes/prayers
Translates: "may/might possibly"

Appendix II – Aorist Middle Participle / Imperative Verb Combo

The 75 Translations cited in this Appendix can be accessed at studybible.info/compare. First, type in a verse and push ***search***. Then, click on *compare (your verse) in other Bible versions* and scroll past the Interlinear Versions to English Translations.

29 of these **75 Versions** render the **Aorist Middle Participle** in Colossians 3:9 with the sense **The Old Man Still Needs to Be Put Off**, which is consistent

with my rendering. Some translate the full phrase: 'that the old man with his works be put off' (Earliest Versions – **MSTC, Tyndale** and **Matthew**). Then, eight Versions translate it 'having put off the old man' (**Living Oracles, YLT, Julia Smith, DBY, Worrell, MKJV, LITV** and **BLB**). Three translate it 'having stripped/stript off the old man' (**Diaglott** without 'off', **Rotherham** and **ACV**). And **Godbey** renders it 'having laid aside the old man'.

Conversely, **46** of these **75 Versions** render this Aorist Participle with the idea **The Old Man Has Already Been Put Off**, like the **KJV, NASV, NIV** and **ESV**. These are: **Great, Geneva, Bishops, KJV Cambridge, KJV Strongs, Mace, Whiston, Westley, Worsley, Haweis, Webster, Webster Strongs, ABU, Anderson, Noyes, ERV, ASV, ASV Strongs, JPS ASV Byz, WNT, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Riverside, Williams, BBE, ECB, AUV, Common, WEB, WEB Strongs, NHEB, AKJV, AKJV Strongs, KJC, KJ2000, UKJV, RKJNT, CKJV Strongs, CAB, WPNT, NSB, ISV, LEB, BSB, MLV,** and **VIN**.

By sheer numbers, it may seem the second group is the most accurate. However, **in six other contexts**

which contain this Aorist Middle Participle – Imperative Verb Combo, ***None of These 46 Translations or the KJV, NASV, NIV or ESV Render Any of These Similar Grammatical Combinations like they do in Colossians 3:9 with the Idea:*** **The Aorist Middle Participial Action is Already Completed**.

Instead, **These 6 Grammatical Couplets** (Eph. 4:25, 6:13, 6:14-15; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:13, 2:1-2) are translated with the idea **The Aorist Middle Participial Action Still Needs to be Completed**. Again, this conforms to the way I translated this construction in Colossians 3:9. And, expanded translations of some of these contexts can be observed in **Appendix III**.
So, **These Same 79 Versions Together Provide 470 More Examples** of how this **Greek Construction** should be rendered.

Furthermore, **All 79 Versions** render **6 more Aorist Active Participle – Imperative Verb Combos** in a manner which indicates **The Aorist Participial Action Has Not Yet Been Completed** (Matt. 21:2; 26:26; 26:27; 28:19; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:6-7). This provides **An Additional 470 Examples** supporting my premise

Colossians 3:9 is not translated correctly in the 50 Versions cited.

Only the Twentieth Century Version renders two of these similar grammatical combinations in a way which indicates an Aorist Middle Participial Action is already complete, otherwise, it translates 11 of the 13 examples cited above in the reverse manner (Eph. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:1-2). Oddly enough, this Version renders Colossians 3:9, 'Never lie to one another. Get rid of your old self and its habits', which conveys a thought consistent with my translation.

The Other 78 Translations Consistently Render the above 6 Aorist Middle Participle – Imperative Verb Combos as well as the 6 Combos containing Aorist Active Participles in three ways: First, some render it: *if the command is to be fulfilled, the subject first has to do the action of the Aorist Participle*, which is how I translated Colossians 3:9. Versions taking this approach begin their renderings with terminology like 'having', 'after having' or 'when we have'.

Second, some render these Aorist Participles with *a present tense sense* which indicates *both the participial and imperative verb actions are progressively accomplished together*. I don't agree with this method since the Greek language commonly uses present tense participles to achieve this effect, so this rendering loses the significance conveyed by an aorist participle. Third, often these Aorist Participles are rendered with *the sense of a command*, probably since they occur in combination with an imperative verb. Again, this rendering loses the sense that aorist participial action must occur first as a prerequisite for obeying the command. I encourage you to look into these contexts.

Conclusion:

There's no grammatical support for translating Colossians 3:9 with the idea: The Putting Off The Old Man Has Been Completed. For, overwhelming support of **900+ Examples** show the same Bible Versions which translate the Aorist Middle Participle in Colossians 3:9 as already completed *translate Similar Constructions Everywhere in an opposite manner*.

Therefore, this question should arise, **'When did this trend begin?'** It's interesting none of the 5 oldest Translations found on the website studybible.info/compare translate Colossians 3:9 in a way indicating its Aorist Participle's Action is already complete (**Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, MSTC,** and **Matthew**). I don't know if earlier Versions exist, but the **Great** Version of AD 1536 is the first one listed on this site which renders this verse with the sense "the old man" has already been put off. As pointed out earlier, once a Bible Version sets a **Translation-Precedent**, unfortunately, subsequent Versions often follow suit.

The next logical question is, **'What was the reason behind why some Translators chose to render Colossians 3:9 in a different manner than they render other similar Greek constructions?'** Based on the content of that verse, I can only deduce this was done because of theological bias. For, Romans 6:6 says our "old man" was "crucified" so I think many Translators *interjected this concept into their rendition* of Colossians 3:9. Thus, they abandoned objectivity based on the known linguistic meaning of what an aorist participle conveys.

This assessment may sound harsh, but the truth often is. For, no man is perfect. In fact, all of us are far from it. The reality is subjective interpretation can affect any teaching, commentary, reference material, or Translation, including my own. That's why I hold the strong conviction all Christians should embrace their responsibility and develop a healthy level of critical thinking to minimize presupposition in their own study or teaching of the Word. And I believe promoting and seeking to maintain dialog with other Body members is the best way to resolve issues like how Colossians 3:9 is translated.

One Final Issue:

Some reference books suggest, since some contexts contain an Aorist Participle occurring in text order before the Imperative Verb and in other contexts a Participle follows the Verb, this difference may affect their relational meaning. However, relationship in the Greek language is based on the structural form of words, not their physical positioning. Their placement can differ for at least three reasons: First, word order can be determined by accommodating additional

words and/or grammatical constructions used in conjunction with any action word combo. Second, the Greek language doesn't contain punctuation marks, so word positioning is one method used to show connection or separation between words, phrases, and/or contexts. Third, an author's choice of which words or phrases to write first often accentuates them as the primary focus in a context.

Appendix III – Expanded Translations of Lifestyle Passages

Romans 6:12-16

"Therefore, don't actively continuously let sin reign (βασιλευετω – **active, present-command**) in your mortal body unto the outcome to continuously obey its lusts; also, you aren't to continuously present (μηδε παριστανετε – **present-command**) your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but you're to complete presenting (παραστησατε – **aorist-command**) yourselves to God as if those living out of the dead and your members as instruments of

righteousness to God. For, sin won't complete exercising lordship over you, for you aren't existing under law but under grace. What, therefore? Should we complete the act of sinning because we don't exist under law but under grace? Don't let this reality possibly come into being! Don't you know that to whom you continuously present (παριστανετε – **present-indicative**) yourselves as slaves unto obedience, you exist as slaves to what you continuously obey, whether of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"

Note: "παριστανετε" occurs twice in this context, once each in verses 13 and 16. Although the grammatical form is identical, **Contextual Indicators** determine the first occurrence is *imperative* in mode (command) and the second is *indicative* (statement of fact).[23] Virtually all Translations render them in this manner.

Romans 12:1-2

"Therefore, I encourage you, brethren, through the mercies of God to complete presenting your bodies

as a living, holy, well-pleasing sacrifice to God, as your logical service. And you aren't to continuously choose to be made conformed (συσχηματιζεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) to this age, but you're to continuously choose to be made transformed (μεταμορφουσθε – **middle/passive, command**) in relation to the renewal of the mind unto the outcome for you to approve what the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God *is*."

Romans 13:11-14

"And this, while knowing the time, that the hour already *exists* for you to be raised out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we completed the act of believing. The night has advanced, also the day has drawn near. Therefore, we should choose to complete putting aside (αποθωμεθα – **middle, aorist-subjunctive**) the works of darkness, also we should choose to complete putting on (ενδυσωμεθα – **middle, aorist-subjunctive**) the implements of light.

As in the day, we should complete the act of walking (περιπατησωμεν – **aorist-subjunctive**) with good out-

ward form, not in relation to carousing and drunken events, not in relation to (immoral) bed and licentious activities, not in relation to strife and jealousy; but you're to choose to complete putting on (ενδυσασθε – **middle, aorist-command**) the Lord Jesus Christ and you're not to continuously choose to make (μη ποιεισθε – **middle, present-command**) a forethought associated with the flesh toward lusts."

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

"The Lord exists as the Spirit; also, where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, liberty *exists*. Also, in relation to the face which has chosen for itself to begin and continue to be made uncovered (ανακεκαλυμμενῳ – **middle/passive**), we all while choosing to be made to mirror-reflect (κατοπτριζομενοι – **middle/passive**) the glory of the Lord are continuously choosing to be made transformed (μεταμορφουμεθα – **middle/passive**) to the same image from (απο – *from the source of*) glory toward glory, just as from the Lord *who is* the Spirit."

2 Corinthians 6:14, 7:1

"You aren't to continuously choose to be made to become (μη γινεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) actively continuously yoked to unbelievers in an other-*than-appropriate* manner; for what partnership *exists* in relation to righteousness and lawlessness, or what commonality *exists* in relation to light toward darkness?" (6:14).

"Therefore, Beloved, while having these promises, we should actively complete cleansing (καθαρισωμεν – **active, aorist-subjunctive**) ourselves from every defilement of the flesh and spirit, while fully perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (7:1).

Ephesians 4:20-27

"Also, you didn't learn about Christ in this way if indeed you heard about Him and were taught in Him – according as truth exists in Jesus – for you to choose to complete putting aside (αποθεσθαι – **middle, aorist-infinitive**) the old man which, according to the former manner of life, is continuously choosing for

itself to be made corrupt (φθειρομενον – **middle/passive**) according to the lusts associated with deception, also *for you* to continuously choose to be made new again (ανανεουσθαι – **middle/passive, present-infinitive**) in relation to the Spirit (or "spirit", cf. Rom. 8:10 + 16) associated with your mind and to choose to complete putting on (ενδυσασθαι – **middle, aorist-infinitive**) the new man, which has been created according to God in righteousness and holiness associated with the truth."

"Wherefore, after having chosen to complete putting aside (αποθεμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**) the lie, each one of you are to actively continuously speak (λαλειτε – **active, command**) truth with his neighbor, because we exist as members of one another. You're to continuously choose to be made wrathful (οργιζεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) and you're not to actively continuously sin (μη αμαρτανετε – **active, command**); don't continuously let the sun set upon your excessive wrath, also you aren't to actively continuously give (μηδε διδοτε – **active, command**) a place to the Devil."

Ephesians 6:10-20

"Finally, you're to continuously choose to be made empowered (ενδυναμουσθε – **middle/passive, command**) in the Lord and in the strength of His might. You're to choose to complete putting on (ενδυσασθε – **middle, aorist-command**) the full armor of God toward the outcome for you to continuously choose to be able (δυνασθαι – **middle, present-infinitive**) to stand against the methods of the Devil; because the warfare in relation to us doesn't exist against blood and flesh but against rulers, against authorities, against world powers associated with this darkness, against spiritual things of wickedness in the heavens. Because of this, you're to actively complete taking up (αναλαβετε – **active, aorist-command**) the full armor of God in order that you may be made able to stand against in the evil day, and after having chosen to complete producing (κατεργασαμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**; same root word as in Phil. 2:12) all things, to stand."

"Therefore, you're to actively completely stand (στητε – **active, aorist-command**) after having chosen to

complete girding around (περιζωσαμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**) your loin in truth and after having chosen to complete putting on (ενδυσαμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**) the breastplate of righteousness and after having chosen to complete binding under (υποδησαμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**) the feet in preparation associated with the gospel of peace; in all things after having actively completed taking up (αναλαβοντες – **active, aorist-participle**) the shield of faith in which you'll choose to be completely able (δυνησεσθε – **middle, future-indicative**) to extinguish all the fiery darts associated with the Devil; and you're to choose to complete receiving (δεξασθε – **middle, aorist-command**) the helmet associated with salvation and the sword of the Spirit which exists as the word of God; while continuously choosing to be made to pray (προσευχομενοι – **middle/passive**) through every prayer and petition in every time in the Spirit . . . and in behalf of me (Paul) in order that a message might be given to me . . . to boldly make known the mystery of the gospel . . . in order that I may choose to complete being bold (παρρησιασωμαι – **middle, aorist-subjunctive**) in it as it's necessary for me to speak."

First Thessalonians 5:5-9

"For, you all exist as sons of light and sons of day. We don't exist in association with the night, also not the darkness. Consequently therefore, we shouldn't sleep as the rest, but we should continuously watch and be sober. For, the ones continuously sleeping, they sleep in association with the night and the ones continuously choosing to be made drunk (μεθυσκομενοι – **middle/passive**) they get drunk in association with the night. Also, while existing in association with the day, we should continuously be sober after having chosen to complete putting on (ενδυσαμενοι – **middle, aorist-participle**) the breastplate associated with faith and love and the hope-helmet associated with salvation, because God hasn't placed us in the direction of wrath but in the direction of the possession of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hebrews 13:1-3, 17

"Let brotherly love continuously remain (**active, command**). You aren't to continuously choose to be made to forget (μη επιλανθανεσθε – **middle/passive, com-**

mand) hospitality for, through this, certain ones were unaware after having entertained angels. You're to continuously choose to be made to remember (μιμνῃσκεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) prisoners who are continuously choosing to be made to suffer (κακουχουμενων – **middle/passive**) and as yourselves existing in body have chosen to begin and continue to be made bound with (συνδεδεμενοι – **middle/passive**) *them* . . . You're to continuously choose to be caused to be persuaded (πειθεσθε – **middle/passive, command**) in relation to those associated with you who're continuously choosing to be made to lead (ηγουμενοις – **middle/passive**); and you're to actively continuously yield (υπεικετε – active, command), for they themselves are continuously watching in behalf of your lives as those who'll give an account, in order that they might continuously do this with joy and not while groaning, for this is unprofitable in relation to you."

First Peter 2:1-2, 13, 18; 3:1, 7

"Therefore, after having chosen to complete setting aside (αποθεμενοι – **middle, aorist**) every evil and

each deceitful thing and hypocrisies and envying and all slanders, as now-born babes, you actively complete the act of earnestly desiring (επιποθησατε – **active, aorist-command**) the logical, guileless milk in order that in it you may be caused to increase toward salvation" (2:1-2).

"You're to be made completely subordinate (υποταγητε – **passive, aorist-command**) to every man-made creation because of the Lord, whether in relation to a king as being supreme" (2:13).

"Household servants, while continuously choosing to be made subordinate (υποτασσομενοι – **middle/passive**) in relation to the masters in the midst of every fearful thing, not only to the good and equitable ones, but also to the crooked ones" (2:18).

"Likewise, wives, while continuously choosing to be made subordinate (υποτασσομεναι – **middle/passive**) to their own husbands in order that even if certain ones are disobeying the message, through the lifestyle of the wives, without a word, they will be

completely gained" (κερδηθησονται – **passive, future-indicative**, 3:1).

"Likewise, husbands, while actively continuously living according to knowledge with the wife as a weaker vessel, actively continuously assigning *them* value as also fellow heirs associated with the grace of life toward the outcome for your prayers not to continuously cause themselves to be made hindered" (εγκοπτεσθαι – **middle/passive**, 3:7).

Appendix IV – A Christian's Relation to the Law

In Romans 6:6, the expressed crucifixion of our "old man" and associated "deactivation" of the "body of sin" are two aspects of *the same dually altered experience* Christians have undergone in relation to the Law of Moses. For, passages exist which state we were "crucified" (συνεσταυρωμαι) to the Law as well as "deactivated" (κατηργηθημεν) from it, yet it's clear we can still choose to be under the Law's condemning influence (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:19-20; 6:14;

Eph. 2:15). Similarly, when we decide not to "walk" by the Spirit's power, we downgrade ourselves to be controlled by our "old man" and will suffer from sin-induced codependency.

TRADITION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spirit Aided Activities

This article explores how the Holy Spirit works in individual growth, evangelism, and edification of the Church. In addition, it contemplates which activities of the Spirit during the Acts period still function.

Chuck Schiedler

Spirit Aided Activities

At age 16, I was an emotional wreck drifting with no direction and questioning the meaning of life. I struggled to stay afloat in this baffling state when God threw me a lifeline and saved me. Since then, my primary questions have been: **'What does God want me to think?'** and **'How does He want me to act?'** I believe these two queries are fundamental to the Christian pursuit, for we need godly motives, attitudes, and deeds to properly serve the Lord.

Consequently, it's vital for every child of God to understand what Scripture teaches about behaviors facilitated by the Holy Spirit. At the onset, it's important to pinpoint the *divine intentions* needed to navigate our sin-tainted existence. Also, we must develop *godly attitudes* that can dominate the mindset we're instructed to have. Lastly, it's essential to become

familiar with the *parameter of actions* worthy of our calling with a view to perform them. In this article, I hope to accomplish these objectives by identifying the types of Spirit-directed activity found in the Church Epistles.[1]

These Scriptures are central since each word is "God-breathed" and written directly to Body members so we "might be equipped, fully equipped toward every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Earlier in this same Letter, Paul specifies the exact revelation God wants us to implement when he orders Timothy to "**hold what you heard from me as a pattern** (υποτυπωσιν, or "type") **of sound words** in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13 – emphasis mine, cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:1-10; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).

In addition, three different times he labels this message "the deposit" (παραθηκην) which Timothy is to "guard" and "commit to (παραθου, or "deposit with") faithful men" so they'll be qualified "to also teach others" (1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 1:12-14; 2:1-3).

Around the time Second Timothy was written, Peter affirmed this same principle, "as all things toward life and godliness *exist* for us . . . through the full knowledge of the one having called us to His own glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3). Only Peter and Paul use the term "full knowledge" (επιγνωσεως) in reference to *a body of revelation currently able to generate spiritual growth*. Furthermore, several times Paul equates this noun with "mystery" truth he received from God – the now revealed "administration" (οικονομιαν) which *explains all aspects of Church management, belief and practice* (Eph. 1:9 &17; 3:2-9 & 4:13; Col. 1:9-10 & 1:24 – 2:3; 3:10, cf. Phil. 1:9; Tit. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:2-3, 8).

Summarizing, Christians possess everything needed to carry out our spiritual walk. To progress, we're required to learn the contents of this divine record, seek to adhere to each part of it, and be careful not to go beyond or fall short of its scope (Acts 20:20, 27; 1 Cor. 4:6). When we realize this revelation "fully" equips us "toward every good work", provides "all things" necessary "toward life and godliness", and serves as our "pattern of sound words", we should

be confident that we can isolate all pertinent beliefs and practices God wants us to put into effect. Essentially, **The Church Epistles Present a Clear-Cut Parameter for All Conduct the Spirit Empowers**.[1]

Next, it's important to grasp the principle: **If non-Christians can perform an act, *that deed should never be classified as 'spiritual'***, for it's done within the confines of human flesh since they lack the indwelling Spirit. Regrettably, I sometimes hear believers assert actions done by the Lost can be Spirit-driven. Although we participate in many similar events as unbelievers, the primary factor which determines whether or not a deed is spiritual is the underlying purpose for which it's done. Because every effort of mankind is naturally and unequivocally controlled by our sin nature inherited from Adam, **Godly Activity is Only Possible for The Saved** since we can access power from the Spirit (Rom. 8:13-14; Gal. 5:16-18).

Therefore, my goal is to define explicit Spirit-aided behaviors we're to adopt and apply. The initial section focuses on the overall nature of our spiritual journey. The next identifies character traits God wants us to

develop for our testimony to the world. A third portion touches on the "new man" makeover we need for life and ministry among believers. The fourth evaluates whether some Spirit-empowered activities seen during the Acts period are still in effect, namely those occurring between Israel's rejection of their Christ until "mystery" truth was fully revealed. And as conclusions are reached about the Spirit's role, these deductions will be compared with present-day viewpoints.

So, I invite you to hop aboard this expository roller coaster and ride the rails of relevant Scripture that divulge what a Spirit-led "walk" entails (Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). For, each believer needs to figure out what God wants us to do if we're to develop the capacity to detect and avert divergent philosophies as well as thrive toward robust spiritual health.

Section 1: Our Christian Conflict

In my early 20's when I thought I knew more than most adults, fortunately I had a wise mentor. I distinctly remember visiting Ruel Glover on three or

four occasions when he brought up a certain passage. His discernment led him to realize I wouldn't receive what he wished to convey if he lectured me so, instead, he shared his own reflections about what he was learning from these verses. After arriving home, each time I revisited the passage and tried to grasp why he was so enamored by it. And each time I garnered a bit more of what this portion taught. However, little did I know how much *the truths embedded in this Scripture present the core of how spiritual growth takes place* nor how its guidance would **Transform my Outlook of Our Purpose in The Christian Life**.

Second Corinthians 10:1-6

As Paul approached the Corinthians, he knew a contingent of detractors existed among them who didn't accept his entire message. So, the Spirit inspired him to begin chapter 10 in the following manner: "Also, I Paul myself encourage you through the gentleness and fairness of Christ, who indeed is humble among you in presence, but when absent I am bold with you; also I pray while being present not to be bold with the confidence with which I'm considered to be

daring by certain ones who consider us as walking according to the flesh" (vv. 1-2).

With these critics in mind, Paul leads off by stating his name with two personal pronouns to draw attention to his person, "I Paul myself" (αυτος . . . εγω Παυλος). This construction is unique and only similar to a couple others in his thirteen Epistles. Ephesians 3:1 addresses gentile believers in reference to how the game-changing theology of "mystery" revelation justifies their entrance into the Body, "For this reason, I Paul the prisoner (εγω Παυλος ο δεσμιος) of Christ Jesus . . ."

The second occurs in an impassioned appeal to his friend, Philemon, while encouraging him to give up ownership of his slave, Onesimus, so he could minister with Paul: "Rather, on account of love I encourage, while being such a one (τοιουτος) as Paul (Παυλος) an elder (πρεσβυτης), and also now a prisoner (δεσμιος) of Christ Jesus" (v. 9). Just like these two contexts, the Spirit prompted him to use this type of rare self-aggrandizing grammar *for the purpose of adding gravity* to what he's about to share.

Yet, Paul immediately tempers this introduction by inserting two attributes associated with (genitive case) our Lord to exemplify the kind of bond he wanted to form with them. The first is "gentleness" (πραυτητος) which carries the idea of *a soothing calmness*. Then, "fairness" (επιεικειας) emphasizes his wish for *equity* in their relationship. These traits combined with his bold opening are generally considered incompatible, but their appearance together shows how Christians can communicate with a *high level of confidence* when this approach is balanced with *Spirit-empowered restraint* (Gal. 5:22-23).

For, Paul knew some at Corinth were saying he had acted "humble" (ταπεινος), or *lowly* like a wimp, when he was among them. At the same time, he's charged with being "daring" and "bold" after leaving town since he no longer had to face them. Ultimately, he's being framed as one who is *continuously* (present tense) "walking according to the flesh" which amounts to *behaving in a devious manner*. Really, they're saying Paul's conduct isn't controlled by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18).

Now he begins to answer these allegations, "For, while walking in the flesh, we aren't choosing to be caused to wage war according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:3). Instead of solely defending himself, the Spirit had Paul add co-workers to the conversation. First, he uses the noun "flesh" (σαρκι) to refer to their *flesh and blood bodies*. Then, he repeats this noun with a preposition to deny they're "walking" (περι-πατουντας) or *behaving* "according to" (κατα) or *in keeping with* their "flesh" (σαρκα), that is, waging warfare *in a fleshly* or *sinful manner* (Rom. 7:5; 8:5-8; Gal. 5:13, 17, 19).

On the contrary, his contingent is *continuously* (present tense) *making concerted choices* (middle voice) "to be caused" (passive), *by accessing power from the Spirit*, to "wage war" (στρατευομεθα) or *employ a fighting strategy*.[2] And this, as they grapple with their own "old man" plus assist others to do likewise (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5, 9).

Next, the conjunction "for" (γαρ) occurs to explain how they handled themselves while living among the Corinthians and after departing. "For the implements

of our warfare aren't fleshly but powerful in relation to God toward the destruction of strongholds, while continuously destroying reasonings and every high thing which rises up against the knowledge of God, and while continuously taking captive every thought in the direction of obedience associated with Christ, and while continuously holding in a prepared state to avenge every disobedient act, whenever your obedience might be fulfilled" (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

The English word 'strategy' is derived from the term "warfare" (στρατειας), and its stem also appears in the verb "to wage war" (στρατευομεθα – v. 3, cf. 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3). In this *combat*, Paul and his fellow ministers used "implements" (οπλα) or *instruments* to conduct their agenda, the nature of which is disclosed in the next few verses. In this context, most Translations render "οπλα" as **'weapons'** but translate it **'armor'** elsewhere in reference to the Christian battle (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:11-13 – πας + οπλια).

However, in Romans 6:13, it's generally translated "instruments" (οπλα) to describe the *spiritual* "implements" used to put on "righteousness" as well as

fleshly "instruments" used for "unrighteousness" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:7). In this passage, I chose to highlight this noun's basic meaning to direct attention away from swords and shields to **The Actual Tools Used for Spiritual Conflict**.

Two adjectives which follow describe how Paul and his companions used these tools. He first claims their methods weren't "fleshly" (σαρκικα), or *represent behavior in the flesh*, since this is exactly how his detractors wanted others to perceive them (2 Cor. 10:4). In contrast, he describes the "instruments" they use for battle as "powerful" (δυνατα), *strong* or *potent* "in relation to God".

This term is central to his defense because it equates the power behind their ministry with *God's capacity*, which is *expressed by enablement from the Spirit* (Rom. 9:22; 11:23; 12:18; 15:1; 2 Cor. 12:10; 2 Tim. 1:12; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 11:19). Also, its noun form "δυναμις" commonly conveys *the Holy Spirit's power which believers can draw upon* (Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:4; Eph. 1:19; 3:16, 20; 1 Thess. 1:5). So, in no uncertain terms, Paul asserts the correct evaluation

of their conduct; **They're Governed by Divine Guidance**, not their sin-prone "flesh".

After declaring their actions were godly, Paul clarifies this war is targeted "toward the destruction of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). The preposition "toward" (προς) means *to proceed in the direction of* the first end goal of our conflict which is "destruction" (καθαιρεσιν). This noun is composed of the preposition "κατα", signifying *a downward motion*, and the noun "αιρεσις", which means *a taking* or *seizing* and comes across as our word 'heresy'. It's used for 'sects' of Judaism like the Pharisees or Sadducees in addition to the new 'sect' linked with Paul (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 26:5; 28:22).

This term labels any system of belief considered contrary to a group's normally accepted teachings and can be defined as *the practice of holding to and promoting errant doctrine* (1 Cor 11:19; 2 Pet. 2:1, cf. Titus 3:10). The text around these references indicates heresies in Corinth included allowing immorality or disunifying actions to persist, and in the Book of Titus the adjective "heretical" refers to someone trying to

get Christians back under Jewish tenets of the Law (Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11).

Returning to the compound noun "destruction" (καθαιρεσιν), it means a *taking down* or *ruin*. And the other two contexts where this term is used emphasize Paul's purpose wasn't to *tear down the Corinthians* but rather *build them up* through "edification" (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). Still, these three usages imply any positive renewal requires simultaneous *demolition of ungodly* "strongholds" (οχυρωματων) or *fortresses* since these confine believers to psychological and moral detention, plus obstruct real knowledge and growth available through the gospel.

Consequently, **True Spiritual Progress Only Comes about in Combination with Being Liberated from Heretical Thought**. This concept parallels what Paul teaches elsewhere; putting on qualities of the "new man" happens in conjunction with putting off traits of the "old man" (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10).

At this point, three participial phrases describe the techniques Paul used to tear down deviant fortifi-

cations so godliness could come about. The first is, "while continuously destroying (καθαιρουντες) reasonings and every high thing which rises up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:4-5). This participle is built with the same root words as its noun "destruction" (καθαιρεσιν). So, together these terms doubly emphasize the need to "continuously" (present tense) and *vigorously* (active voice) *take down* or *free believers from heretical ideas*.

This participle along with two others ("taking captive" – αιχμαλωτιζοντες and "holding" – εχοντες, vv. 5-6) are nominative plural in form which stipulate *Paul and his associates are their common subject*. This indicates they weren't just focusing on the Corinthians' spiritual battle, but they were paying close attention to their own minds and hearts as well.

In fact, one's ability to effectively minister to others as a model of Christian behavior first requires extensive experience in being transformed from the control of sin. The proof Paul's group had done this over many years is observed in their capacity to care for these brethren (2 Cor. 1:3-7, 12; 2:17; 4:1-2, 7-15). This

testimony provides the best counter to the accusation they were "walking according to the flesh".

Now to the crux of the matter, Paul states the first obstacle hindering Christians, which also needs *constant* (present tense) annihilation, is "reasonings" (λογισμους) or *rationale* (2 Cor. 10:4). This noun is from its familiar root "λογος", which is generally translated "word" though it basically conveys the idea of *a message*. The English words 'logistics' and 'logic' are derived from it. And the *Logic* or *thought processes* behind every secular philosophy include tenets fundamentally opposed to the gospel Paul preached (2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1; 11:4, 12-15; 12:19-21).

Therefore, whether a point of view contains precepts from the Law of Moses which no longer apply or concepts from human-sourced thinking, God wants every unorthodox belief lining up "against" His "knowledge" to be severed from afflicting His children. For, all of us need to be reorientated and reprogrammed by divine truth to escape heresy's alliance with sin and emerge with new conduct (Rom. 6:11-14; 12:1-2, 16-21; 14:1, 13, 22-23).

In the phrase, "continuously destroying . . . every high thing (υψωμα) which rises up against the knowledge of God", this noun speaks of *elevation*, and its religious relevance implies the sense of *exaltation* (2 Cor. 10:5; Rom. 8:39, its other occurrence). This term's effect is expressed by the phrase "which rises up" (επαιρομενον) as these *high ideas* stand "against" (κατα) or *in opposition to* "the knowledge of God".

This participle combines the preposition "επι", meaning *upon*, and the verb "αιροω", *to take* or *seize*, which contains the same root as the noun "αιρεσις" (heresy) just covered. Also, its perfect tense signifies *after acts of uprise start, they maintain an ongoing effect*. Together, these points of grammar indicate *after high things gain a foothold, they continue to enforce their negative impact* of opposing God's revelation.

This use of "υψωμα" is consistent with the evil intent implied by "high places" in the O.T. which Jews were to stay away from since religious practices *exalting false gods* occurred at those locations (Lev. 26:30; Deut. 33:29; 1 Kings 3:2-3; 2 Kings 17:11; Isa. 16:12; Micah 1:3). In contrast, other passages show *God*

wanted His people to encounter exaltation in their own "high places" to experience divine victory (Deut. 32:13; Psalm 18:33; Hab. 3:19). This same principle is portrayed in the N.T. by the verb "υψοω" which states Jesus and believers are or should be "exalted" (Acts 2:33; 5:31; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Pet. 5:6; and Phil. 2:9 adds "υπερ").

The second participial phrase describing how we can destroy "strongholds" is, "while continuously taking captive every thought in the direction of obedience associated with Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Now that Paul has established the thought base believers should adhere to, he addresses how our dual-natured mind ought to react when exposed to clashing data. The next participle directing how we're to face this conflict is "continuously taking captive" (αιχμαλωτιζοντες) or *imprisoning* our "every thought" (Luke 21:24; Rom. 7:23; 2 Tim. 3:6).

The noun "thought" (νοημα) refers to *a concept generated in the mind*. Its plural form describes "schemes" or *attitudes* promoted by Satan to deceive our "old man" as well as blind the "thought process-

es" (νοηματα) of unbelievers from seeing their need to trust in Christ (2 Cor. 2:11; 4:4; 11:3). However, when we maintain a correct truth base and utilize the Spirit, we can pray within our "new man" and "the peace of God which exceeds every mind (νουν) will guard your hearts and your thoughts (νοηματα) in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 4:22-24; Phil 4:6-9; Col. 3:9-10).

Since the seeds of sin germinate in our mind, believers need to be "continuously (present tense) taking captive" or *detaining* "every" (παν) *single* "thought in the direction of obedience" (υπακοην – 2 Cor. 10:5). This noun is composed of the preposition "υπο", meaning *under*, and the noun "ακοη" from which we derive the word 'acoustic'. Combined they portray the idea of *yielding under what is heard*, thus they signify *conformity* or *compliance*.

In every endeavor, Christians should seek "obedience associated with Christ" (Χριστου – genitive case) since this path aligns with God's objective for us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:20-21). Furthermore, "υπακοην" and its verb form occur elsewhere to describe how we acquire

"righteousness" and "holiness" while implementing our Lord's qualities (Rom. 6:12, 16; Col. 3:20, 22; 1 Pet 1:14).

The third participial phrase explaining how Christians can destroy "strongholds" is designed to help avoid lackadaisicalness since this mindset inevitably causes lethargy. To do this, we need to be proactive "while continuously holding (εχοντες) in a prepared state to avenge every disobedient act" (2 Cor 10:6). This participle means *to have* or *possess*. It speaks of a "holding" *pattern we* must maintain and is further defined by the adverbial phrase "in a prepared state" (εν ετοιμῳ). Jointly, these terms mean we're to *constantly* (present tense) *be ready to act*.

Then, with an infinitive, Paul declares what the *objective* of our vigilance is to be, "to avenge (εκδικησαι) every disobedient act" (2 Cor 10:6). This term is built from the preposition "εκ", which means *out*, and the verb "δικαιοω", meaning *to render justice*. Literally, it depicts *giving out justice* or *sentencing*, a punishment imposed at the end of criminal trials. This word teaches another key lesson, for other contexts

containing its forms **Discourage Believers from Avenging Evil Acts Performed Against Us**. The reason given for why we shouldn't take revenge for spiteful actions of fellow believers or the Lost is *God Reserves The Right to Avenge Every One of Them Himself* (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

Accordingly, we're to deal with "every" degenerate "thought" which enters our mind by *condemning it*, then *locking it away* so it can't evolve into a "disobedient act". Sin wields only one product – *death* and *destruction* (Rom. 6:12, 23; 1 Cor. 8:11-13; Gal. 6:7-8). So, if we fail to tap into the Spirit's power to stop it, sin will wreak havoc and consume us. On the one hand, we should keep in mind we don't have permission to personally retaliate against others for their sins against us (Rom. 12:14, 17-21; 1 Thess. 5:15). However, in **The Divinely Sanctioned Warfare** described here, it's each believer's duty to utilize the "instruments" provided to eliminate our own temptations for the purpose of growing spiritually and becoming an example (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Phil. 3:10-16).

The noun translated "disobedient act" (παρακοην) is comprised of the preposition "παρα", meaning *beside*, and the noun "ακοη", part of the term "obedience" just covered. So, it conveys *going beside what is heard*, thus *defiance* or *rebellion* against the "knowledge of God", and it's the opposite of "υπακοην" which depicts *compliance* (2 Cor. 10:5-6). Therefore, "every" (πασαν) rebellious act a Body member performs is the direct result of not taking revenge on "every" evil "thought" (παν νοημα) which enters our mind.

This mode of defiance sets in motion the truism of Galatians 6:7, "whatever a man might sow, this he will also reap". Thus, whether we currently reap ungodly character, which never satisfies and grieves the Lord, or if we watch our works burn and suffer loss at the Judgement Seat, either represents a failure to do the job God saved us for (1 Cor. 3:12-18; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 12:1-2).

At this point, Paul closes with a positive note by using a phrase which reaffirms what God wants from His children, "whenever your obedience might be

fulfilled" (2 Cor. 10:6). The conjunction "whenever" (οταν) is made up of "οτε", meaning *when in relation to time*, and the particle "αν", which *adds an indefinite sense*. This term is blended with the subjunctive verb "might be fulfilled" (πληρωθῃ) which also portrays *conditionality*. Both aspects of grammar emphasize if we're to advance toward the life goal of perfection, **Our Maturation is Conditioned Upon Daily Choices of "obedience"** (Phil. 3:12-17).

A more detailed meaning for "πληρωθῃ" includes the idea of *completion*, and its passive voice alludes to *outside help from the Spirit* which enables a believer to be filled with "obedience" (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 3:19; 5:18; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:9). Then, the term "obedience" (υπακοην) appears a second time in the text **highlighting it as the primary mechanism** which fuels our Christ-like walk (2 Cor. 10:5-6; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28; 4:12).

Now, for the first time in Second Corinthians 10:3-6, Paul employs the pronoun "your" (υμων) to pinpoint the Corinthians' obedience. Otherwise, these four verses *consistently include he and his associates' need*

to obey (1 Cor. 9:19-27). Every Bible teacher should take heed to the pattern seen here and in other passages. Rather than lecturing with phraseology like, **'You need to think such and such a way'** or **'You need to do this'**; *Lessons about Obedience Should be Directed to All The Saints, Because We All Have a Continual Need to Grow*! Therefore, every exhortation should be prefaced by **'We . . .'** since *All of Us* possess a high dose of the "old man"; *All of Us* have a daily need to "abound more" (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:1).

Summarizing this portion – **All Body Members Battle with Sin-Burdened "flesh" But can Have Success by Utilizing "powerful" Counter Measures from the Indwelling Spirit**. Young and advanced alike are soldiers drafted into this "warfare" in which the primary focus is personal transformation. Participation is designed to free us from all perverted philosophy and "high"-mindedness opposed to the "knowledge" of God.

To triumph, we must consciously and actively neutralize sinful "thoughts" that would otherwise result in disobedience. On the positive side, we're

to cultivate godly thoughts toward "obedience" which is a necessary step in the goal of being conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 2 Tim. 2:1-4; 4:7; Heb. 12:1-2).

This context is chocked full of practices promoting sanctification. And the most elementary principle I glean is **An Individual's Need to Deal with our Own Sin Amid the Conflict with Evil Forces**. By taking this course, we can mature to the point of having tangible value to offer others. I believe these truths form the bottom rung on the procedural ladder for how we acquire holiness. Thus, ***Ground Zero in Our Plan of Attack* Should be To Expel Sinful Thoughts Entering Our Mind so We Can Obey Christ**. No wonder my mentor tactfully sought to direct my attention to these verses.

Additional Features of Our Spiritual 'War'

Let's touch on a few more Scriptures which throw light on *Our Spiritual Struggle*. The longest and best-known section describing this conflict is found in the Book of Ephesians. However, comments on it and

other pertinent portions will target additional perspectives which weren't addressed in the passage just covered.

Ephesians 6:10-20

"Finally, you're to choose to be empowered in the Lord and in the strength of His might. You're to choose to complete putting on the full armor of God toward the outcome for you to choose to be made able to stand against the methods of the Devil; because our struggle isn't against flesh and blood but against rulers, against authorities, against world powers associated with this darkness, against spiritual things of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

Both the verb "choose to be empowered" (ενδυναμουσθε) and infinitive "choose to be made able" (δυνασθαι) occur in dual voice forms which emphasize *the believer's responsibility to submit to* or "choose" (middle) *outside power* (passive) *from the Holy Spirit* to perform these feats.[2] These two action words express how we can put on "the full armor

(πανοπλιαν) of God" to be able to "stand against the methods of the Devil". This noun consists of the adjective "πας", meaning *all* or *the whole*, affixed to the noun "οπλα", previously discussed, which means *implements* or *instruments*. In the following verses, Paul itemizes *the full contingent of spiritual tools* God has provided for our impending fight.

Next, this conflict is said to be "against" (προς) or *directed toward* the "methods (μεθοδειας) of the Devil" and his minions – heavenly "powers associated with this darkness" who test us with "spiritual things of wickedness" (Eph. 6:11-12). This noun is built from the preposition "μετα", which portrays the idea of *going across*, and "οδος" meaning *a road* or *way*. It transliterates into our word 'method' and colorfully conveys how *the Devil employs any technique* to lead his victims *across a road* to the unwanted destination of "deception". This term's other occurrence indicates Satan uses *secular teaching* or *instruction to divert believers from the truth* (Eph. 4:14, cf. 2 Cor. 10:4-5; 11:14).

It's important to bear in mind the basic makeup of most philosophies which breed "deception" include a high amount of truth. That's why *this technique is so effective in misleading people* because it only takes some error, no matter how little, to twist biblical truth into humanistic thinking. Furthermore, the false add-ons are then labeled and promoted as fact. But, in reality, *these counterfeit additions pervert any truth they're combined with* and make the overall message fraud. The Devil uses this **Tricky Method** because it dupes the immature who naturally think they're wise (Rom. 16:17-20; Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Before discussing specific "implements" Christians can use to fend off evil forces, it's vital to grasp what the phrase "flesh and blood" implies, for our "struggle" (παλη) or *wrestling* isn't against entities described as such (Eph. 6:12). Do you realize Satan and his cronies don't occupy bodies, plus they don't reside on earth? This is Paul's point. We need to realize our Battle to stop the thoughts which enter our mind from germinating into "disobedience" shouldn't be directed toward those who possess flesh and blood bodies (cf. Gal. 1:16; Heb. 2:14).

Because **Our Spiritual War Isn't Against People**, that is, family members, neighbors, acquaintances, school officials, governing authorities, media members, or politicians. For, these people don't have supernatural ability to tempt or persuade us to disobey like the above-mentioned celestial forces do. **Grasping this Principal helps Christians Maintain a Proper Perspective in Our Real Battle**.

Sadly, *many are unaware of who these "powers"* – **OUR TRUE ENEMIES** – *are and get caught up fighting in the wrong arena*. The problem with opposing moral issues of fellow humans is this tactic isn't included in our mandate, so *this sort of combat can only be flesh-based*. To be empowered by the Spirit, we need to make sure we're following God-given orders. And as I read the Church Epistles, commands to alter lifestyle are exclusively directed to those who possess the indwelling Spirit, not the unconverted.[1]

In reference to this topic, some cite Colossians 2:13-15 to justify the idea our adversaries are earthly by interpreting it to teach Christ's crucifixion incapacitated wicked spiritual powers from having any influ-

ence over believers. It reads, "He made you alive with Him (Christ) . . . after having blotted out the contrary handwriting in decrees which was opposed to us . . . after having put away rulers and authorities whom He displayed openly, after having triumphed over them in Him" (εν αυτῳ – or "in it", referring to *the cross*).

However, this passage teaches when Jesus "triumphed over them", these evil "rulers and authorities", just like our "old man", were "put away" (απεκδυσαμενοι – Col. 3:9) in the sense they no longer have absolute control over us like before we were saved (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Tit. 3:3). Now, with superior ability from the Spirit, we can resist any enticement they may throw our way (Rom. 13:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:19-22; 3:10; 4:27; 6:16; 1 Pet. 3:22).

For, just like the "handwriting" of the Law was made inactive but still negatively affects believers who try to keep it, Jesus' work on the cross "triumphed over" evil rulers and "displayed" them "openly" (εδειγματισεν εν παρρησιᾳ – Col. 2:15, cf. Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:19-20; 6:14; Eph. 2:15). Note, it doesn't say they

were eliminated, but *He exposed them for what they are*. Therefore, these entities no longer have free reign to hold us hostage to sin since the Spirit can enlighten us to spot temptation and provide power to overcome it. And because sin, the flesh, and evil heavenly forces collectively seek control of our "old man", **The Holy Spirit is Truly Our Saving Grace** if we choose to walk in Him (Rom. 8:9-39; 12:1-2, 21; 1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 3:16, 20;1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 2:16; 3:8).

This is why Paul, Peter and John all warn to be leery of Satan and his invisible contingent because *They are Our Real Arch Enemies.* So, again, **The True Battle Ground is Located Inside Each Believer's Mind** (Rom. 12:2; 13:14; 2 Cor. 10:6; Eph 4:22-24).

When we grasp *Our Mind is The Major Field on Which Spiritual Development Occurs*, this vantage point clears up why we must "avenge" our own wicked thoughts and not take revenge against evil done to us (2 Cor. 10:4-6). For, God wants us to undergo beneficial suffering from both believers and unbelievers, forgive those who wrong us, love our enemies, and be subject to earthly leaders (Rom. 8:18-24; 12:14

– 13:10; 1 Cor. 4:12-13; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 1:27-30; 2 Thess. 1:4-9; 2:10; 1 Pet. 4:1-5). **Gains from Enduring Affliction Form a Large Part of The Blueprint to Advance in "obedience", Triumph Spiritually, and Showcase Jesus' Attributes to The World** (Rom. 12:21; 1 Cor. 15:54-58; 2 Cor. 10:5-6; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; 1 John 4:4).

After identifying the nature of our actual opponents, Paul itemizes specific tools needed to succeed. These instruments are "truth", "righteousness", "the gospel of peace", "faith", "salvation", "the Spirit" which energizes "the Word of God", and "prayer" (Eph. 6:14-18). Many commentators end the list of armor with verse 17, but no point of grammar exists to indicate a break, so I believe "prayer" was intended to be another valuable tool (v. 18).

One final observation about these implements. All are tied to *initial salvation*, which is complete, yet we become more stable by better grasping what happened at our rebirth. Plus, to solidify our testimony, *we must continue to incorporate these essentials*.

Before moving on, it's noteworthy Paul implores Body members to activate this tool of "prayer" in reference to his own ministry since their petitions could help augment his speech with greater "boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19-20). The reason he desires prayer-assistance is because **This Revelation Contains The Marching Orders Our Recruiter Made Known to Successfully Execute the Battle Plan** just set forth (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:2-10; Col. 1:25-29; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 2:1-4).

Dealing with Blight-Causing Sin

This heading is inspired by Hebrews 12:1, "And indeed, therefore, while having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, after having set aside every weight and sin which easily persists, through endurance let us run our continuous prevailing agony" (αγωνα). Our word "agony" is derived from this noun which is regularly used to describe *the fight*, *struggle* or *conflict* involved with obeying the tenets of and sharing the gospel Paul received (Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7 – its other four occurrences). Again, this verse indicates **Our Primary Enemy Lurks**

Inside of Us, for we're exhorted to first "set aside every weight and sin which easily persists" within our being.

This passage corresponds with how *The Christian Fight* is described elsewhere since we're instructed to take "captive every thought" unto "obedience" to "Christ" and to renew our "mind" (Rom. 12:2, 21; 13:14; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Cor. 10:6). In short, **Our "old man" Must Go Through the Process of Dying**. This doesn't happen naturally but is accomplished "through endurance" (υπομονης – Heb. 12:1).

This noun is built from the preposition "υπο", meaning *under*, affixed to the noun "μονη", which signifies a *remaining* or *abiding*. The combined term is often translated **'perseverance'** or **'patience'**. In some contexts, it clearly portrays the idea of *remaining under through adversity*. And since this concept can be applied to every place it occurs, this is its basic meaning (Rom. 5:3-4; 8:25; 2 Cor. 6:4; Heb. 10:36; James 5:11; Rev. 14:12). Therefore, **The Practice of Dying to Sin Will Always Involve Discomfort and Hardship**.

Romans 6:11 confirms this need by saying, "you're to constantly choose to be made to consider yourselves dead ones (νεκρους) indeed in relation to sin (αμαρτια), also living (ζωντες) in relation to God in Christ Jesus." Then, we're warned not to "let sin (αμαρτια) reign in your mortal (θνητῳ, or "dying") body unto the outcome to obey its lusts" (v. 12). Finally, verse 16 asks, "Don't you know that to what you present yourselves as slaves resulting in obedience, you are slaves to what you obey, whether of sin (αμαρτιας) resulting in death (θανατον) or obedience resulting in righteousness?"

This context proves "sin" and "death" are inextricably tied. For, *we're required to discard transgression* by the Spirit's power if we want to *gain the righteous attributes* available in our new "life" (ζωη –vv. 22-23; Gal. 6:8-10; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19).

In like fashion, Colossians 3:5 begins a section detailing the process we're expected to take to be transformed into the "glory" we'll fully assume when Christ returns (vv. 1-4). Here, we're ordered to "put to death (νεκρωσατε) the members which are upon the

earth". Then, we're told to "put off" several offenses associated with our "old man" which produce ungodly character. Finally, this renunciation of iniquity is described to occur in symphony with being clothed in the qualities of our "new" man, the final leg of putting on "life" (vv. 5-10).

With more parallel subject matter, Philippians 3 recounts Paul's salvation by referencing his own background of boast-worthy Jewish attributes which center around his "flesh" (σαρκι – v. 4). Then, it says "But I consider all things (previously bragged about) to be loss . . . and consider *them* as dung in order that I might gain Christ" (v. 8). So now, the superior God-sourced "righteousness" he possesses in Jesus replaced his own inadequate "righteousness" based on family lineage and keeping the works of the Law (vv. 4-6, 9, cf. Gal. 2:16).

Continuing, Paul links justification to post-salvation life, "associated with the outcome to know Him, both the power of His resurrection and the commonality associated with His sufferings, choosing to be made conformed with (συμμορφιζομενος) His death

(θανατῳ), if somehow, I might attain unto the resurrection out of the dead (νεκρων – Phil. 3:10-11).[2]

This participle specifies our persona should be *morphed* (μορφοω) "with" (συν) the qualities of Christ, which is God's ultimate purpose for his elect (noun forms of this word – Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:21). For this transformation to take place, our "mind" must go through renewal by way of "death" so *we can be liberated from the "sin"* residing in our "flesh" (Rom. 12:1-2; 6:16; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 5:1, 13; Phil. 3:4, 10). Though we'll never reach perfection, **Sinlessness Should Be Our Goal** since this is God's endgame for us, which culminates when our lowly bodies are "conformed to the body of His glory" at the "resurrection" (Phil. 3:11-16, 20-21).

Second Corinthians equally addresses *our need to undergo death to sin*. "We have this treasure (the gospel message) in earthen vessels (weak bodies) in order that the exceeding power might be associated with God and not out of us" (4:7). Next, after detailing how he and others suffer while ministering, Paul says they're constantly "carrying around the deadness

(νεκρωσιν) of Jesus in the body in order that the life (ζωη) of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (v. 10). Then, he explains the importance of this statement, "For, while living we're constantly choosing to be delivered unto death (θανατον) because of Jesus, and in order that the life (ζωη) of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal (θνητῃ – or "dying") flesh (σαρκι). So that death (θανατος) is working in us, also life (ζωη) *is working* in you" (vv. 11-12).

This section precedes the passage expounded earlier (2 Cor. 10:1-6). Both portions imply a contingent in Corinth was aggressively seeking to cause chaos by raising doubts about the legitimacy of Paul's authority and message. So, among other responses, the Holy Spirit had him record many of the sufferings he endured while preaching the gospel (1 Cor. 4:8-21; 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 4:1-2, 16-18; 6:4-13; 7:5). These torments combined with affliction from Paul's own battle of dying to sin illustrate *the "agony" that accompanies personal growth as well as transmitting the qualities of a changed "life" to others* (1 Cor. 9:16-27; 2 Cor. 11:21-29; 12:7-10; Gal. 6:17; Col. 1:24 – 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:6-7; Heb. 12:1).

This same kind of misery will distress every believer who obeys the command to engage in gospel-warfare. Yet, *Triumph* along with the declaration **'It's Worth It!'** will reward those who steadily reinforce themselves with godly traits obtained from "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new" (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3; 3:12).

For, affliction derived from modifying character in this temporal fight is a key part of **The Divine Plan** to make us "worthy of the kingdom of God" (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 1:27-30; 2 Thess. 1:4-5). So, just like we dispose of carcasses blocking a roadway, every evil intent which enters our sin-vexed mind should be corralled, then put away forever (2 Cor. 10:6).

On a personal note, after gradually recognizing the **Significance of these Victory-Assuring Procedures**, I'm again reminded of my mentor, Ruel, who often and openly admitted his own sinfulness and expressed his need to deal with it. Then he sought to demonstrate these convictions in word and deed. Now, more than ever, I'm thankful he was transparent about his own walk for the purpose of passing

on these "deep", life-altering principles (1 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:18-19; Col. 2:1-3). Four decades later, I'm still profoundly affected by the residual impact of his example (1 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8-10; Titus 3:8).

Section 2: Our Warfare among Non-Believers

While replacing sin with righteousness to *Become Battle-Ready*, the Spirit's role is critical since He helps us with the training needed to prevail. For, "we didn't receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit out of God in order that we might know the things having been freely given to us by God" (1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 3:16-19). At salvation the Spirit enlightens our heart to trust in Christ; after that He continues to provide capacity to comprehend the revelation which discloses who the Father is, what He's done, how He's made us acceptable to Himself, and how we're to respond to life's trials. And, just prior to this verse, the foundational truth the Spirit uses to accomplish this feat is stated, "the wisdom of God in a mystery, which

has been hidden, which God predestined prior to the ages for our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7).

Initially, this "wisdom" (σοφιαν) "has been hidden" (αποκεκρυμμενην). This perfect participle acts as a *verbal adjective* explaining the "wisdom" *was initially hidden, then kept secret* or a "mystery". The time it was formulated is expressed by the phrase "prior to the ages" (προ των αιωνων – 1 Cor. 2:7). Other contexts confirm this "mystery" wisdom was "hidden from the ages (των αιωνων) in God" and "kept silent in times eternal" (χρονοις αιωνιοις – Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9-10).

Combined, these statements show this body of truth was "predestined" *before time began* in Genesis 1:1, then God "kept silent" about it until He chose to reveal it. Because of His deliberate act, this *Secret Wisdom* can't be found in events documented prior to Christ's crucifixion but is first detected in the writings of "His holy apostles and prophets" during the next generation (Rom. 11:25, 33; 1 Cor. 2:8; Eph. 3:5, 9; Col. 1:25-27).

In addition, the "wisdom" contained in this now-revealed "mystery" is described as "the deep things of God" which "the Spirit searches", "teachings of the Spirit", and "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:10, 13, 16). Of all Bible authors, only Paul directly speaks about it saying, "the mystery was made known to me", and he calls this revelation "my gospel" (Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 3:10; 9:16-17; Eph. 3:3). Consequently, **Studying His Letters Can Teach Us Everything We Need to Know About Triumphing in Our "good fight"** (1 Cor. 11:1; 15:55-58; Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14; 2:1-4; 3:16 – 4:8).

Finally, the text says this "mystery" was revealed "for our glory" (δοξαν – 1 Cor. 2:7). This noun is derived from the verb "δοκεω" which means *to hold an opinion or think about* something, thus, *to perceive what that thing represents* (Mark 10:42; Luke 10:36; John 5:39; Acts 15:22; 1 Cor. 3:18; 8:2; Gal. 2:6, 9; Phil. 3:4; James 4:5). Its noun portrays the same idea of *perception* or *representation* (Matt. 6:29; Luke 4:6; 12:27; John 12:43; Acts 12:23; 1 Cor. 11:7, 15; 15:41; 2 Cor. 6:8; Phil. 3:19). Most of the time "glory" is used to *represent God's nature*, which is also what believ-

ers will be conformed to at Christ's coming (Matt. 16:27; Luke 2:9; John 1:14; Rom. 8:18; 1 Cor. 15:43; Eph. 1:18; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4).

However, First Corinthians 2:7 speaks to a less familiar feature of "glory" – *our current conformity with the Savior*. When Christians implement the qualities of Jesus, who exemplifies His Father, we bring "glory" to God as others *perceive His traits in us* (Rom. 15:7; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:15-17; Eph. 3:16). This witness is developed by using the Spirit's power to apply truth found in the "administration of the mystery" or "gospel of the **glory** (δοξης) of the blessed God, which I (Paul) was entrusted" (Eph. 3:2-3, 9, 16; 6:20; Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:11 – emphasis mine).

Then, as Ephesians 3:13 closes the most detailed portion about how Paul suffered while proclaiming this new truth which describes the gentiles' path into equal relation with God, he says "wherefore, I ask *you* not to despair in my afflictions on your behalf, which are your **glory**" (δοξα, 2:11 – 3:12, emphasis mine).

Having touched on how *The Spirit uses Church-Epistle Truth* to train Christians to "glorify" God in our all-out battle against evil forces, **Let's Consider Portions which Standardize the Conduct We're to Have while Deployed in the Arena of Evangelism**.[1]

As previously noted, we experience 'wins' by obtaining "new man" qualities that pertain to motives, attitudes, and actions. Hence, from this point, each mandatory trait Body members are to "put on" will be tagged to represent these categories. *Intentions* (motives) will be specified with an **'I'**, Attitudes by an **'A'**, and *Deeds* (actions) with a **'D'**. In addition, *General Assets* not fitting these categories will be marked with a **'G'**. And since some attributes transcend individual labels, these will be classified by a multiplicity of tags.

Spirit-Approved Message for Evangelism

"And I, after having come to you, brethren, came not according to superiority of word or wisdom while proclaiming the testimony (or, "mystery") of God to you. For I determined to know nothing among you

except Jesus Christ and this one having been crucified." (1 Cor. 2:1-2)

Paul takes these brethren back to the time he came to Corinth and preached to them as a non-Christian audience. Since verse 2 encapsulates his original message of the crucifixion of "Jesus Christ", let's start there. The perfect participle "having been crucified" (εσταυρωμενον – **G**) signifies Jesus *died on the cross, then what He accomplished continues*. This means, after He suffered the penalty of death for the sin of all men, anyone who places their trust in Christ's substitutionary payment is exonerated by the Father, becomes His child, and receives the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:15-17; Heb. 9:24-28).

This is why Paul "determined" (εκρινα – **I, D**) or *judged* to limit his message to conversion, for without the indwelling Spirit the Lost can't respond to other parts of the gospel which consist of altering behavior (Rom. 8:7-8; Eph. 4:17-19; Titus 3:3). So, when partaking in The Battle for Men's Souls, **He Focused Entirely on Redemption** (Acts 13:15-43; 17:22-34).

In verse 1, this proclamation is called "the testimony" (μαρτηριον – **G**) or *witness* "of God". However, many manuscripts contain the word "mystery" (μυστηρον – **G**) instead of "testimony". This is a common type of textual difference where two similar words which overlap in meaning appear in varying Greek texts. Since there's solid evidence for both renderings, I'll combine their meaning. This suggests Paul's "testimony" to the Lost was comprised of the "mystery" message we're dispatched to preach: "Christ died on behalf of our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

When this message is compared with Jewish preaching of that day, the significance of what Paul states here hits home. For, the gospel of the Kingdom included believing in "Christ" (their *Messiah*) but also being "baptized for the forgiveness of sin" (a Jewish purification) and keeping the Law of Moses (Lev. 8:5-6; Num. 8:5-7; Matt. 5:17-20; 19:16-22; Mark 1:2-8; 16:15-18; John 1:31; 3:16-26; Acts 2:38-39; 22:16; Heb. 6:2; 9:10).

This is why Paul restricted his salvation message to the cross and several times contrasts *this "mystery" testimony of simple faith in Christ's work* with keeping "the works of the law" (Rom. 3:19-23, 27-28; 4:2; Gal. 2:16-21). A study of his Letters show they contain the current patterns for both salvation and how Christians are sanctified; however, he only shared the former with the unsaved (1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Tim. 1:12-16; 2 Tim. 1:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Also, he didn't approach them with "superiority of word or wisdom", but "in much weakness and in fear and trembling" so potential converts wouldn't be impressed by his intelligent sounding speech or philosophy but instead perceive him as mortal and humble (1 Cor. 2:1, 3). Then he adds, "and my word and my preaching *were* not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in display of the Spirit and power in order that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

So, rather than flaunting his talents, Paul used methods which permitted the "power (δυναμει – **G**) of God" to perform through the "Spirit", since He's the

one who prompts people to believe in Christ (Acts 13:48; 1 Cor. 1:18-24; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 1:28-29). We too should avoid evangelizing with flesh-based techniques, for they tend to usurp the Spirit's role of convincing the "chosen" to trust the "wisdom" of the gospel.

Spirit-Inspired Allegiance

"Suffer evil with as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Also, while choosing to be energized to wage warfare, no one chooses to be entangled in the practices of *this* life in order that he might please the one having enlisted *him*." (2 Tim. 2:3-4)

In *Our Ongoing Crusade of Evangelism*, each member in the Body is a "soldier of Christ Jesus". To be "good" at this job, Paul *commands* (imperative) Timothy to "suffer evil with" (συγκακοπαθησον – **I, D**). This verb is made up of the preposition "συν", meaning *together with*; the noun "κακος", portraying *something bad*; and the verb "πασχω", which indicates *being affected by some act*, here in a negative sense. Applying this triad of meaning, Timothy shouldn't "be ashamed of"

but *welcome hardship connected with* proclaiming the "gospel" he received from Paul (2 Tim. 1:8, 11-18; 2:9, 15; 4:2-5). *Being willing to accept affliction* as we share should be a top priority since our message details how God's grace saves sinners as well as the way believers attain the holiness needed for effective evangelism and service to the Lord (1:9-14; 2:9-10, 14-26; 3:10-17).

Persecution should be anticipated by everyone who chooses "to live godly in Christ Jesus" while they embrace the gospel "entrusted" to Paul. For, it's the "pattern of sound words" we're to "commit to faithful men who'll be qualified to also teach others" (2 Tim. 1:12-13; 2:2; 3:12). And, **While Carrying Out These Marching Orders**, we need to realize "God didn't give us a Spirit of fear but of power and love and a sound mind" (1:7, cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Titus 3:3-7).

Therefore, while waging this battle, we mustn't choose "to be entangled in the practices of *this* life", for ties like these will hinder our ability to "please" the one who "enlisted" us. The verb "chooses to be entangled" (εμπλεκεται – **I, D**) unites the preposi-

tion "εν", meaning *in*, with the verb "πλεκω", which means *to twis*t or *braid*, and we derive the word 'implicate' from this compound term. So, just like Christians should evade circumstances that could implicate us as accessories in crime, we're to *constantly* (present tense) *make choices* (middle voice) to be strong enough *not to be* (passive), *deceived by Satan or controlled by our flesh*, caught up in "practices" coupled with this "life".[2] This type of discipline needs to dominate our routine "in order that" we might "please" Christ, our Recruiter.

The principles conveyed in this passage are a microcosm of what Paul teaches throughout his Letters: **Our Main Focus should be to Serve the Savior in a Way that Represents Him**. Initially, God "bought" us with the "price" of His precious Son's blood; now He expects us to modify our behavior to display His virtues to the world (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 15:55-58; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; Titus 2:11-14).

In this pursuit, *He Demands Full Allegiance* while we navigate inevitable struggles linked with developing Christ's qualities and sharing the gospel (1 Cor.

2:13-16; Col. 1:24 – 2:3; 3:1-2). Lack of commitment opens us up to chase "the practices of *this* life" and be corrupted by *idolatry* – serving self, persons, or earthly images and philosophies in the place of God (1 Cor. 10:14-33; Eph. 5:5). These choices impede our growth, grieve the Holy Spirit and, essentially, **Cause Us to Lose Ground in Our Real Battle**.

Spirit-Endorsed Partnerships

"You don't choose to be made contrarily yoked with unbelievers; for what participation *exists* in relation to righteousness and lawlessness, or what commonality *exists* in relation to light toward darkness; also, what harmony *exists* with Christ toward Belial, or what part *exists* in relation to a believer with an unbeliever; also, what agreement *exists* in relation to the temple of God with idols? For, we're the temple of the living God according as God said that 'I'll dwell and walk among them, and I'll be their God and they'll be my people.'" (2 Cor. 6:14-16)

While *Managing Our Conflict*, we're warned to be careful who we collaborate with. This caution is

voiced by the participle "contrarily yoked" (ετερο-ζυγουντες – **I, D**) which consists of the noun "ετερ-ος", portraying *something different*, affixed to the verb "ζυγοω", which means *to yoke a pair* (2 Cor. 6:14).[3]

This compound word occurs just once in the N.T., but its parts portray the intended meaning. First, "ετερ-ος" refers to *something of another kind* such as in the term 'heterosexual' – being attracted to *the opposite* sex (Matt. 11:3; Luke 9:29; Acts 17:7; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6). Then, in high school Health class I learned the word 'zygote' (ζυγοω) is used for a fertilized egg in humans, that is, a yoked sperm and egg. Also, the crossbeam which connects a team of working animals is a 'yoke'. So, this term specifies **Christians are to *Actively*** (active voice) ***and Routinely*** (present tense) **Make Sure *"not" To Team Up* or *Partner With* "unbelievers"**.

To stress this point, a *command form* (imperative) of the verb of being is used with a negative, "you don't choose to be made" (μη γινεσθε – **I, A, D**). This verb is in dual voice form which signifies believers are *to*

make volitional choices (middle) to insure we're "not" *caused to become* (passive) "contrarily yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14).[2]

For, we're inherently different than them since they aren't spiritually alive, so *improper affiliation can bring about detrimental consequences*. This verse is most often applied to marriage which is entirely valid. Nevertheless, considering the five couplet comparisons which follow, it's just as critical to *apply this practice to every area of life* since we can be influenced by behaviors of the unsaved or be perceived as agreeing with their ungodly acts. Our Father's always concerned about how His children, "the temple of the living God", will guard His reputation and represent His "glory" (1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor. 6:16).

Accordingly, it's vital we concede our "righteousness" (δικαιοσυνῃ – **D, G**) is incompatible with the "lawlessness" that exemplifies unbelievers (Rom. 3:21-26; 6:12-16; 2 Cor. 6:14). Also, our "light" is opposite to their "darkness"; and "Christ", whom we are "in" and to whom we should conform, has nothing in common with "Belial" (or *Satan*; 1 Cor 12:12-13; 2 Cor. 6:15;

Eph. 1:4; 4:17-24). Furthermore, because the Spirit lives in us as the "temple of God", we're to have no "part" or "agreement" with the Lost since they represent "idols" (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:15-20; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:15-16). After mulling over these realities, **we should recognize it's necessary to maintain a separate lifestyle** so we can protect our social status and not be affected by their human-sourced beliefs or conduct.

Before examining the O.T. verses cited to support this practice, note the adverb used to introduce them, "according as" (καθως). This word combines the preposition "κατα", which means *according to* or *in line with*, and the adverb "ως", meaning *like* or *similar* to. Much like our *Simile* in English literature, this compound term specifies *principles in these quotes correspond* to the just-stated distinctions between us and "unbelievers". Therefore, "καθως" is used *solely for the purpose of comparison*. Other terms such as "πληροω" or "τελειοω" are employed in the Gospels to identify *exact matches* and, thus, indicate *Fulfillment of Prophecy* (Matt. 1:22-23; 2:15-18; 4:14-16; John 19:24, 28-30).

Although Paul cites dozens of O.T. passages, he never introduces them with these verbs. Instead, he regularly uses "καθως" and similar terms to *designate Body truths that align with O.T. teaching* (Rom. 1:17; 2:24; 4:17; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 8:15; 9:9; 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-12). Why is this? Because we're living in an un-prophesied time when the Church is administered by "mystery" revelation which wasn't made known in the past (Dan. 9:24-27; Eph. 1:9-10). Consequently, **Though Paul's Letters Contain Many Truths which Parallel with O.T. Concepts, Not One of Them is Presented as a Fulfillment of Scripture**.

So, how do the quotes in this portion clarify these relationships? First, "I'll dwell and walk among them, and I'll be their God and they'll be my people" relates to our present condition since He's also our "God" and members of the Body are His "people" (Lev. 26:12; 2 Cor. 6:16). However, the fact God "will walk and dwell among them" won't happen until the future Kingdom when Israel obeys the Law of Moses as shown by its adjoining context (Lev. 26:13-46). In contrast, today we experience the presence of God through the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 3:17-

18). And contrary to popular opinion, we're not defined by public associations or country of origin and residence, but **God's true community consists of all believers around the globe** (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 3:20).

"Wherefore, you come out of their midst, and you be made separate, says the Lord, and you don't choose to touch the unclean thing, and I'll receive you, and I'll be a Father for you, and you'll be sons and daughters for Me, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17-18 [Isa. 52:11; Jer. 31:9])

Like saints of the past, we're not to "contrarily yoke" with unbelievers but rather "be made separate" (αφορισθητε – **I, D**). This verb is built from the preposition "απο", meaning *from*, prefixed to the verb "οριζω", which means *to divide* and comes across as our word 'horizon'. Together, they signify *creating a boundary away from* the issues stated in verses 14-16, since connections like these can damage our testimony or "holiness" (αγιωσυνην – **I, A, D**; 2 Cor. 7:1). However, unlike Israel, we're never taught to physically separate from pagans or their possessions but, instead, to *keep just enough social distance* so our

convictions and routine won't be adversely affected (Num. 25:1-18; Deut. 7:1-6; 20:16-18; 1 Sam. 15:2-23; Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1-30).

For, we're fundamentally different than past converts since *we possess the indwelling Spirit*, and they didn't. With our Divine Protector, we can thrive in environments wrought with evil "because He (the Spirit) who's in you is greater than he (the Devil) who's in the world" (1 John 4:4-6, cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11; Phil. 2:14-16; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 4:1-4). So, we don't need to "come out of their midst" or maintain distance from "the unclean thing", as Lot and others had to, since God unconditionally sees us as "sons and daughters" and "holy and blameless" in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30-31; 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:21; 6:17; Eph. 1:4; 2 Pet. 2:6-9). Now, we're to "cleanse ourselves from every defilement of the flesh and spirit, while fully perfecting holiness in the fear of God" so we can *Reflect His Pristine Integrity* (2 Cor. 7:1, cf. 3:17-18; Tit. 3:8).

Summing up, we're ordered not to align with the unsaved in ways which can compromise our testimony. This same point is frequently repeated as the Church

Epistles teach our lives shouldn't be influenced by the world around us (Rom. 1:18-32; 12:1-2; Eph. 4:14, 17-24; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; 1 Pet. 1:13-16).[1] Moreover, nowhere are Christians taught to achieve spiritual goals by seeking to alter the norms of a secular community. On the contrary, God exclusively intended the lessons of sanctification to apply to His children who are personally and corporately responsible to perform Spirit-assisted acts that please Him (Rom. 8:7-8; Col. 1:9-11; Heb. 11:6).

Otherwise, anytime believers collaborate with a cause attached to this world's system, we not only run the risk of having our own philosophy corrupted but also position ourselves to be judged by their ethics, morals, and values. The only way to retain the level of "holiness" God demands in **Our Spiritual Struggle** is to keep separate from humanly contrived pursuits.

So, **If We Want to be *Influencers for God*, *We Should become Gospel Activists*, for This Cause is 100% Righteous, Trustworthy and Effective** since it's anchored in Christ's work on the cross and empowered by His Spirit (2 Cor. 1:18-22; 5:14-21; 1 Tim. 1:15-17).

Let me repeat, the cross is the only message God authorizes for broadcast to "unbelievers" (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:1-2; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:15). Efforts expended elsewhere will draw us into **The Wrong Arena of Social Conflict** and **Stifle our Spiritual Growth**.

Spirit-Empowered Routine

"Also, we encourage you, brethren, to abound more (in *love*, see vv. 9-10a) and to choose to be caused to endeavor to act quietly and to practice your own things and to choose to be caused to work with your own hands just as we commanded you in order that you might walk with good outward form toward those outside and might have need of nothing."
(1 Thess. 4:10b-12)

As we please our Recruiter by sharing salvation with the world, this passage zeroes in on the regimen we should develop. After Paul urges to increasingly practice love, he says "to choose to be caused to endeavor" (φιλοτιμεισθαι – **I, D**) to develop three life habits. Before examining these, this infinitive is built from the noun "φιλος", portraying the idea of *love*,

and the verb "τιμαω", which basically means *to value*. It signifies we're to concentrate on *the outcome* of establishing *love-based values*. Also, it's dual voice construct stipulates we're to *continuously* (present tense) "choose" (middle) "to be caused" (passive), *by the Spirit's power*, to *strive* or *be ambitious* to include the following behavior.[2]

Our first aim should be "to act quietly" (ησυχαζειν – **I, D**), another infinitive referencing *an outcome* or *end goal* (1 Thess. 4:11). Since this word occurs in the active voice, it calls for a *deliberate* pursuit of *restful* or *behind-the-scenes conduct* instead of overt activity which tends to divert attention from Christ's redemptive work. So, the initial quality God wants us to implement is a *constant* (present tense) determination to operate with quiet methods so *cordiality* and *lack of pressure* will augment our verbal message (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

The second life-adjustment we're to make is "to practice (πρασσειν – **I, D**) your own things" (1 Thess. 4:11). This is also a present active infinitive, so we're to have the *end goal* of *continuously* and *deliberately*

focusing on our "own things". Simply put, we're to *be engaged in our own business* rather than butting into the work or activity of those outside the Church. When we supplement a quiet existence by concentrating on our own affairs, the unsaved can observe us leading "a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectability" (1 Tim. 2:2).

These traits lower the probability of distracting prospects from the gospel since they *subtly bypass stumbling blocks* which can arise from social controversy. For, many community concerns are fraught with hazards which can damage people's estimation of us and, in turn, harm their view of our message which promises eternal life in Jesus.

Lastly, we're "to choose to be caused to work (εργαζεσθαι – **I, D**) with your own hands" just like Paul and his fellow-ministers "commanded" (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Thess. 4:11). This third infinitive targets another *end goal* and its dual voice form directs us "to choose" (middle) *to be empowered* (passive) to hold a job *by tapping into enablement from the Spirit*.[2] The principle all Christians should *regularly* (present tense)

work with our own hands and be self-sufficient is a prominent standard modeled by Paul throughout his ministry (Acts 18:1-4; 20:33-35; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6-18; Phil. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:6-9; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Tim. 6:6).

The purpose we're to live in the fashion just detailed is "in order that you might walk" (περιπατητε – **I, D**), or *live life*, "with good outward form (ευσχημονως – **I, A, D**) toward those outside" (1 Thess. 4:12). This term is comprised of "ευ", meaning *well* or *right*, affixed to "σχημα", which refers to *visible appearance* and comes across as the word 'scheme'. As an adverb, it describes *the way we're to conduct ourselves* "toward those outside" (εξω) – unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:12-13; Col. 4:5). For, God wants us *to be seen functioning with a decent witness* characterized by an unobtrusive, self-supporting, and quiet presence.

One more reason to assume these practices is "in order that" we "might have need (χρειαν – **I, D**) of nothing" (1 Thess. 4:12). This portion details how God expects believers to pursue a pattern of behavior which won't provoke the unsaved to question our motives or think we're trying to take advantage

of them. Instead, to the extent we accomplish these tasks, they'll be impressed by our ethics, self-reliance, and hard work. **These are the Best Practices We, as Foreign Agents, can Utilize to Operate Under Cover Yet Hide in Plain Sight** (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 1:27-30; 3:20; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Pet. 2:11-12).

All in all, God wants non-believers to see **Success Stories Who Consistently Exhibit the Transformative Power of the Gospel** through above-reproach behavior which like a magnet attracts interest to the salvation message. Furthermore, Christians should recognize the obligation to obey this ideology is totally on us, not on the world. Therefore, **Effective Execution of This Code of Conduct is A Vital Part of Fighting the Good Fight**, it profits the world as well as the Church, and it pleases the Father (Gal. 6:10; Titus 3:8).

Spirit-Enabled Personality Traits

"You're to do all things apart from complaints and disputes in order that you might make yourselves become faultless and pure, children of God without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverted gen-

eration, in which you choose to be made to shine as lights in the world while holding fast to the word of life . . .” (Phil. 2:14-16a)

In *Our Preparation* to be controlled by the Spirit, we’re told to “choose to be caused to produce your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12; 1:27 – 2:13; Titus 2:11-12).[2] Then, verse 14 begins to divulge what this entails, “do all things apart from complaints and disputes”. The noun “complaints” (γογγυσμων – **I, A, D**) occurs 4 times and is well translated *murmurings* and *grumblings* (John 7:12; Acts 6:1; 1 Pet. 4:9).

It’s paired with “disputes” (διαλογισμων – I**, A, D**) which transliterates to our word ‘dialogs’ and can describe positive or negative exchanges. Since we’re to do all things “apart from” (χωρις) or *separated from* “disputes”, this noun depicts *arguments* or *quarrels*. And circumventing these nasty traits isn’t optional, for the present imperative verb “you’re to do” (ποιειτε – **I, D**) *requires* us to *constantly* suppress a critical attitude from worming its way into our persona since this mindset incites contention and debate (2 Tim. 2:14-18, 24-26).

The purpose for this favorable disposition is that "you might make yourself become" (γενησθε – **I, D**) a certain way (Phil. 2:15). This middle voice verb suggests *the subject is to act upon itself*, so I rendered it to "make" *ourselves* "faultless" (αμεμπτοι – **I, A, D**), "pure" (ακεραιοι – **I, A, D**), and "without blame" (αμωμα – **I, A, D**).

All three of these nouns are prefixed by the letter *alpha* (α) which negates their meaning. The first precedes "μεμπτος", signifying *a blame* or *fault*, so the pair conveys being "faultless" (Luke 1:6; 1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 8:7). The second alpha is linked with "κερασ-τος", meaning *mixed*, so they portray being *unmixed with evil*, thus "pure" (Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19). The third occurs with "μωμος", meaning *a blame* or *blemish*, so they portray *being unblemished* before God like Jesus is (Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19).

Finally, Paul caps off the need to *eliminate flesh-sourced* "complaints and disputes" *from our repertoire* by using the subjunctive mode which *requires a response* before the verb action of "γενησθε" can happen (Phil. 2:15). This mode, along with the middle

voice, stresses "children of God" must *choose* to draw on the Spirit's power *to fulfill the condition* of achieving a non-confrontive, sweet demeanor so we can "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

Then, rather than showing disgust for societal customs by countering with our "old man", we'll be able to live in a manner "worthy of respect" so if prospects are offended by anything, it'll be the message of the cross we're mandated to preach (1 Cor. 2:2; 8:9; 9:19-23; 1 Tim. 2:2; 3:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:8).

The Father wants these qualities to enhance our witness "in the midst of a crooked (σκολιας) and perverted generation" (Phil. 2:15). Just as this adjective is used for the physical deformity of 'scoliosis' in our spine, here it describes the *twisted* or *corrupt morals* of fallen men (Luke 3:5; Acts 2:40; 1 Pet. 2:18, its other uses).

This verse also labels the world "perverted" (διεστραμμενης) by using a participle built from the preposition "δια", which portrays the idea of *through*, and the verb "στρεφω", meaning *to turn*. In perfect

tense form it describes human culture as *having thoroughly turned away, then remaining isolated from* God-ordained truth.

So, it shouldn't surprise us when we're the ones stereotyped as weird, "strange", to be "pitied", or even mentally deranged. Yet, God instructs to us to demonstrate "Christian" character amid these false evaluations which, we should recognize, are egged on by our Adversary (Acts 26:24-29; 1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Pet. 4:1-19; 5:8-11).

Thus, we shouldn't be offended when "the world" **Identifies Us as The Warped Ones** then labels us as 'intolerant', 'bigots', 'racists', 'homophobes', 'misogynists' and 'sexist'. For, profiles like these represent part of the suffering God called us for, and He expects us to answer these attacks with gracious and beneficial responses from a changed heart (Rom. 12:14-21; Phil. 1:29-30; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

He definitely doesn't want us to "repay evil in the place of evil or slander in the place of slander" but to disregard all fleshly desire to retaliate so we can

"shine as lights in the world" (Rom. 12:17; 1 Cor. 9:19-27; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9).

The verb "you choose to be made to shine" (φαινεσθε – **I, A, D**) is a dual voice form which signifies to *make the choice* (middle) *to be enabled by an outside energy* (passive), *the Holy Spirit*, "to shine".[2] Also, this present imperative form indicates we're *perpetually ordered* to *illumine God's virtues*, which we can do "while holding fast" (επεχοντες – **I, D**) or *paying attention to* "the word of life" (**G**, Acts 3:5; 1 Tim. 4:16). This approach **Enables our Gospel-Light to Provide a Divine Roadmap** for the Lost so they can get right with God. It also helps the saved avoid sin which edifies the Body (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Tim. 1:15; 4:6-16; Titus 1:1-3; 2:11-14; 3:3-7).

In conclusion, rather than allowing an attitude of victimhood to penetrate then dominate us, Christians should accept: **The Devil's Children Will Never Stop Rejecting God's Moral Order** because he and they are dead set against it (Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Eph. 2:2; 4:14). Therefore, instead of publicly dissenting with the world's philosophies or view of us, God

wishes His elect to fortify ourselves by making conscious decisions not to live like them plus meet every challenge posed by inevitable persecution sent our way. Remember, **Our Provisions for Victory in The Arena of Evangelism Consist of Jesus' Work on The Cross Shared by Spirit-Rehabilitated Converts**.

Spirit-Approved Submission to Government

"You remind them to choose to be made subordinate to rulers *and* authorities; to obey; to be prepared ones toward every good work; also, to blaspheme no one; to be non-fighters *and* fair, while choosing to be caused to display gentleness toward all men."
(Titus 3:1-2)

Not only can we access the Spirit's strength to render allegiance to God and represent Christ with a good testimony, but we can apply this same divine power to yield to secular authority. Since Paul *commands* (imperative) Titus to "remind" the saved Cretans how to appropriately relate with governing officials, it's clear they hadn't faithfully implemented this conduct, though they already knew it.

I translated the infinitive "to choose to be made subordinate" (υποτασσεσθαι – **I, A, D**) since it's in a dual voice form indicating *we're to act upon ourselves* or "choose" (middle) "to be made" (passive), or *caused by the outside force of the Holy Spirit*, to *practice submission* (Gal. 5:16-18).[2] This same kind of *surrender* is required in passages defining the relationship wives should have with their husbands, believers are to pursue with one another and Church leaders, younger men are to have toward elders, and Christian slaves are to practice toward their masters (1 Cor. 16:15-18; Eph. 5:21-24; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 5:5).

Beyond *yielding*, Timothy's to remind these Body members "to obey" (πειθαρχειν – **I, A, D**; Titus 3:1). This infinitive is from the verbs "πειθω", meaning *to persuade*, and "αρχω", which means *to rule*, and it possesses the same stem as the noun "rulers" (αρχαις) – *those who occupy first positions*. Apparently, the command to submit wasn't enough for these hard-headed Cretans. So, the Spirit added a second unique term for the purpose of emphasis, if "possible", to *persuade them to comply with community leaders* and promote "peace", while Executing God's

Orders to Evangelize (Rom. 12:18; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 1:10-13). The concepts of subordination and obedience aren't hard to grasp, but they're very difficult to practice if we yield to the obstinate nature of our flesh which pushes non-compliance with secular rule of law.

Proceeding, Paul lists **Other Mandatory Forfeiture of Rights**. Specifically, Timothy's to remind these believers "to be prepared ones (ετοιμους – **I, D**) toward every good work" (Titus 3:1). This noun implies *the readiness* we need *to act* or *react* in a godly manner to chaotic situations, some of which may result from the dictates of governors.

Figuring out how we can respond to benefit those around us is *Pivotal to God's Purpose for the Church*. So, instead of repaying "evil in the place of evil" we're told to "choose to be caused to think beforehand (προνοουμενοι – **I, A, D**; or *make prior plans*) for good in the presence of all men" and to "choose to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and not make a forethought (προνοιαν – **I, A, D**) in association with the

flesh which results in lusts" (Rom. 12:17; 13:14, see this term's meaning in Acts 24:2; 1 Tim. 5:8).

Next, Timothy is to jog their memory "to blaspheme (βλασφημειν – **I, A, D**) no one" (Titus 3:2). This term is derived from the verb "βλαστανω" which means *to bud* or *burst forth*, and it transliterates into our word 'blast'. It's affixed to "φημι", which portrays the idea of *speaking*, so together these terms graphically describe *blasting with speech*, thus, *defamation* or *slander*.

When believers realize we're the only ones on earth capable of desiring and practicing the will of God since we can draw supernatural power from the Spirit, this theology should help us deduce all unbelievers, including leaders, operate on a lower moral level in this Satan-dominated system (Rom. 8:7-8; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Yet, somehow, many still justify *speaking ill* of and *slandering* the person, decisions, or performance of governing officials, and sometimes on a frequent basis. This character flaw demonstrates immaturity, for

it's counterproductive to the qualities we're supposed to "put on". Remember, we've already seen Scripture state if unbelievers are offended by anything, it should be from the offense of the cross and not "lust" driven responses prefaced on a humanistic perception of reality (Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Gal. 6:12-17).

Also, believers are to recall how we're trained "to be non-fighters" (αμαχους – **I, A, D**, Titus 3:2). This compound word is from the letter *alpha* (α), which negates any term it's affixed to, and the noun "μαχη", denoting *a battle* or *fight*. This word is closely associated with "μαχαιρα" which refers to a *large knife* or *short sword*, weapons of that era (Rom. 13:4). So, "αμαχους" represents the quality of being *disinclined to fight* or *pacifistic* in reference to earthly authority, an idea repeated numerous times.[4]

Thus, Elder/Overseers aren't to be "strikers but fair and peaceable" (αμαχον – NASV; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). Then, Paul tells Timothy, "It's necessary for a slave of God to choose (middle voice) not to be caused (passive) to fight (μαχεσθαι – *by temptation*

from the Devil) but to be gentle toward all".[2] Plus, he's "not to fight about words" (λογος + μαχειν) since flesh-based conflict results in "the destruction of those who hear" – *speakers and listeners alike* (2 Tim. 2:14 & 24, cf. John 6:52; Acts 7:26; James 4:2).

In place of harboring bitterness against bureaucrats, we're to recollect the need for the godly qualities of being "fair" (επιεικεις – **I, A, D**), or *equitable*, "toward all men" while "choosing to be caused to display gentleness" (πραυτητα – **I, A, D**), or *a soothing calmness* (Titus 3:2).[2] This phrase recaps God's wish for us to respect the office of and maintain a good testimony toward leaders as well as "all men" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Furthermore, what's recorded next should provoke sympathy for the unsaved since it describes our own pre-redemptive condition: "At one time we were foolish, unpersuaded, choosing to be caused to be deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, haters, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).[2] The memory of our depraved history should help jolt us to do our duty by developing a good

witness so we can more effectively share reconciliation with the Lost that they too might be saved.

First Peter 2:13-17

This passage contains additional direction that helps us properly relate with secular agencies. We're told, "You be subject to every human creation because of the Lord" (1 Pet. 2:13). The noun "creation" (κτισει) is the same word used to describe God's formation of the universe, and 16 of its 19 occurrences refer to that event (Mark 10:6; 16:15; Rom. 1:20, 25). Twice it refers to the Body of Christ, God's "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). Only here it refers to something man creates which, in this instance, is *earthly governmental systems*. Keep in mind, God created humanity in His image which is why we have **'creative'** ability (Gen. 1:26). Also, I rendered the adjective "human" (ανθρωπινῃ) since this term *describes the nature of* this "creation"; it's a *fabrication of mankind*.

In this verse, "κτισει" is translated **'authority instituted'** in the NIV, **'institution'** in the ESV and NASV, then **'ordinance'** in the KJV, all of which *obscure how*

this "creation" was initiated. The actual lesson is, **The "creation" of "every" Governmental System can Be Traced to "human" Brains, Not an Act of God**. The footnote cites Versions which properly render this term.[5]

Why is this important? Because many believe the U.S. Constitution is inspired similar to God-breathed Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). This conviction is based on **Illegitimately Applying God's Covenant Principles Made with Israel to America**.

Furthermore, no nation on its own has or will ever be able to obey God enough for Him to stand with them. And with regard to Israel, **Only after He Autonomously Initiates The New Covenant and Gives His Chosen Remnant the Holy Spirit** will they be capable of fully obeying His statutes (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-40; Ezek. 36:26-28; Rom. 9:27-29; 11:25-29).

Nevertheless, today many teach God will ally Himself with any nation that follows Him. This assumption is made from texts like Second Chronicles 7:13b-14, ". . . if I send a pestilence among My people, and My

people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Anyone reading the context around this quote can see these promises are for the Nation of Israel, not any other country.

Centuries ago, the idea **God Sanctions Humanly Created Entities** provided justification for the Crusades. Subsequently, Lutheran factions fought to free themselves from Roman Catholic control; later England formed their own Church; then the Thirteen Colonies fought to escape what they described as Brittain's **'Tyranny'**. These are only a few past events which **Represent Christian Failure**. For, at those times *believers willingly compromised complete allegiance to God, aligned with unbelievers in rebellion, violated orders not to fight, and defied several other commands just deliberated*.

Don't get me wrong, I have no problem with countries defending themselves from regimes which would destroy them, for this is a stark reality in our *Sin-Infested World*. What I want brethren to ponder

is no divine mandate exists which endorses the Body of Christ to participate in revolt against secular governments, align with unbelievers in insubordinate behavior, or claim that **'God is with us'** in an earthly conflict.

As we've seen, **God only supports His people – Body members world-wide – in activities tied to obeying His orders**. Check it out for yourself. I'm confident you won't find One Directive Linked with Practicing Our Faith which Authorizes Us to Contribute to the defense/acquisition of territory or establishment and/or maintenance of freedom, wealth, or moral law.

So, how does God want His people to be engaged? Peter tells us, "Because, the will of God exists likewise, while doing good (which includes submitting to authority) to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:15, cf. Titus 2:5, 8, 10). Thus, **God desires *Our Prime Objective to be* A Passive Demonstration of His Virtues**, not "repaying evil in the place of evil" (Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9). As we venture forward on this path, He wants us to perform

"as free ones and not holding the freedom as a covering for evil, but as slaves of God" (1 Pet. 2:16).

The Church Epistles repeatedly teach we possess "freedom" (ελευθερια – **I, A, D**) or *liberty* from sin; however, this doctrine never refers to gaining freedom from terrestrial bondage (Rom. 8:21; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1, 13, cf. Eph. 6:5-9; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:18-19).[1] In the O.T., God delivered His Covenant People from servitude countless times, but there's absolutely no reason to expect this kind of divine intervention in the affairs of any nation today. In reference to this thought, the present State of Israel will be considered later.

Last of all, Peter commands, "You value all men, love the brotherhood, choose to be caused to fear God, value the king" (1 Pet. 2:17).[2] To grasp their full meaning, both imperative verbs should be translated "value" (τιμησατε – **I, A, D**) or *attribute proper worth to*. In particular, we're ordered to "value the king" since every authority under them is sent "for vengeance of those doing evil, also the praise of those doing good" (v. 14).

Think about it; **Anarchy is The Alternative to Organized Government**. This term equates to the chaos which existed before the *Wild West* was regulated and today in non-policed areas during *Natural Disasters*. In almost every instance, lack of law and order to stem criminal behavior *Hinders Us from Carrying Out God's Commission* in a peaceful environment (1 Tim. 2:1-7). Therefore, we should be thankful for the stablizing "value" rulers provide in every locale we minister.

Romans 13:1-7

Last, but certainly not least, this context is most often cited to define *A Christian's Relation to Secular Authority*. And for good reason, because it delves deepest into describing humanity's God-given "right" to govern itself which includes determining what's "good" and "evil" for their people (vv. 1-4). Verse 1 begins, "Let every soul choose to be caused to subordinate itself to superior authorities, for no authority exists except by God, also those being exist as having been and continuing to be arranged by God."

This command (imperative) to "be . . . subordinate" (υποτασσεσθω – **I, A, D**) is the same verb appearing in the other portions just covered. Here, its subject is "every soul" (πασα ψυχη). The noun "soul" is the part of our person which entails our physical makeup and encompasses every aspect of our being except the *moral dimension* which is our "spirit" (Phil. 2:20 [ισο + ψυχον]; 1 Thess. 2:8; 5:23).

So, we're to submit to and "be at peace" with governing authorities on an emotional, attitudinal, and action-wise plane, unless we're being forced to violate specific conduct stipulated by God which, in our country, is practically unheard of (Rom. 12:18-21; Titus 3:1-2). I translated this verb "choose to be caused to subordinate itself" since its dual voice specifies we're held accountable *to act upon ourselves* or "choose" (middle) "to be caused" (passive), *by power from the Spirit*, to perform this *act of surrender*.[2]

Now, why do these officials have the divinely established "authority" (εξουσια), *power* or *right* to govern? Because *each* (singular in number) "authority exists . . . by God" (Rom. 12:1). Then, the text

converts to a plural participle "those being", *all those who function* in human institutions, currently (present tense) "exist" (εισιν) or *persist* "as having been and continuing to be arranged (τεταγμεναι – **G**) by God" (1 Pet. 2:13). This perfect participle indicates God *lined up* or *ordered* this right, then officials *retain this ordinance* of wielding justice.

Based on available revelation, I believe this came about after the Flood and will continue until the Lord returns (Gen. 9:5-6). For, when the Cataclysm ended, God changed from Personally administering humanity, such as handling justice for murder, to *granting men the authority to govern themselves* (Gen. 4:8-15, 23-24).

"So that the one who chooses to be caused to oppose (middle/passive) authority (ἐξουσιᾳ) has and continues to stand against (perfect tense) the arrangement of God; also, those having stood against (or, "opposed") will cause themselves to receive (middle voice) judgment in relation to themselves" (Rom. 13:2).[2] Because of these realities, Christians are told if we "desire not to fear authority (ἐξουσιαν), do good

and you'll have praise from the same" (v. 3). "Also, if you might do evil, fear; for it (an authority) doesn't carry the sword in vain, for it's a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to one practicing evil" (v. 4, cf. Prov. 8:15-16).

Then, Paul concludes "it's necessary" for us "to choose to be caused to submit (middle/passive) not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience" (Rom. 13:5).[2] Unbelievers primarily respond to "fear" and "wrath" for reasons anyone can understand. Christians also live in the flesh and can relate to fear of prosecution, but *we're to function on a higher plane* which is the clue behind the phrase "because of conscience" (συνειδησιν – **I, A, D**).

Our word "conscience" is derived from Latin and means *knowledge (science) with*, which matches the connotation of the Greek words forming this noun. Therefore, **The Compiled Knowledge of Truth** God wants us to believe and practice constitutes the "things above" or "high calling" which should regulate our lives (Phil. 3:12-14; Col. 3:1-2). Simply put,

we're to **Develop a Spirit-Engrained Conviction to Obey the Directives Set Forth in the Church Epistles**.[1]

Also key, Each Superior is said to be an "avenger for wrath" (Rom. 13:5). This statement stipulates **God extends the same "right" to Existing Rulers for taking vengeance on "evil"** that He will one day employ to pour out His own "wrath" against sin (Rom. 12:17-19; Heb. 10:26-31; 1 Pet. 2:14).

In contrast to this delegation of power, God only permits Body members to "avenge" sin-instigating thoughts which enter our mind, but not deviant acts performed against us (Rom. 12:19; 2 Cor. 10:6). Why? Because a massive part of our testimony is to step aside and trust Him to allocate "vengeance" and "wrath" for the "evil" of others. **This Model of Justice** seems more reasonable when assessed by how it complements the qualities we need to discreetly engage in evangelism and Christian growth, for both flourish when we squelch tensions by overcoming "evil with good" (Rom. 12:17 – 13:14).

Finally, "because of this, you're to pay (imperative) taxes" and, among other "obligations" (οφειλας – **I, A, D**) or *duties*, to "render (imperative) . . . value (τιμην – **I, A, D**) to the *one deserving* value" (Rom. 13:6-7). Just like the command to "value the king" in First Peter 2:17, **Christians should appreciate the worth of All Superiors** whom God has certified, then express this sentiment by subsidizing their efforts with decreed taxes.

In conclusion, submitting to local or national leaders doesn't mean we must agree with or trust everything they decide, otherwise *Why Would We Need Multiple Commands to Submit*? Yet, This Order for Pacifism is wholly compatible with **Our "calling" which Mandates Us to Evangelize and Edify but Doesn't Authorize Activism to Alter Social Norms** (Eph. 4:1).

These **Methods of Real Spiritual Warfare** represent the purpose for which God chose and gifted us. So, when we divert from These Objectives, we'll find ourselves fighting flesh-based battles to accomplish temporal victories. These achievements won't yield eternal value or reap lasting rewards since They

Aren't Consistent with The Lord's Decrees for Us. Instead, *Secular Skirmishes Sidetrack Christians* from doing our God-given job and, thus, **Hinder the Spiritual Advancement of Each Participant** (Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Tim. 2:3-4, 24-26).

Spirit-Certified Prayer for Leaders

"Therefore, first of all I encourage *you* to choose to be caused to make petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings on behalf of all men, on behalf of kings and all those being in a superior position for the purpose that we might lead a calm and quiet life in all godliness and respectability." (1 Tim. 2:1-2)

While exhorting us "to choose (middle voice) to be caused" (passive), *by the Spirit*, to pray for "all men", Paul singles out secular leaders since they assert greater influence over how a culture perceives our Christian faith.[2] The reason to petition our Father "on" their "behalf" is "for the purpose that we might lead a calm and quiet life". The first adjective describing how God wants us to live is "calm" (ηρεμον – **I, A, D**), which depicts a *restful existence*, and the second

means to be "quiet" (ησυχιον – **I, A, D**) or *inconspicuous* (1 Tim. 2:2). Basically, we're asked to *portray a demeanor that blends into our environment* which allows us to covertly share the gospel message (vv. 3-6).

Now, the text indicates these mild qualities are attained by functioning "in all godliness and respectability" (1 Tim. 2:2). The noun "godliness" (ευσεβεια – **I, A, D**) literally means *good fear* and represents a lifestyle *reverent to God*. Then, the noun "respectability" (σεμνοτητι – **I, A, D**) speaks of *dignity*. In other places, these terms depict *Qualifying Behavior for Elders and Deacons* plus *Conduct All Body Members* are advised to gain (1 Tim. 3:4, 8, 16; 4:7-8; 6:2-5).

Paul's plea for prayer is followed by the statement, "This is good and acceptable in the presence of God, our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:3). Demonstrative pronouns like "this" (τουτο) represent *concepts within their context*. Here, the idea articulated is **praying for "all men", including governing authorities, is God's method for constructing a stable atmosphere where we can have an Impactful Christian Witness**. For, He

"desires all men to be saved and come unto a full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Contrary to how this passage is often interpreted, it doesn't reinforce the view believers should pray for rulers to institute or preserve biblical values in secular law or culture. Instead, it promotes behind-the-scenes prayer that *God May Silently Sway Leaders' Decisions to Allow the Free Practice of Christianity*, so society can hear the hope of the gospel.

And these petitions will have the most impact if our actions aren't perceived as threatening, but *worthy of respect*. Consequently, this portion's primary lesson is: **Prayer is God's Sanctioned Means to Gain the Toleration needed to Optimize Our Causes of Evangelism and Edification**. So, **Spirit-Aided Prayer should Define the Kind of Social Activism we Participate in** to execute our commission in a non-confrontational manner.

Again, this appeal is frequently linked to pushing social and/or political activism, though that approach has no support in the Church Epistles.[1] We've already

visited numerous passages instructing believers to develop the exemplary testimony of a Spirit-enabled, service oriented, gracious, noncomplaining, peaceable, and self-reliant routine.

On the other hand, when we criticize, malign, or actively protest the dictates of leaders, these actions create stumbling blocks and close doors. Hence, **That Behavior Is Counterproductive to Our Written Orders for Spiritual Warfare**, and **These Unauthorized Tactics** upset the Father's Spirit (1 Cor. 9:19-27; 10:29-33; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Eph. 4:29-32).

Summary of Section 2

Take note of Paul's encounters with local and regional authorities, including Ceasar. Nowhere do these exchanges suggest he smeared municipal leaders, criticized their decisions, or portrayed himself as a victim (Acts 24:10-27; 25:6-12; 26:2-32). Even when in custody, he improvised to evangelize everyone around him and spoke optimistically about entering glory, though he faced impending execution (2 Tim. 4:6-8, 16-18). Often, he gave up personal rights so he could

preach; "while being free from all, I enslaved myself to all . . . I've become all things to all men in order that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Also, while in prison, he took opportunity to minister to believers and penned at least five Letters (Acts 16:19-34; Eph. 3:1-13; Phil. 1:12-20; 4:22 – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Second Timothy, and perhaps Hebrews). At all times, he concentrated on **Being a Godly Example for Fellow Body Members** (1 Cor. 4:14-16; 10:29 – 11:1; Phil. 3:12-17; Titus 3:8).

Furthermore, Paul understood the psyche of unbelievers. He knew they wouldn't submit to many biblical teachings because they're firmly trapped under the control of Satan's agenda and lack the Spirit's illumination (Rom. 8:7-8; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). So, he never tried to use moral shame or legislation to pressure them into changing their lifestyle. And, when recounting our pre-salvation past, he affirms **God Doesn't Expect the Lost to Live by His Standards**, "when you were slaves of sin, you were existing as free ones in relation to righteousness" (Rom. 6:20).

Since the unsaved are "slaves of sin", he tailored his message to them around Christ's work on the cross (Acts 17:16-32; 1 Cor. 2:1-5). Then, if anyone was offended, it wouldn't be from Paul insulting their decency but from the "foolishness" God formulated in the gospel to humble man and glorify Himself (1 Cor. 2:21-31; 10:32-33).

So, why do many still propagate the idea Christians are responsible to secure temporal **'rights'** when *Paul established the pattern of relinquishing "rights"* (εξουσιας – **I, A, D**, 1 Cor. 6:12; 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18 – emphasis mine)? And, why do Bible teachers proliferate the pursuit of **'social freedoms'** when the Church Epistles define our "freedom" (ελευθερια – **I, A, D**) as **The Capability to be Liberated from the Power of Sin**, which includes giving up comforts to benefit others (Rom. 6:6-22; 1 Cor. 9:1, 19; 10:29; Gal. 5:1, 13; Phil. 2:1-5)?[1]

Furthermore, why do I hear the term **'Tyranny'** used to describe society's resolve to be governed by the desired morals and policies of the majority (Rom. 1:18-32; Eph. 4:17-19)? Given that the passages cov-

ered so far Confirm Our Orders aren't for combat in that arena, **We should Anticipate Suffering** when we seek to obey His Word, and we shouldn't be surprised when *The World Regards Our Beliefs as Crazy* (Acts 26:24ff; 1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:1-4).

My response to these questions is: **For many Decades, A Guilt Trip has been Imposed on Christians to Shame Us into Becoming Socially and Politically Active**. It's important to recognize *the basis for this viewpoint is entirely from mandates in the O.T.*, specifically those given to God's Covenant Nation, Israel. So, when these promises are taken literally, they're both true and will be fulfilled; but there's no legitimate reason to currently apply them to the Church or any other country (Rom. 11:25-29).

Yet, in the 1980s, Jerry Falwell campaigned for his concept of righteous activism and lobbied us to join what he called **'The Moral Majority'**. Also, the theologian and philosopher, Francis Schaefer, urged Christians to engage in social change. His book titled *How Should We Then Live* became a film series, and both strongly encourage social activism. This title is

a direct quote from Ezekiel 33:10 and, once more, the surrounding context shows it relates to the Jewish People. Since that time, countless individuals and groups have continued to guilt believers into pursuing social reform, but **All Their Support is Drawn from O.T. Teaching Which Isn't in Effect Today** (Rom. 6:14; Col. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 1:3-11).

Check this out for yourself! Let alone all the Epistles, you won't find directives promoting social activism in the Gospel Accounts or Book of Acts either. The single N.T. exception is Revelation which records future events when Christ returns to reclaim earth. So, what should Christians do since local and national activism contradicts principles in the Church Epistles?[1] Just follow God's current directions for belief and obedience.

As deceptive teaching goes, I believe propaganda pushing Body members to address societal concerns is really spearheaded by the Devil. For, **His Number One Goal is to Entice Believers to Get Involved in Things Contrary to God's Will**. And this, by promoting "every wind of teaching" and "profane empty voices and oppositions of falsely named knowledge". These

sources attract our flesh but will clash with the "deposit" (παραθηκην – **I, D, G**) of truth standardized for us to follow in Paul's writings (Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:4; 1 Tim. 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 1 Pet. 5:8-10).

Finally, I'm aware some of my deductions go against the flow of current religious teaching. But I've decided I can best contribute to the Body by teaching the Word as I see it and applying my conclusions to issues of our generation. In fact, the methods of *Reorientation and Transformation* have always been God's remedy to preserve His founding principles (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Eph. 4:12 – 5:21). So, **The Church is Always in Need of Fresh Reformation**.

Scripture Contradicts Political Platforms

To better illustrate the principles highlighted in this section, I'm going to apply Scripture to deliberate four issues debated by the Republican and Democrat Parties. My goal is to show each Party espouses some biblical truth but also secular thought. When I hear fellow Body members say, **'My candidate and/or Party holds to biblical values'**, I can't help thinking

about the wrong ideals they adhere to as well. As discussed earlier, when the method of deception is employed, falsehood is always attached to truth. The Devil regularly uses this tactic, and it's also why believers are advised not to ally with the Lost. This is a chief reason why I consider **Overt Involvement to Change Society should be categorized as An Activity Outside of Our Lane**.

Issue 1 – The Bible Teaches Economic Socialism

No statement in the Church Epistles supports *Capitalism*, for this economic system promotes the ownership of property or conduct of business should primarily be free from governmental oversight.[1] But, we've seen God has given leaders the right to reign and maintain order as they see fit, then levy "taxes" for that purpose (Rom. 13:1-7). Also, when Paul urges believers to financially fund the poor "saints" in Judea, he espouses the principle of "equality", though this appeal for fiscal socialism was never intended for secular communities (2 Cor. 8:4, 12-15, cf. Rom.

12:13; Eph. 4:28). This charge was explicitly directed to Christians to help our spiritual family members.

To boot, God endorsed this same ideology with Israel when He founded the Year of Jubilee. Under this decree, every 50 years each Jew was returned to the original portion of land allotted to his tribe when they first entered the Promise Land. This practice was instituted so they wouldn't take economic advantage and "wrong one another", but instead "fear your God" (Lev. 25:8-17). Also, in monetary dealings, they were told not to "charge interest to your countrymen" (or "brother"), which safeguarded equity in their communities (Deut. 23:19-20). However, no restrictions were placed on their trade with infidels.

Not long ago, during the Pandemic of Covid 19, this biblical principle could've been better applied. For, I observed Christian owned businesses defy edicts from officials to remain closed. Many opened in protest, and in-so-doing violated God's command to be "subordinate" (Rom. 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13). Imagine *The News Headline about Our Testimony* had the financially capable among us backed these

businesses until they could lawfully open. This fiscal rescue would've complied with God's order to submit plus delivered a positive witness for the gospel.

Instead, **Resistance Broadcasted that Profit Was More Important than Compliance** and, thus, *The Lord's Name was Sullied*. Next time we're faced with similar circumstances, let's focus on **Showcasing our Faith and Not, by fleshly default, Manufacture Stumbling Blocks** in reference to the message God wants us to make good-looking to the world.

Issue 2 – Social Justice Isn't Part of Our Battle Plan

Passages in the Church Epistles speaking to Christians who are slaves or masters don't encourage or discourage slavery – *They're Neutral on The Subject* (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22 – 4:1; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:18). These lessons were included to address socio-economic realities which existed then, and God foresaw would persist throughout history.

When these teachings are examined, it's evident they convict believing slaves and masters to watch their behavior since all the saved will account for our conduct when we face the Lord. Also, slaves are asked not to worry about their status, but if they're "able to become free, rather to make use of this" (1 Cor. 7:21-24). Of course, every phase of liberation would have to reflect godly character which forbids protests, fighting, slander, or not compensating their owners for their worth (Philemon 18-19).

In reference to the slavery long practiced in the United States, I despise professed Christians who used Scripture to classify dark skinned people as worth only 3/5ths the value of light-skinned people. Some even applied Noah's curse on Ham's offspring to Blacks, though no proof for this opinion exists (Gen. 9-10). In time, the Civil Rights Movement also incorrectly cited the Bible and used the phrase "Let my people go" to support their cause, though this plea specifically refers to the liberation of Israel from Egypt (Exod. 5:1).

I have no problem with humanity grappling over issues related to social justice, for cultures often need to address pertinent problems. I just don't see any reason to invoke God in these matters since there's no Church-Epistle support for that slant.[1] Instead, we're to live peaceful quiet lives, demonstrate qualities which complement our message, and know any suffering we undergo is temporary since we're on earth a short time (Phil. 2:12-16; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 1 Tim. 2:1-6).

Moreover, I watch **Christians often Get Sidetracked from Our Mission** such as when the Black Lives Matter Movement emerged. I must admit, as a so-called white man, my first reaction to the mantra **'Silence is Violence'** was negative because I felt it attacked my life's core purpose of serving Christ. But, after evaluating the issues in light of the Word and the views of acquaintances, some of whom are Black, I could understand these citizens' sense of inequity in addition to their high level of frustration since full resolution for the Country's discrimination hadn't happened, though it's been over 150 years.

So, I concluded **The Body of Christ Should Be The Posterchild for Equity and Inclusion** because not only Blacks, but millions of Hispanic, Arab, Asian, Native American, and Island people make up our family. Therefore, we should insist no one in the Church harbors racist tendencies or affiliates with groups like the KKK, for this should make us sick.

Also, rather than challenging philosophies which contain some unbiblical aspects, we should concentrate on verbalizing positive comebacks such as, **'Jesus loves all people, and I'm involved in sharing the eternal life offered by Him'**. Keep in mind, the next new hot-button issue has already formed below the horizon and will soon captivate society's attention.

Now to hijack a notion, **We Should Advocate Godly Segregation** – God's children should sustain a healthy separation from secular American culture. For, Christians need to recognize who we are. We're "foreigners" and our key "citizenship exists in the heavens" (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11). When we joined the Body, each of us lost all earthly identity since "there isn't Jew or Greek, there isn't slave or free, there isn't

male and female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). We're "ambassadors" dispatched in a Battle for Souls, and each of us is a "soldier" *On a Heavenly Mission* so we shouldn't get entangled in **World-Related Conflict** (2 Cor. 5:14-21; 6:14-18; Eph. 6:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:3-4).

Listen carefully to Influencers, including Politicians, who quote the Bible. You'll find they either cite principles from Scripture intended for Israel or they pick out excerpts from the Church Epistles which apply to the Body of Christ. In simple terms, the Word was never intended to administer countries or non-Christians in **This Age of Satanic Rule**.

Issue 3 – Scripture Declares Life Begins at Conception

Romans 9 records, "Rebekka, while having a conception (κοιτην; literally "a bed") from one, Issac our father", produced their twins (vv. 10-13, cf. Heb. 13:4). This portion suggests from the time Rebekka conceived in their "bed", she didn't produce 'fetuses'

but the persons of Jacob and Esau. The same idea is portrayed by Genesis 4:1, "Eve . . . conceived and gave birth to Cain." In Hebrew, the verbs "conceived" and "gave birth to" have the same direct object which is "Cain". So, Eve didn't conceive one thing which turned into Cain, the "manchild" himself was initiated in her womb. Since the Bible teaches **Life Begins at Conception, Any Purposeful Termination of Pregnancy is Murder**.

Though this is the stance Christians should take, inevitably human reasoning enters the mix; **'What about in cases of rape or incest?' A Better Question is, 'What solution would God endorse for believers?'** When we espouse abortion, this view immediately lowers the value of life for all decision makers and can affect anyone else who knows about it. Also, the residual guilt of condoning murder will haunt all who contribute the rest of their life.

Now, rape and incest are heinous crimes, and there's nothing wrong with aiding in the prosecution of offenders. Although, we shouldn't stop there but also do all we can to support the underaged child or

woman who was violated. First, they should be assured the sexual assault wasn't their fault. Second, we should encourage them to carry the child to term; and if they choose not to keep the baby, we should help find good adoptive parents. Third, if financial help related to this physical and emotional trauma is appropriate, believers should step up.

Another question often raised is, **'What if the mother's life is in danger?'** Perhaps circumstances exist where a physiological health problem would deem abortion acceptable to God; I don't know. But, in such cases, I won't take part just like the *Multitude of Christian Medical Professionals* who hold similar convictions.

Having said this, I know a couple who had difficulty carrying pregnancies to term. During another, doctors told the wife she would die unless the child was aborted. They prayed about their dilemma, but knowing the probability still opted to trust the Lord and keep the baby. As it turned out, her body kicked in, so she and the child were fine. Then, she successfully

gave birth to more kids. Personally, I'm very proud of their courageous and provocative witness.

Like the earlier Covid 19 illustration, instead of channeling funds into social or political concerns, how about believers contribute resources to matters we know fully agree with interests approved by God. Shouldn't we *Put our Money Where Our Mouth Is*? By applying assets to problems within our ranks, we can make a compelling argument for the gospel as the world observes a **Wonderful, Loving Christian Community which Supports Itself** (Phil. 2:12-21; Titus 2:1-14).

In summary, I'm not encouraging believers to get politically involved but to focus on taking care of terminating life and other problems in our own house. I'm persuaded the Church's current lack of moral conviction is directly proportional to the time and effort lost while we endeavor to change society rather than ensure our people are taught how to attain and maintain godliness.

Sometimes I hear the defense, **'Well, at least we're doing something'**. Yes, but *Is This 'something' Counterproductive to God-Given Mandates*? As I see it, one huge problem is uniting with Mormons, Catholics, and other heretical Groups on issues like abortion. For, these legitimizing alliances give them more clout to mislead people by doctrines like salvation by works and other destructive beliefs.

Therefore, I think it's unwise for Christians to engage in debates centering on secular narratives such as **'Women's Rights'**, **'Human Rights'**, or **'The Rights of the Child'**. Instead, we should frame our teaching to Body members around **What's Right Before our Virtuous Creator and Lord**.

Likewise, with reference to evangelism, we should search for ways to share without generating stumbling blocks. In chats about abortion, I've begun to ask, **'Aren't you glad your mother didn't abort you?'** Then, if this successfully diverts our conversation from that topic, which it normally does, I'm able to segue into how human beings are special creations

of God, why mankind is separated from Him, and how Jesus is the answer.

Issue 4 – Today, Unbelieving Jews aren't God's People

Paul states, "Indeed, according to the gospel, *they're* enemies (εχθροι) because of you" (Rom. 11:28). The "you" in this verse refers to *the Church* which is comprised of saved Jews and gentiles. For, Christ eliminated the "enmity" (εχθραν) or *hatred* between these two groups as well as their *hostility* with God (Rom. 3:28-30; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:21-23). Although the Greek text lacks a verb of being, a present tense one is understood so I added the contraction *"they're"*.[6]

So, this verse teaches **Israelis Who Currently Don't Believe in Christ Should be Designated as God's Adversaries**, not His people (Eph. 2:1-3). This assessment is tempered by the fact, "according to election, *they're* beloved because of the fathers". This means God will eventually keep everything He promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other patriarchs since

the "gifts and calling" for His elect "are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:28-29).

Even though many Jews lived in parts of the Promised Land in Paul's day, neither he nor any other N.T. writer (excluding Revelation) indicates they had any divine right to occupy that Land prior to Christ's return. Instead, he describes "the Jews" in "Judea" as "having killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and harshly persecuting us, and not pleasing God, and contrary to all men, while hindering us from speaking to the gentiles that they may be saved, unto the outcome to fill up their sins all the time; also the wrath has attained upon them unto the end" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). This portion clarifies, at that time unbelieving Jews were piling up "sins" which in "the end" will receive the judgment of God's "wrath".

Back in Romans, the "mystery" revelation, termed Paul's "gospel", is said to "establish" Christians. As such, **it also explains the present nature of God's dealings with the Jewish Nation** (11:25; 16:25-26). Since "a hardening has partially happened to Israel", this phrase and its context indicate God had sus-

pended His relationship with them (11:25, 30-32, cf. 9:14-18). This occurred after the "transgression" of rejecting their Christ (or *Messiah*, John 1:41; 4:25, cf. Mark 3:28-29) which resulted in "salvation" going "to the gentiles unto the outcome to provoke them (the Jews) to jealousy" (παραζηλωσαι – Rom. 11:11, 25, cf. Acts 28:24-28).

And since saving more gentiles synchronized with God's purpose of postponing His New Covenant with Israel and starting the unprophesied Church program, Paul concentrated on his "ministry" of being "an apostle to the gentiles . . . if somehow I might provoke my flesh (Jews) to jealousy (παραζηλωσω) and save some out of them" (Rom. 10:19; 11:13-14). So, why did God change from treating Israel as His special people? To show His entire creation that even though Jews had a past advantage, today all who enter a relationship with Him do so solely by His "mercy" (Rom. 11:30-32, cf. 3:1-2; 9:14-18).

This scenario will continue "until the full number of gentiles may come in", that is, be saved and join

the Body (Rom. 11:25). We're not quite there in the annals of history, but **When This Divine Maneuver Concludes**, "in this manner all Israel will be saved", "the Savior will come out of Zion" (O.T. name for Jerusalem), "their sins" will be forgiven, and their "acceptance" of Christ will result in "life out of the dead" (vv. 15, 26-27).

Since this divine strategy hasn't transpired yet, how should Christians view the present State of Israel? For, data in the Church Epistles shows God's people are comprised of believing Jews and gentiles, plus the Church has nothing to do with human borders or countries. Also, unlike times in the past, N.T. revelation provides no validation that God establishes or guides earthly Nations today.

By now, you're probably tracking my rationale. For, I don't believe it's justified to think the current Country of Israel exists by divine intervention. I absolutely believe God will send Christ back to rule as promised. However, when this Occupation is Combat-Secured, not one person will be lost (Exod. 14:14; Deut. 20:4; Judges 7:7 – 8:32; Rev. 19:11 – 20:3).

Second, when this "restoration of all things" occurs, God "will send Jesus Christ" accompanied by supernatural events (Acts 3:17-26). Third, this will happen quickly, such as "plagues" destroying "Babylon" in "one day" (Rev. 18:2, 8). Forth, the land mass Israel inherits will consist of far more real estate than they presently occupy (Gen. 15:18-21; Ezek. 47:13-23). And fifth, when this takes place, **God will make sure All Creation Knows He Alone Did It** (Ezek. 37:21-28; 38:23; 39:25-29).

Accordingly, the stance God used secular nations to establish the Jewish State in accordance with prophecy in 1948 contradicts biblical truth plus is premised on an allegorical approach to passages such as Matthew 24:32-35.[13] Also, I believe current calls to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" direct Christians down rabbit holes which have nothing to do with the agenda God gave the Church (Psalm 122:6).

Again, don't get me wrong, I'm not opposed to pacts or alliances between Nations of this world. For, at **This Time of Satanic Domination**, it's incumbent on

countries to be allied if they're to survive and thrive. What I'm saying is there's no evidence these affiliations have anything to do with God's guidance or the Church, so believers should guard our testimony and not get too deeply involved. Though, there's no scriptural issue with believers partaking in vocations like policing or the military (Acts 16:25-34; Phil. 1:12-14; 4:22).

On the other hand, I have a gigantic problem with anyone who **Invokes the Name of God in Secular Functions**, including the claim He endorses any military operation today. Remember, our allegiance is to God alone (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Therefore, our philosophy shouldn't be controlled by the O.T. concept of **'God and Country'**, but the Church Epistle teachings of **'Edification and Evangelism'**. So, we should access power from the Spirit in everything we do which can enable us to respond to any circumstance in a godly manner. This is the key aspect of our testimony that differentiates us from unbelievers.

In closing, under the U.S. Constitution all should have equal rights. However, the functional reality for

Christians is we can't use all the language or methods employed by unbelievers since **Our Conduct is Limited by a Heavenly Constitution Documented in The Church Epistles**.[1] We aren't supposed to "repay evil in the place of evil" or complain, fight, slander, deceive or lie, and the Word constantly preps us to expect affliction and suffering as we serve the Lord (Rom. 12:17).

Somehow, many still think it's okay to compromise and travel a flesh-surfaced road to alleviate hurt and make life relationally, psychologically, or financially easier. Instead, we should abandon backing **'the lesser of two evils'** and **Follow True Hero-Examples**. Mine are Jesus, Paul, Peter, and a few faithful brethren I've known. Who are yours?

With far less knowledge, back in the latter 1980s I dropped out of politics and stopped voting. At present, the same convictions outlined in this section are held by some Brethren and most Amish groups. Ironically, the Jehovah's Witness Cult holds this same position. The common thread is *A Recognition God's People Have No Current Ties To, thus, Shouldn't*

Function in Unison With Systems of This World (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 4:17-24; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 4:1-4).

So, beyond challenging believers to rethink the Word's counsel on this issue, I encourage Bible teachers who agree with my conclusions to stop being silent for fear of losing respect or numbers and begin vocalizing what they know to edify the Body. For, **Only God's Truth Equips Us Soldiers to Prepare for and Win in This Scary Earth-Bound Conflict**.

Section 3: Edification Creates Combat Readiness

Having covered many aspects of the Word that guide our all-out war of evangelism, this segment contemplates passages which typify the attributes needed for **Our Spiritual Battle related to Personal Growth and Edifying the Church**.[1] First, **'The Fruits of the Spirit'** will be examined since they embody several traits essential for our maturation process. Then, First Thessalonians 2:1-12 will be explored to identify motives, attitudes, and actions vital for our Christian life

and ministry. Finally, Romans 12:9-21 presents additional qualities required to integrate God's love into our daily routine. Overall, these expositions target the Spirit-produced character we must obtain to effectively serve the Lord.

Keep in mind, the qualities, acts, and beliefs God wants us to "put on" will continue to be labeled with an **'I'** to represent *Intents*, an **'A'** to signify *Attitudes*, and a **'D'** for *Deeds*. Also, a **'G'** will designate the *General character traits* we're supposed to acquire.

Galatians 5:22-23

"Also, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, inner strength; there is no law against such things."

The most common quality for Our Impending Battle which represents the essence of God and we can implement by the Spirit's power is "love" (αγαπη – **I, A, D**, Eph. 4:24; 6:11). The simplest definition I've heard for "love" is *doing what is best for someone else* or, even, *ourselves*. Second on this list is the trait of

"joy" (χαρα – **A**) which shows itself through *delight* or *pleasure* in our speech and actions. Next, we experience "peace" (ειρηνη – **I, A, D**) when the Spirit weaves *harmony* and *tranquility* into our hearts. For, unless *serenity* occupies our "inner man" and relationships, we'll be stressed in Our Personal Struggle (Rom. 12:17-21; Eph. 3:16-20; Phil. 4:6-9).

Complementing these is "patience" (μακροθυμια – **A, D**). This term is often translated 'longsuffering' because it's from "μακρος", which speaks of *length*, and "θυμος" meaning *the life center of our being*. Forms of the second noun are used in reference to sacrifices, so this two-part word really refers to *being slow to pour out our inner self*. Then, regarding emotion, to *curtail anger* at others or, again, ourselves (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 10:5, 12). The fifth fruit we can be clothed with is "kindness" (χρηστοτης – **A, D**) which holds the idea of *providing what is needed*, therefore, being *beneficial* or *helpful*.

Next, "goodness" (αγαθωσυνη – **I, D**) represents *a broad spectrum of decent acts*. Excellent synonyms would be *all kinds of virtue* and *uprightness*. Then,

"faithfulness" (πιστις – **D**) conveys *showing trustworthiness* or *fidelity*. This list also includes "gentleness" (πραυτης – **A, D**) which indicates a *soothing calmness* should augment our personality. Lastly, the Spirit can help us obtain "inner strength" (εγκρατεια – **A, D**), this term's literal meaning, also well rendered *temperance* or *self-control*.

Just by incorporating these fruitful qualities goes a long way toward outfitting us to handle Satan's coordinated and relentless onslaught designed to impede those who wish to obey the Lord. Also, the fact Paul states "there is no law against such things" shows these nine grace-traits are common with behavior taught in the Law of Moses (Rom. 3:31; 6:14).

First Thessalonians 2:1-12

Certain portions of Scripture impact Christians differently, and for a long time this passage has impressed me by how it portrays the overall nature of ministry. Prior to chapter 2, Paul describes "what sort of entrance" he, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy had with the Thessalonian believers. For, these converts took

a significant turn from worshipping "idols to serve a living and true God" plus "await His Son out of the heavens" with a fresh hope of escaping "the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

The text also states this transformation was so profound they readily shared their "faith" in "Macedonia . . . Achaia" and "every place" so Paul and his comrades had "no need to speak anything". Basically, that region no longer required outside evangelists since these new believers were doing such a great job proclaiming the gospel (vv. 7-8).

The "entrance" (εισοδον – **D**) Paul and his companions had with this community is conveyed by the preposition "εις", which means *into*, affixed to the noun "οδος", denoting *a road* or *way* (1 Thess. 2:9). This term represents the *way into*, or *inroad* they had during a brief three-to-four-week period (Acts 17:1-4). Its antonym "εξοδος" is the title of the Bible's second Book which details Israel's *way out of* or *exit from* Egypt.

The added adjective "what sort of" (οποιαν) further describes the *kind* or *quality* of reception achieved among these prospects. Then, following this overview of how the gospel penetrated this locale, "εισοδον" is repeated *to highlight the many Spirit-energized techniques* used to attain this dramatic pathway into the Thessalonian's hearts (1 Thess. 2:1).

"For you yourselves know, brethren, our entrance toward you that it has not become empty, but having suffered beforehand and been maltreated in Philippi, according as you know, we chose to be bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much agony." (1 Thess. 2:1-2)

Paul declares their "entrance" to these "brethren . . . has not become empty" (κενη). This noun means to be *vain* or *void* and refers to *absence of quality* (Acts 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:10, 14, 58; Phil. 2:16; James 2:20).[7] Since this phrase implies their ministry *didn't lack excellence*, and it's paired with the adjective "what sort of" (οποιαν – 1:9), both concepts point to the *outstanding results produced by their methods* – **Enthusiastic and Passionate Believers**.

The first element enhancing this outcome was these saints' knowledge of how Paul's group had previously "suffered" and "been maltreated in Phillipi" (Acts 16:12-40). After realizing these ministers had endured trauma from proclaiming the gospel there, it was clear they were again willing to risk persecution by *choosing* "to be bold" (επαρρησιασαμεθα – **D**, middle voice) and preach at Thessalonica.

Boldness or **Openness of Speech** is a central feature of Paul's ministry. It's one of the reasons for his success and, thus, an attribute all believers are urged to "put on" (Acts 9:28; 13:46; 2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4; Eph. 6:19-20; Phil. 1:20). The fact they asserted themselves in Phillipi and now at this town in the face of "much agony" (αγωνι – **D**) or *struggle* made a big impression on these prospects and converts. For, their courage amid opposition sparked crowds to consider the supreme importance of their message (Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 1:5-8; 2 Tim. 4:7).

"For, our encouragement isn't out of deception, also not out of uncleanness, also not in trickery, but just as we've been approved by God to be entrusted with

the gospel, likewise we speak, not as pleasing men but God who approves our hearts." (1 Thess. 2:3-4)

Now, Paul addresses some of the *underlying motives* which reinforced his effective methodology. First, he says it wasn't "out of" or *sourced in* "deception" (πλανης – **I, D**). This word depicts the *act of leading astray* or *fraud*, and it's used to describe the work of sin and the Devil (Rom. 1:27; Eph. 4:14; James 5:20; 2 Pet. 3:17; 1 John 4:6).

Second, their approach wasn't *sourced in* "uncleanness" (ακαθαρσιας – **I, D**) or *impure objectives*. Nor was it instigated by "trickery" (δολῳ – **I, D**), the desire to *ensnare* or *entrap* the unsuspecting. By simply being real, upfront, and honest, they gained respect and proved their motives were pure.

In contrast to arriving with evil intent, Paul and his fellow ministers entered Macedonia with the knowledge they had been "approved by God". Since they knew they *operated with a divine mandate*, what kept their words and deeds in check while executing their plan?

On the one hand, they *vigorously* (active voice) sought to be "pleasing" (αρεσκοντες – **I, D**) to "God" and, on the other hand, they bore in mind He's the one who "approves" (δοκιμαζοντι – **I**) or *validates* their hearts. Since they were *routinely* (present tense participles) concerned about displeasing the Father and reaping His disapproval, this accountability-producing mindset resulted in godward integrity which, coupled with the broadcast Word, attracted interest.

"For, neither once we were made to come with a message of flattery, just as you know, nor in a pretense associated with covetousness; God *is* witness; neither seeking glory out of men, neither from you, nor from others, while choosing to be made able to be a burden as apostles of Christ, but we were made to be gentle in your midst as a nurse might cherish her own children." (1 Thess. 2:5-7)

"We were made to come" (εγενηθημεν – **I**) is a verb of being which expresses how *their action emerged* or *came to fruition*. Appearing in the passive voice with the negative "ου" (inside "ουτε"), this term indicates *an outside energy didn't cause* their "message"

or *speech* to include "flattery" (κολακειας – **I, D**). Had they *sweet-talked* these converts even "once", this behavior would've shown they were seeking to manipulate minds and hearts by their "flesh". Instead, Paul and his colleagues purposely avoided this tactic which silently confirmed their motives were Spirit based (2 Cor. 10:3-4; 1 Thess. 1:5).

Neither were they caused to appeal to these brothers with a "pretense" (προφασει – **I**) or *pretext* of "covetousness" (πλεονεξιας – **I, A, D**, Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; 2 Cor. 9:5; Eph. 4:19; 5:3). Again, *posturing* and *greed* would've led their audience to feel shammed and obligated to repay those who delivered the gospel message rather than being confident they could freely profit from its virtue.

Then, to prove these claims, Paul declares "God *is* witness" (μαρτυς – **G**); *He testifies on their behalf*. Just as someone swears to be truthful at a trial by placing their hand on the Bible, Paul realized the Spirit in tandem with their carefully crafted conduct would convince those reading this Letter his

contingent was purely out to benefit everyone they met (1 Thess. 2:13).

Furthermore, Paul asserts they weren't "seeking glory" (δοξαν – **I, A, D**) from the Thessalonians or "others". On the contrary, their full intent was to *represent God* in a manner which all would *perceive, then glorify Christ* as the great and holy Savior. Once more, while demonstrating immaculate ethics, people never felt threatened or taken advantage of. Quite the opposite, prospects and new believers were comfortable with their *obvious lack of selfishness*. It was clear they weren't looking for recognition or compensation – two of the most sought-after goals in this covetous world (1 Tim. 3:3; 6:5-11; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

Continuing the claim greed had no part in their actions, Paul writes, "while choosing to be made able (δυναμενοι – **D**) to be a burden as apostles of Christ" (1 Thess. 2:7). This participle indicates Paul's consortium "as apostles of Christ" *constantly* (present tense) had the ability *to choose* (middle voice) to "be made able" (passive) to be "a burden" (βαρει – **I, A, D**, cf. 2 Cor. 11:9; 12:16 [κατα + βαρεω]; 1 Thess. 2:9;

2 Thess. 3:8 [επι + βαρεω]).[2] This term comes across as our word 'bar' and means *a weight*. It's seen in the terms 'barbell' and 'barometer', a device that measures *atmospheric pressure*.

The kind of weight signified here is **A Financial Burden** since "apostles", just like Levitical Priests, possessed God-given "authority" (εξουσιαν – **I, A, D**) to expect money or goods for their services (Matt. 10:1-15; 1 Cor. 9:4-12; 2 Thess. 3:9). However, even though they had this *right*, since Body members aren't under the Law of Moses and "apostles" no longer exist, Christians aren't authorized to apply this principle since it functions in conjunction with the "tithe".

Instead, Paul and his fellows habitually worked with their hands to provide their own needs in order to *Typify Christian Responsibility* which all "brethren" including "elders" should "imitate" (Acts 20:17-35; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Thess. 3:6-16). **This Practice is An Essential Part of Our Christian Standard**, for **"It's more blessed to give than to receive"** and **"if anyone doesn't continuously** (present tense) **desire to work, also don't let him eat!"** (Acts. 20:35; 2 Thess. 3:10).

Because of this conviction, Paul and his delegation never portrayed the idea they were owed anything for ministry nor tried to finagle compensation from anyone but purposely avoided asking to be paid for their efforts. So, he always maintained a *No-Strings-Attached Example* whether evangelizing or edifying believers. As stated, he never preached the gospel with a "pretense" of "covetousness" (1 Thess. 4:5). Therefore, **eliminating monetary barriers furnished another attractive incentive** which helped the Thessalonians focus entirely on the benefits of the gospel.

Granted, Paul did raise contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem, but he never asked for financial support for his own ministry. Though, he did thank those who helped him during times of need like when he was running for his life or incarcerated since those conditions didn't allow him to work (Acts 17:4-6, 12-14; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8 – 9; 12:14-18; Phil 4:15-19).

Otherwise, he labored to provide his own needs as well as those ministering with him (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Thess. 2:9). Also, he taught believers to supplement the "needs" or "burdens" of other Body members

and leaders if circumstances, including ministry-time, caused a deficit in their ability to provide food and shelter for their family (Gal. 6:1-6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 6:5-10).

Even so, **No Passage in The Church Epistles Justifies the Stance of Expecting Compensation for Ministry if A Person is Able to Provide Their Own Needs**.[1] And, with few exceptions, in developed countries Christians can finance their basic needs. By this standard, missionary pursuits where self-support is difficult would provide a credible reason to raise funds.

Finally, those heeding this lesson and working for their own needs remove a great "stumbling block" from Preaching The Blood of The Cross or Teaching Holiness. For these **Operations of Spiritual Confrontation** initiate plenty of resistance and "offence" on their own. Therefore, we must avoid an improper relation to money since it provides a cause for criticism and often results in compromise (Rom. 9:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 2:17; Gal. 5:11; 1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:8).

Instead of chasing monetary gain, Paul says, "we were made to become (εγενηθημεν – **I, D**) gentle in your midst as a nurse might cherish her own children" (1 Thess. 2:7). For a second time, this verb occurs in the passive voice stressing *how their behavior was under the Spirit's control*. Hence, they *were made* "gentle" (ηπιοι – **A, D**), *mild*, or *kind* among these converts as a "nurse" (τροφος – **A, D**), or literally *any feeder* like a parent, "might cherish" their offspring.

To grasp the meaning of the verb "cherish" (θαλπῃ – **I, A, D**), consider its only other occurrence where husbands are told to "cherish" their wives just like their own bodies (Eph. 5:29). This term basically means *to warm* or *heat*, so bearing in mind the woman's created makeup as the "weaker vessel" as well as the frail stature of children, we can picture the *gentle* and *warm-embracing care* which distinguished the demeanor of Paul and his associates (1 Pet. 3:7).

". . . likewise, while choosing to be made to have a strong affection for you, we thought it well to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but our own

life-essence, because you were made to become beloved ones to us." (1 Thess. 2:8)

The adverb "likewise" (ουτως), or *in similar manner*, connects this verse with the preceding context and indicates what's stated next continues to add evidence that Paul and his fellows practiced genuine concern. And since the participle "choosing to be made to have a strong affection" (ομειρομενοι – **I, A**) occurs in a dual voice form, it shows they *personally decided* (middle) to *be caused* (passive), by outside power from the Spirit, *to deeply desire* these brethren.[2]

Stemming from this celestial feeling, Paul adds, "we thought it well to impart" (μεταδουναι – **D**) or *share* two things. First, they desired to distribute "the gospel of God" (**G**), *the message which can produce eternal salvation and subsequent holiness*. However, they didn't stop there "but" also shared their own "life-essence" (ψυχας – **I, A, D**) or *lives*, a term often rendered "souls" (Acts 15:24; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:19; Rev. 6:9; 20:4).

Since the totality of our human condition is expressed by the phrase "spirit and soul and body" later in this Book, the "soul" (ψυχη) is defined as everything contained within our "body", or *corpse*, other than the "spirit" dimension – *our moral center* (1 Thess. 5:23). So, this term specifies **they spent their entire mental and physical capacity** to serve these believers.

Why did they gladly expend this effort? The explanation given is, "because you were made to become (εγενηθητε – **I, D**) beloved ones to us" (1 Thess. 2:8). This verb depicts *coming into existence*, and its third passive voice form in this context indicates *an outside energy made these believers* "beloved" (αγαπητοι – **A, G**) or *precious*.

This phrase is clarified earlier in the Letter where these "brethren" are identified as "having been loved (ηγαπημενοι) by God" since *they know* they're recipients of His "election" (1:4, cf. Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13). Viewing them as *personally selected by God*, just like he and everyone else in the Body, Paul regularly calls believers "beloved", then pours out his life-energy to **Aid His Extended Family**

Members (Rom. 8:15; 11:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:18; 2 Cor. 4:1-15; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 2:17-18).

"For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil night and day while constantly choosing to be made to work toward the outcome not to put a burden on anyone of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God; you and God *are* witnesses how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we were made to come to you who believe, according as you know how *we were made to come* to each one of you as a father of his own children, while continuously encouraging and comforting and testifying unto the outcome for you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:9-11)

Next, Paul directs these "brethren" to "remember" how hard he and his associates worked while at their town. He wants them to recall the "labor" (κοπον – **D**) or *exhausting work* and "toil" (μοχθον – **D**) or *hard employment* they took so as not to "put a burden on" (επιβαρησαι – **I, A, D**) these converts, that is, a *monetary weight*.

As outsiders and temporary laborers, they likely had to accept the most difficult jobs. And their willingness to do so complemented their objective not to come across as superior, have a "pretense" of "covetousness", seek "glory", or place an economic "burden" on them but, instead, to sacrifice as if they were family (1 Thess. 2:5-8). Besides, they were probably sleep-deprived since they kept busy "night and day" or *around the clock* (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27).

The participle "εργαζομενοι" (**I, A, D**) specifies Paul and his colleagues preached the gospel "while constantly" (present tense) "choosing" (middle) "to be made" (passive) "to work" (1 Thess. 2:9).[2] This dual voiced term indicates *they tapped outside power from the Spirit* to sustain pure motives, attitudes, and deeds as they ministered. In particular, *He Repeats the Fact* they never put a financial "burden" on them **To Model the Principle All Christians Should Finance Their Own Needs**. Lastly, he affirms "you and God *are* witnesses" and "know" the character "we were made to come" (εγενηθημεν – **I, A, D**, passive voice) with, the kind of behavior "a father" warmly shows "his own children" (1 Thess. 2:10-11).

This **Narrative of Ministry Essentials** concludes by veering in on the reason they sustained this exceptional routine. For, Paul mentions their encouragement, comfort and testimony was "unto the outcome for you to walk in a manner worthy of God". In other words, their aim for these brethren who entered this spiritual "kingdom" was to represent Jesus' "glory" in all areas of life (1 Thess. 2:12, cf. 1:6-10; 2:4, 6). While contemplating this extended portion, **May Each of Us Take to Heart the Plethora of Sanctifying Motives and ABCs of Conduct to Boost Our Own Service for The Lord**.

Romans 12:9-21

This section's final passage solidifies several more lessons and procedures which help believers advance toward Spirit-led maturity, **Becoming Equipped for Our Heavenly Conflict** (Eph. 4:24; 6:10-11; Col. 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:17). The Roman Church was privileged to have the power couple of Pricilla (Prisca) and Aquilla along with others who were "beloved" (αγαπητον **– G**), "approved" (δοκιμον **– I, D**), and "labored in the Lord" (Rom. 16:3-13). With these assets, Paul was

confident their assemblies had what it takes to be ready for action, "Also, I myself have been persuaded concerning you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, having chosen to be filled with all knowledge, and having chosen to be made able to counsel (or "admonish") one another" (15:14).[2]

Most Christians are familiar with First Corinthians 13:4-7 which presents *Basic Qualities of Love* in a remarkable way. However, this Roman passage is another less-celebrated portion which delves deep into **The Essence of What Love Is** and **Brims with Life-Changing Properties**.

"Love *is* unhypocritical, while abhorring evil, while choosing to be joined to good" (Rom. 12:9).

The Greek text doesn't include a verb of being in the statement, "love *is* unhypocritical". Yet, it's understood since every noun, including "love" (αγαπη – **I, A, D**), inherently contains *substance* and, as such, possesses *existence* or *being*.[6] Furthermore, when adding a verb of being it's always legitimate to insert its indicative mode form which *portrays a statement*

of fact. Instead, many Translations add the imperative mode (command) sense, **'let love be'**, which is probably because it occurs in a behavior-modifying context (Rom. 12:1-2).

However, when *the basic idea set forth by the grammar* is followed, this phrase emphasizes **What The Core Essence of Love Is**. Carrying this construct forward, the rest of the chapter can more clearly be seen for what it communicates: **Expressions of Mentality and Action which Define the Functional Outworking of "love"**. Note, Versions that preserve this view.[8]

The first term which describes godly "love" is the adjective "unhypocritical" (ανυποκριτος **– I, A, D**). It's made up of the preposition "υπο", meaning *under*, affixed to the noun "κρισις", which transliterates to our word 'crisis' and conveys the concept of *judgment*. This compound word is prefixed with an *alpha* (α) which *negates its meaning*. The ancient Greeks called stage actors 'hypocrites' since its literal translation is *an interpreter from underneath*.

No wonder it's still used for politicians caught in scandal or religious leaders acting counter to their creed.[9] Other good renderings are 'sincere' (NIV), 'genuine' (ESV), 'free from hypocrisy' (TGNT), and 'non-pretended' (MLV). God doesn't want us to *feign* truth, but to be straightforward in speech and life-style. For, hypocrisy amounts to putting on a show with the motive of manipulating fellow Body members to think and act in the flesh. This is unacceptable for any Christian, especially leaders (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:1-13; 1 Pet. 1:22; 5:1-4).

The text continues, "while abhorring (αποστυγουντες **– I, A, D**) evil" (Rom. 12:9). Every participle acts as a *verbal adjective*, and this one describes a property of sincere "love". In its nominative plural form, this term *designates believers as its subject* who perform the action. Also, this nominative plural participle is just the first of many which appear in this chapter and encapsulate the kind of behavior God desires us to exhibit.

It's composed of the preposition "απο", which portrays the directional idea of *going away from*, affixed

to the verb "στυγεω", meaning *to hate*. So, we're supposed to *continuously* (present tense) and *vigorously* (active voice) *loathe* or *despise* "evil" (πονηρον), a term used to represent anything *bad* or *wicked*.

After addressing how believers should view "evil", Paul targets a constructive life direction, "while choosing to be joined (κολλωμενοι **– I, D**) to good" (Rom. 12:9). The meaning of this participle illustrates how we should *glue* ourselves to, thus *cleave* to "good" (αγαθῳ). This noun depicts the exact opposite of the term "evil" and stands for *all things virtuous; attributes* and *deeds* God wants His children to adopt. With this as our goal, we'll dedicate time to "choosing" (middle voice) "to be" (passive), by enablement from the Spirit, *bound to the routine* (present tense) of "good", another evidence of genuine "love".[2]

"*being* lovingly affectionate ones with brotherly love unto one another, while choosing to be caused to prefer one another in value, not *being* hesitant ones in relation to diligence, while being fervent in spirit (or "Spirit"), while serving the Lord, while rejoicing in reference to the hope, while choosing to be enabled

to endure affliction, while persevering in prayer, while participating in the needs of the saints, while pursuing hospitality." (Rom. 12:10-13)

In these four short verses, I've rendered the present tense participles with "while" to emphasize we're to *be constantly absorbed* in these behaviors since *each verbal adjective* contributes to the description of heartfelt "love". Like these participles, "lovingly affectionate ones" (φιλοστοργοι **– I, D**) is a nominative plural noun, so it too represents *the temperament we're to have*, though no verb of being is present (v. 10).[6] It's built from "φιλος", which means *a loved one* or *friend*, and "στοργη", signifying *natural affection* between family members.

Although "φιλος" is commonly taught that it doesn't convey divine love like "αγαπη", contexts like this contradict that opinion and show the two terms overlap in meaning. So, to demonstrate Spirit-sourced "love", Body members should *display warm regard* to "one another" with "brotherly love" (φιλος + αδελφος **– I, A, D**), since at salvation we enter *a new and eternal family relationship*.

We're not to simply pretend to like our spiritual siblings since this would equate to *hypocritical love*, but to relate "while choosing to be caused to prefer (προηγουμενοι **– I, A, D**) one another in value" (Rom. 12:10). This participle is from the preposition "προ", which means *before* or *prior*, tied to the verb "ηγεομαι", meaning to *lead the way*. Even though this compound word only occurs here, its verb part by itself conveys the idea of *considering* or *regarding* which requires *making prior choices* (Phil. 2:3, 25; 3:7-8; 1 Thess. 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:15).

Then, it's dual voice form further emphasizes "choosing" (middle) "to be caused" (passive), *by the Spirit's power*, to give preference to "one another" – me to you and you to me.[2] Thus, we're *to condition our hearts* to see the "value" (τιμη **– I, A, D**) or *worth* all Body members possess to help facilitate working together.

Next, we're "not" to be "hesitant ones (οκνηροι) in relation to diligence" (Rom. 12:11). This noun portrays *shrinking back* or *being unready*. Conversely, "diligence" (σπουδη **– D**) speaks of *hastiness* and,

thus, *being busy*. How are Christians to develop this type of readiness? To empower the conduct taught here, this verse declares we should be "fervent in spirit, while serving the Lord". The present participle "while being fervent" (ζεοντες **– I, A**) means *to boil up like a hot spring*, but both N.T. uses depict its metaphorical sense of *boiling with passion* "in spirit" or "Spirit" (Acts 18:25).[10]

The noun "spirit" (πνευματι **– I, A, D, G**) can refer to our human spirit or the Holy Spirit. Scripture reveals that after we're saved and permanently receive the indwelling Spirit, He interacts with our human spirit. Many of these same passages explain how we must choose to "walk by the Spirit" if His fervency is to influence our behavior (Gal. 5:16-18; Rom. 8:9-16; 1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 4:22-24). Therefore, when we submit to His enablement, like Apollos, we can experience Spirit-energized service for the "Lord" (κυριῳ **– I, G**, Acts 18:24-28; Rom. 12:11).

Another attribute of fervent and unpretentious "love" is "while rejoicing (χαιροντες **– A, D**) in regard to the hope" (Rom. 12:12). This participle signifies we ought

to *constantly* (present tense) *exhibit delight* in our "hope" (ελπιδι **– A, G**) – the Lord's return when God *transforms us into full conformity with Christ's sinless image* (Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:3-4; Tit. 2:13-14). When believers revel in our shared future "glory", this virtual reality will positively modify the way we rally around one another while we **Mutually Fight the Presiding Conflict on Earth**.

This eternal perspective helps a lot when we find ourselves in need of "choosing to be enabled to endure (υπομενοντες **– A, D**) affliction" (Rom. 12:12). This participle is composed of two words literally meaning *to remain under* and always occurs in contexts which speak to the necessity of *sustaining through* "affliction" (θλιψει **– I, A**). So, if we're to be even keeled and *withstand persecution*, we must *regularly* (present tense) *choose* (middle voice) "to be enabled" (passive), *by the Spirit*, so we won't deviate from God's purpose while battling evil forces (Rom. 6:11-23; 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:57-58; Col. 1:23; Heb. 6:19).[2]

Another indispensable factor for an ardent, love-motivated existence is, "while persevering (προσκαρτερ-

ουντες **– A, D**) in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). This participle consists of the preposition "προς", meaning *toward*, and the verb "καρτερεω", which conveys *being strong* or *persistent*. If we're to experience the full thrust of God's support, we need to *constantly* (present tense) and *vigorously* (active voice) draw upon *Spirit-aided fortitude* to approach the Father in "prayer" (προ-σευχῃ **– G**). This medium enables Christians to assist other Body members in a uniquely intangible way.

The next ingredient in a love-purposed life is "participating (κοινωνουντες **– A, D**) in the needs of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). This participle is also a present active form which specifies we're to get *constantly* and *vigorously* involved with *sharing in* "the needs of the saints" (αγιων **– A, G**).

In this concern, it's vital we aren't deceived by widespread theology which propagates the view only some Christians throughout history are **'Saints'**. This heresy purports certain folks should be venerated, and even prayed to, as if they've somehow achieved *perfect holiness*, which is what this Greek term really means. The truth is *all believers hold the position*

of being "saints" in God's sight because we reside "in Christ". Though, we still exist and function as a community of sinners who should look out for "one another" to ensure no one lacks basic needs (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Eph. 1:4; 4:28; 1 Tim. 6:7-10, 17-19).

Some even designate Paul as a special **'Saint'**, though there's no indication he could or did reach perfection (Phil. 3:12-13; 1 Tim. 1:12-16). In fact, when he and Barnabas performed "signs and wonders" in Lystra, they "rent" their "garments" in strong protest when people wanted to "sacrifice" to them as if they were "gods" worthy of worship (Acts 14:1-18).

Growing up in Catholicism, I was taught to depend on so-called **'Saints'**, a practice I now know *promotes a corrupt view of the true holiness of God and diverts people from relying on the only Person who can help – Jesus*. For, Our Purity Comes Only By Grace as **God bestows sainthood on every Christian In a Judicial Sense** (Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22).

In addition to providing the basic life-needs of others, we're to be "pursuing hospitality" (φιλοξενιαν **– A,**

D, Rom. 12:13). Again, this word is made up of the noun "φιλος" affixed to "ξενος", which designates *a stranger*. So, this term means *the love of strangers* and, considering its context, most likely refers to caring for unknown believers visiting an area. As a point of interest, its opposite 'xenophobia' (ξενος + φοβια) describes *a fear of strangers*. Also, the adjoining participle tells us to *continuously* (present tense) and *vigorously* (active voice) be "pursuing" (διωκοντες **– D**) or *chasing after* accommodating this class of guests.

"You speak well about those persecuting you, you speak well about *them* and don't curse. *You're* to rejoice with those rejoicing, to weep with those weeping, while thinking the same thing unto one another, not thinking lofty things but choosing to be guided away with the lowly. You don't choose to be made thinking ones beyond yourselves." (Rom. 12:14-16)

Continuing the illustration of love in action, we're commanded (imperative), "You speak well (ευλογειτε **– I, A, D**) about those persecuting you" (Rom. 12:14). This verb, from which we derive the word 'eulogy', combines the adverb "ευ", meaning *well* or *good*,

with the verb "λογεω", which signifies *forming a message*. So, when others are *regularly* (present tense) "persecuting" (διωκοντας) us, or *pursuing with negative intent*, we're not to respond in like manner but *habitually* (present tense) and *robustly* (active voice) *emphasize positive aspects* of our association. For, each friction-triggering aggression offers an opportunity to react with a Spirit-assisted reply which can benefit all. This practice **showcases the value of being delivered from the control of sin** (6:2-14).

The last admonition precedes two more *orders* (imperatives), "you speak well about them and do not curse" (μη καταρασθε **– I, D**, Rom. 12:14). This verb means to *invoke* or *pray for evil to come upon* someone. So, rather than stooping to this common flesh-based response which often surfaces in cussing a person out, Paul repeats "you speak well about them". This command *holds us accountable to do the unexpected*. We should *eulogize* those who offend us, or *concentrate on their best side*, like when we share at a memorial. If we choose to "walk in the Spirit", we can overcome any frustrations that result from hostile acts of others (Gal. 5:16, 20; Eph. 4:29-31; 5:18).

Now we're told, "*You're* to rejoice (χαιρειν **– I, A, D**) with those rejoicing" (Rom. 12:15). Both the infinitive and participle in this phrase are in the present tense, so our *ordinary feedback* for those enjoying an achievement or receiving a gift should be *delight* and *celebration*. As we participate in their happiness, this act will please them even more.

Likewise, believers are "to weep (κλαιειν **– I, A, D**) with those weeping". This present tense infinitive and participle also signify we're to share *continuous mourning* or *feeling of sorrow* with the *despondent* or *grieving*. And with the Spirit's assistance, we all have unlimited capacity to empathize with and support those who hurt.

Following the traits of love portrayed in verses 9-15 which we're to internalize, Paul says we can attain these qualities "while thinking (φρονουντες **– I, A**) the same thing unto one another" (Rom. 12:16). This present active participle teaches Body members to *consistently* and *fervently devote our minds* to make sure we're on the same page. When we mutually consider "the same thing" (το αυτο), *standards*, or *di-*

vine truths "unto one another", this practice helps us build a greater sense of camaraderie. It also insures we won't be sidetracked by "thinking (φρονουντες **– I, A**) lofty things". Remember, Greek terms are repeated to accent a thought, and *both participles stress the need to develop a favorable frame of mind* if we're to carry out our "calling" (Eph. 4:1-16; Phil 2:1-5).

At the base, this requires not thinking "lofty things" (τα υψυλα **– I, A**) or *highfalutin' thoughts* about "one another"; judgements that give rise to hate, disunity, and condescension (Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 10:5). Then, Paul voices the way to avoid a critical attitude, "choosing to be guided away (συναπαγομενοι **– I, D**) with the lowly". This participle joins the verb "αγω", which means *to go*, with two prepositions: "συν", meaning *with*, and "απο", signifying *from*. Together, they convey *going from with* which suggests we should *move away from* anyone who retains a proud line and *gravitate toward* "the lowly" (ταπεινοις) or *humble* (1 Pet. 5:5). Don't get conned! **Any Christian will be Infected by the Personality of Those We Choose to Hang Out With – Good or Bad**.

Therefore, believers can best mature when we're "choosing" (middle voice) *as the Spirit guides us* "away with" (passive) "the lowly" (Rom. 12:16).[2] This approach consists of *regularly* (present tense) rubbing shoulders with those who use their gifts to exhibit Spirit-led modesty and, at the same time, renounce and circumvent the flesh-emitting poison of those who crave self-promotion.

The verse closes with one last charge, "You choose not to be made thinking ones beyond yourselves" (Rom. 12:16).[2] I translated this noun "thinking ones" (φρονιμοι **– I, A**) to demonstrate its stem directly relates to the two preceding participles. This *Threesome of Terms Screams a Warning*. We shouldn't *allow our brain to perceive* our worth as "beyond yourselves" (παρ' εαυτοις) and be duped by the view: **I'm more important than other Body members**. For, when we accept the Church-Epistle definition of our condition, we'll recognize everyone has equal value since we're all saved by grace, gifted by God, and have *identical Spirit-assisted access to the Father* for growth and ministry (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 4:6; 12:12-26; Eph. 2:18).[1]

"Also, while not repaying evil in place of evil to anyone, while choosing to be caused to think beforehand about good in the presence of all men; if *you're* able, the *ability which is* out of you, while being at peace with all men; while not avenging yourselves, beloved, but you consciously give a place to the wrath, for it has been written, 'Vengeance is mine; I shall repay' says the Lord. But 'If your enemy hungers, you give him food; if he thirsts, you give him drink; for while doing this you'll heap coals of fire on his head.' You're not to choose to be overcome by evil, but you're constantly and vigorously to overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:17-21)

It's intriguing the Spirit inspired Paul to write so much about how Christians should respond to malice sent our way. The number of reactive lessons contained in these five verses alone underline the importance of grasping **What God's Approved Counter-Measures Are** plus our ability to implement them.

This capacity will correspond with how well we've "put on" the "new man" properties of "love" just prescribed; a link supported by two points of

grammar. These are the connective conjunction "also" (δε – found in "μηδενι") and the nominative plural present participle "while . . . repaying" (αποδιδοντες **– I, D**) which follows others in like form and designates we, as its subject, are to *continuously plug this godly behavior into our lives* (Rom. 12:17).

This term assembles the preposition "απο", meaning *from*, and the verb "διδωμι", which denotes *giving*. In English, good equivalents are "not" to *deliver* or *impart* "evil in place of" (αντι) or *in response to* "evil" (κακου), that is, *wickedness* directed at us. So, how should we react? The text specifies we're to concentrate on "choosing to be caused to think beforehand (προνοουμενοι **– I, D**) about good in the presence of all men".

This participle is from the preposition "προ", meaning *before*, prefixed to the verb "νοεω", which means "to think" or *use the mind*. Also, its dual voice form directs us to *habitually* (present tense) focus on "choosing" (middle) "to be caused" (passive), *with the Spirit's help*, to devise reactions which center on "good" (καλα **– I, D**) or *anything beneficial*.[2]

This is *A Very Simple Principle*, yet it challenges our human condition. Because our natural reaction is to strike back with verbal and/or physical attacks. In secular encounters to protect life, limb or property, a harsh response may be warranted. But, pertaining to Battle-Exchanges in Our Heavenly Conflict, *this retort is highly inappropriate*. For, we're obligated to personify a changed life which includes undergoing adversity, though this consequence doesn't seem fair.

Think about it; we're not under the Law which allows "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" reactions (Lev. 24:20). So, we're to *take thought beforehand* and *get mentally prepared* to deliver good solutions "in the presence of" or *to be seen by* "all men", even if we're suffering oppression (Rom. 12:17; this term is in 2 Cor. 8:21 & 1 Tim. 5:8, see its noun "προνοιαν" in Rom. 13:14).

So, how can we fabricate "good" responses? Initially, we should implement the *Impeccable Character* needed to personally mature, help edify the Body, and supplement evangelism. The alternative is generating comebacks which, at best, exhibit anger or contempt and, at worst, show rage or retribution.

If we don't *mentally prepare* to respond to persecution by allowing the Spirit to help us learn positive principles then act upon them, *we'll mess up, do things we regret*, and *reap appropriate discipline* (1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 10:6; Gal. 6:7-9; Heb. 12:4-7). **This is How We Acquire Genuine Maturity for Combat-Readiness to Perform Well in the Most Complicated Situations** (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

In accord with this goal, verse 18 states, "if *you're* able, the *ability* out of you, while being at peace with all men." Let's begin by analyzing the present active participle which instructs us to Secrete Spiritual Sweat *on a regular* and *vigorous basis* so the community will perceive us as championing the cause of "being at peace" (ειρηνευοντες **– I, A, D**) or *sustaining serene relations*.

Note, this context holds us, not unbelievers, accountable to take the lead and go to great lengths to maintain calm exchanges "with all men", *fellow believers and the Lost alike*. This technique of non-confrontation – **A Divinely-Enabled Tactic of Triumph** – is diametrically opposed to the **Spirit-Grieving Deficiencies**

of complaining, slander, fighting, or protest, which are excluded from our repertoire since they inevitably incite friction (Eph. 4:30; Phil. 2:12-18; 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

Why are Christians held responsible to achieve and preserve peace? Because we have the *Indwelling Member of the Godhead* (Rom. 12:18; 15:13; 1 Cor. 2:4; Eph. 1:19; 3:16, 20; 1 Thess. 1:5). That's why the noun "able" (δυνατον **– I, D, G**) is used, for our *capacity* to succeed is from the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 6:20; 7:4-6; 8:7-8, 12-17). He enables us to operate with a 'dynamo' which helps steer negotiations toward armistice.

So, "if" the *possibility exists* "out of you" (εξ υμων **– I, G**), *from inside of us* or *within our grasp*, we should explore every option and pull out all stops to place the pursuit of peaceful relations as an overriding concern. **This Pacifistic Maneuver, Fueled by Divine Energy, is Central and Critical to Our Daily Warfare Against Heavenly Evil Forces**.

In addition, Paul advises the "beloved" at Rome not to get involved in "avenging (εκδικουντες **– I, A, D**) yourselves". This participle combines the preposition "εκ", which signifies *out*, with the verb "δικεω", meaning *to judge*. In the present active form, this term states we're *routinely* and *aggressively* "not" to seek *out-justice* or *retribution* for those who deliberately sin against us. In contrast with **This Call to De-escalate**, we're told to aggressively "avenge", or *condemn*, and "take captive", or *imprison*, every evil intent entering our own mind (2 Cor. 10:6). With regard to wicked acts from outside sources which seek to harm us, we're to "consciously give (δοτε **– I, A, D**) a place to the wrath" (Rom. 12:19).

This verb is a command (imperative), and I chose the term "consciously" to represent its *present active* form. So, in lieu of taking independent revenge, which may be permitted or even encouraged by human ethics, **we're to Reject This Response and Commit Hateful Attacks to God**. For, at a time corresponding with His strategy, He'll take His rightful "place" and pour out "wrath" (οργῃ **– G**) or *fury* with fairness and justice.

To grasp the horrific sense of this noun, it transliterates to our word 'orgy' and is used to describe the defiant behavior of people who reject the Creator in favor of worshipping His creation, then take license to use their bodies in aberrant ways (Rom. 1:18-27; Eph. 5:3-14). Because of this, God's punitive "wrath" will ultimately send them to the "lake of fire", the destination salvation allows us to escape (Rom. 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 6:16-17; 14:9-12; 20:10-15).

Reinforcing the thought *God is The Rightful Dispenser of "wrath"*, Paul cites, "'vengeance is mine; I shall repay', says the Lord" (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19). Since the noun "vengeance" (εκδικησις **– G**) is made up of the same root words as its participial form in verse 19, it also expresses *divvying out justice* or *executing a sentence*. Keep in mind, God is jealous and will have His Day of Judgement so all Creation can see Him, and Him alone, execute "wrath". Therefore, we mustn't upstage Him by usurping His planned reprisal, but this is exactly what we do each time we repay "evil in the place of evil" (vv. 17-18).

At this juncture, rather than concluding how we should respond to those who wrong us, Paul cites another O.T. quote to expand upon the principle: "speak well about those persecuting you" (Rom. 12:14). Thus, "If your enemy hungers, you give him food; if he thirsts, you give him drink; for while doing this you'll heap coals of fire on his head" (Prov. 25:21-22; Rom. 12:20).

The noun "enemy" (εχθρος **– A, G**) refers to *a hostile person* and describes *the enmity* between God and men (Rom. 5:10; Phil. 3:18; Col. 1:21). This adverse relationship is solved when someone is justified before the Father by trusting in the blood of Christ. After reconciliation, God desires His children display spiritual fruit and practice good works, *Again With the Aim to Defuse* those who treat us cruelly (2 Thess. 1:5-8; 1 Pet. 3:8-18; 4:12-16).

To conclude, Paul sums up this portion by defining how we should react to conflict, "You're not to choose to be overcome by evil, but you're to constantly and vigorously overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). The phrase "you're not to choose

to be overcome" combines the *negative* "μη" and the verb "overcome" (νικω), which means to *triumph* or be *victorious*. The shoe company, Nike, used this Greek term to devise its brand. Here, it occurs as a present imperative which portrays a *constant command*, and its dual voice form signifies we're *responsible* "to choose" (middle) "not . . . to be overcome" (passive), or *coerced by outside stimuli*, to perpetrate "evil". Negative influences attempting to lure us to sin can be classified as the "world", the "flesh" and the "Devil" (Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:14; 5:17-19; 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Following the *conjunction of contrast* "but" (αλλα), Paul utilizes a positive *charge* (imperative) directing us to "overcome (νικα) evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). This present active verb indicates we're to "constantly" and "vigorously" partake in "good" (αγαθῳ) – *Spirit-energized activity pleasing to God* (Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-14).

While pursuing this path, we can experience victory as we encounter sin (1 John 2:13-14; 5:4-5). Furthermore, we should know all attacks are promoted by

heavenly principalities and powers who oppose us as God's ambassadors and propose to stir up our "old man" (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). Nevertheless, we can be optimistic since "death was swallowed up unto victory" (νικος), the "victory (νικος) through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54, 57).

One final observation about the verbs rendered "overcome" (νικω & νικα). Both are 2nd person singular in form unlike all the other action words in verses 9-19, which are plural. These singular forms transfer all exhortations made to the Body down to *Its Individual Members which* **Holds Each Believer Responsible** to know how to "overcome evil with good". Many other contexts combine individual and plural directives to draw attention to personal accountability. And, in truth, individual acts of obedience are foundational for "building up" or "edifying" the Church (Eph. 4:12-16).

Consequently, if we follow **God's Guidebook of Conduct** by utilizing the Spirit to perform its instructions, We Can **Triumph in Our Formidable Battle**. With Jesus by our side, we can be confident "no

temptation has taken you except what is common to man, also God is faithful who won't allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able to bear, but with the temptation He'll make a way out (or "an escape") to be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

And we should take courage "my beloved" and "become seated, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor isn't futile in the Lord" (15:58). To review, God not only trains us through His Word and provides power through His Spirit to succeed in our Combat Mission, but **Compliance Reaps Divine Benefits Now Plus Future Rewards** (2 Cor. 10:6; Gal. 6:7-10; 1 Tim. 4:6-16; Titus 2:11-14).

To wrap up, all three contexts expounded in this section contain essential lifestyle-attributes which are facilitated by the Spirit and available to all Body members. These qualities result from modifying our beliefs, intentions, attitudes, and actions – the groundwork for holiness. Therefore, if we claim to be led by the Spirit in any deed, let's make sure that act is supported by *Specific Lessons from Our Training*

Manual and produced in tandem with divine energy. For, **The Church Epistles Provide Both the Spiritual Movements and Power Necessary for Winning "the good fight" for which God Chose (Drafted) and Gifted us** (Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; 4:7).[1]

Other portions bursting with renovating truth and have had a vast impact on my Christian walk are: Romans 6 – 15; First Corinthians 5 – 15; Galatians 5 – 6:10; Ephesians 4 – 6:20; Philippians 1:27 – 3:9; Colossians 3 – 4:6; Second Thessalonians 3:1-15; First Timothy 2 – 6:21; Second Timothy 2 – 4:8; Titus 1:5 – 3:11; Hebrews 11 – 13:17; First Peter 1:13 – 5:11; and Second Peter 1 & 3. May each of us encounter incalculable revitalization from His Word to help strengthen our service for the Lord Jesus Christ! (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:20)

Section 4: Permanent Roles of the Spirit

Having touched on how the rudiments of Christian conduct apply to our interactions with the world and fellow believers, this final section evaluates the comings and goings of the Spirit during the Acts period

when Israel expected their New Covenant Kingdom to commence. Instead, this Jewish program was postponed, it was replaced by the Body of Christ, and some of the Spirit's movements are shown to cease by direct statement or standards detailed in the post-Acts Letters. Usually, the scope of this topic is limited to termination of gifts and certain aspects of prayer. However, other Spirit-generated activities performed within this timeframe will also be addressed.

The Word Teaches Some Gifts Will Cease

During this transition period, gifts which show "the manifestation (φανερωσις) of the Spirit" were "being given" to Body members "toward the profit" (1 Cor. 12:7). These *Outward exhibitions* are itemized: "a message of wisdom", "a message of knowledge", "faith", "gifts of healings", "workings of miracles", "prophecy", "discernment of spirits", "kinds of tongues" (or "languages"), and "interpretation of tongues" (vv. 8-10).

Then, chapter 13 highlights the relevance and temporary nature of "prophecy" and "knowledge" as these

gifts are compared with the overriding need to do all things with the never-ending quality of "love" (vv. 1-3, 8-13; 16:14).

Here, Paul declares "prophesy" and "knowledge will be deactivated" (καταργηθησονται – 1 Cor. 13:8). This verb is from "εργεω", signifying *to work*, preceded by an *alpha* "α" which *negates this meaning*. Together, they specify these gifts will become *unworking* or *idle*. By adding the preposition "κατα", which depicts *downward motion*, this three-term word mimics the action of an engine *idling down* when a vehicle *stops*. I think the translation "deactivated" most vividly portrays its meaning since it's used to represent a thing which is currently active becoming inactive (Rom. 6:6; 7:2, 6; 1 Cor. 15:24, 26; 2 Cor. 3:14; Gal. 5:11; Eph. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10). Then, the text alerts us to *the time these two gifts will become inactive* – when the "perfect" (τελειον) or *complete* "might come" (1 Cor. 13:10).

In reference to himself and the Corinthians, Paul states *currently* (present tense) "we know in part and prophesy in part" (v. 9). However, when the "perfect"

comes, that which is "in part" or *partial* "will be deactivated" (καταργηθησεται – v. 10). Since this passage references truth received by "prophecy" along with the gift of "knowledge", which allowed the holder to *retain divine messages like a human server*, when revelation for the Church was completed, these gifts would no longer be required but *become extinct*.

The question is, **'When did this happen?'** After employing a metaphor to illustrate how everyone "now", or presently, saw truth in a partial manner, Paul says "then I will fully know (επιγνωσομαι) just like I was fully known" (επεγνωσθην – 1 Cor. 13:12).

These two verbs consist of "γινωσκω", which by itself means *to know*, prefixed by the preposition "επι", adding the idea of *upon* or *on top of*. Thus, it conveys the concept of *knowledge upon knowledge* or *completely knowing*, much like the noun "perfect" in verse 10. In this passage, many Translations including the NIV, NASV, and ESV render these forms of "επιγινωσκω" to **'know fully'**, although these Versions hardly ever translate its other 42 occurrences this way.

At this point, it's noteworthy that *Passages in The Church Epistles* which define core teachings of the "dispensation of God", made up of "mystery" revelation, include this verb's noun form "full knowledge" (επιγνωσις) plus the noun "perfect" (τελειον – Rom. 12:2; Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10, 24 – 2:3; 3:10; Titus 1:1; Philem. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:2-3, 8).[1] Two of these portions pair both nouns to describe how "mystery" truth can *transform believers into Christ's image* (Eph. 4:13, 16-19; Col. 1:25-28). This grouping of terms supports the view after *Church truth was fully revealed*, the gifts of "prophecy" and "knowledge" became obsolete and passed away.[11] Versions which usually render "επιγνωσις" with its full meaning are DBY, YLT, & LITV – "full knowledge" and TGNT – "perfect knowledge".

Why is this important? Because **Grasping the Gift of "prophecy" has Ceased Safeguards Christians** from being taken in by individuals or groups who claim to receive revelation beyond the biblical text. To some degree, Cults, the Catholic organization, and numerous Denominations claim Apostles and/or Prophets still exist. This doctrine puts those willing to listen in

danger because they'll be deceived by *so-called new revelations* which contradict parts of Scripture (Rom. 16:17-20). That's why existing contexts assert we don't need added instructions (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Therefore, believers must study and be personally convinced of what the Word teaches if we're to be spiritually stable and capable of detecting, circumventing, and withstanding error.

Another gift cited in this portion is "tongues" which "will cause themselves to cease" (παυσονται) or *stop* (1 Cor. 13:8; other uses: Luke 5:4; 8:24; Acts 20:1; 31; Eph. 1:16; Heb. 10:2; 1 Pet. 3:10; 4:1). This verb is in the middle voice which indicates *the subject*, "tongues", *will act upon itself* to cease. It's also in the future tense showing this Spirit-energized gift "will" stop sometime after this Letter was received. Based on the context's subject matter and this phrase's position couched between statements about "prophecy" and "knowledge" discontinuing, both points suggest "tongues" will become inactive in a similar timeframe. It would follow "interpretation of tongues" would simultaneously end.

This same principle of cessation can be applied to "gifts of healings" (1 Cor. 12:9). For, the fact many believers had this ability is confirmed in the record of Acts along with the Epistles written during that time (Acts 3:1-10; 28:1-10; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4; James 5:15). But something changed, for on three separate occasions the post-Acts Letters indicate Paul was no longer able to heal (Phil. 2:25-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20). These instances exist in stark contrast to the last historical record of divine healing in Acts 28:1-10, when Paul restored the health of all those who were sick on the Island of Malta.

The Word Infers Other Gifts Cease

Now that we've covered Scripture which explicitly indicates certain supernatural gifts of the Spirit discontinued, let's examine the remaining gifts on the list of First Corinthians 12:8-10. Initially, I'll identify passages describing how these gifts functioned during the Acts period, then compare this activity with what can be learned about them in the post-Acts Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, First & Second Timothy, Titus, and First & Second Peter).

Evaluating these in order, let's look at "a message (λογος) of wisdom" and "a message of knowledge" (1 Cor. 12:8). This noun in both gifts is generally translated "word". It's used in John 1:1 and 14 referencing Christ's pre-creation existence, His historic birth, and the "glory" exhibited during His life. Based on its overall usage, "λογος" is widely held to refer to *the complete message about Christ* since it represents everything written about Him in the Gospels and Epistles. Thus, the totality of this record has been properly titled, **'The Word'** (Acts 1:1; Heb. 1:1-3). This "message" is "of" or *associated with* (genitive case) both "knowledge", or *revealed truth*, and "wisdom", which refers to *the correct application of truth*.

Accordingly, "λογος" represents the "message" or "word" early prospects heard and responded to (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 8:4; 10:44; 11:1). On the Day of Pentecost, prior to proclaiming "the great things of God", some 120 believers were "all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4, 11). Peter was one of these, and **Some of His Discourses Became Part of The Permanent Record Since They Consist of Spirit-Energized Verbiage He'd Received** (vv. 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:19-22).

Then, thousands who believed "were all filled with the Holy Spirit" and, "with one accord", were "speaking the word (λογος) of God with boldness" (Acts 4:24-31). This unnatural unison among new converts was only possible because they were being divinely led.

After that, Stephen is depicted as having the "face of an angel" when, with the Spirit's help, he boldly preached a message, angered Jews by accusing them of killing the Messiah, then was stoned to death (Acts 6:15; 7:2-60). Based on Jesus' teaching, these disciples expected this kind of Spirit-backing, "Don't be concerned about how or what you might speak . . . for you aren't the ones speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you" (Matt. 10:19-20, cf. Jer. 1:9; John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:27).

So, it's my understanding the speech exercised in early Acts "through the Spirit" was similar to the *messages* "of wisdom" and "knowledge" possessed later by the Corinthians and others which enabled them to speak the "word" of God with 100% accuracy (1 Cor. 1:5; 12:7-8). For, some of these also found

their way into *The Inspired Record* (Acts 10:34-43; 13:16-47; 15:7-11; 17:22-31; 18:6; 26:1-29; 28:23-28; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16). Conversely, the post-Acts Letters give no indication this early ability of infallible speech continued.

On the contrary, in reference to evangelism, Christians are charged (imperative mode) to "walk in wisdom toward those outside" and for our "message" (λογος) to "always be in grace, having been seasoned with salt, to know how it's necessary for us to answer each one" (Col. 4:5-6). This passage doesn't say the Spirit will provide our words, but it places responsibility on us to formulate a message from the truth of "grace . . . to answer each" inquiry we encounter.

Then, Ephesians 4:29 portrays this same accountability by commanding (imperative), "let no rotten word (λογος) proceed out of your mouth, but if anything is good toward edification of need in order that it might give grace to those who hear." Also, we're exhorted to "fearlessly speak the word" (λογον) and hold fast to "the word (λογον) of life" in order to be effective witnesses (Phil. 1:14; 2:16).

Furthermore, we're ordered (imperative) to "let the word (λογος) of Christ dwell in you richly", and "everything you might do in word (λογῳ) or deed" is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:16-17). Then, Paul instructs Timothy to be "nourished by the words (λογοις) of the faith" as well as not allow others to "despise your youthfulness but become a pattern of believers in speech (λογῳ, "word" or "message"), manner of life", etc. (1 Tim 4:6, 12). Finally, to set an example, Timothy is told (imperative) to "strive" to accurately handle "the word (λογον) of truth" and persistently "preach the word" (λογον – 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:2).

All these verses support the belief we're responsible to draw upon the Spirit's power to understand the Word and develop our "message" (1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 5:18). Moreover, **No Portion in the post-Acts Letters Supports the Idea the Spirit Gives Us Words to Speak**. And, to accentuate this point, we're warned our speech and actions will be judged when "each of us will give an account (λογον – "word" or "message") concerning himself to God" (Rom. 14:1-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-11). Now,

how can this principle be practically applied? **No Christian, Including Bible Teachers, Should Ever Claim the Message They Communicate was Given to Them by God**. And anyone who states or implies this shouldn't be trusted.

The next Spirit-energized gift mentioned is "faith" (πιστις – 1 Cor. 12:9). The only other place this aspect of "faith" appears in the Church Epistles is where Paul says, "if I might have all faith to the extent to move mountains, but might not have love, I'm nothing" (13:2). Some declare this statement wasn't intended to be taken literally, however it parallels Jesus' teaching if his disciples had "faith as a mustard seed", they could move a "mountain" (Matt. 17:20; John 4:46-54). Apparently, some believers in Corinth and beyond possessed a comparable gift.

So, what incidents similar in magnitude to moving mountains are found in the Acts period? How about the faith Peter and Paul demonstrated when they raised the dead (John 11:1-44; Acts 9:32-42; 20:9-12)? And, how about Paul's faith which gave confidence to all the folks on his ship that none would

perish because of the storm or subsequent wreck on Malta's rock-laden coastline (27:33-44)? Also, what about his lack of concern when he was bitten by a poisonous "viper" (28:3-6)?

Finally, what about the teaching in James that a "prayer of faith" by elders wouldn't just heal a person, but also cause their "sins" to "be forgiven" (John 20:23; James 5:14-17)? Then, he equates these prayer results with Elijah's faith which caused the heavens to start and stop rain. Aren't these the exact kind of outcomes from "faith" that Jesus predicted (Mark 16:15-18; John 14:12-14)?

Consequently, if this gift remained today, we'd expect to see believers routinely performing similar feats. However, miracles like these don't take place from the beckoning of individuals which suggests the Holy Spirit has ceased empowering this gift. Today, God may choose to perform wonders to further His purpose or in response to prayer, but there's rarely if ever proof to verify His involvement. Finally, the point of view this kind of "faith" has also been

"deactivated" is legitimized by its non-existence in the post-Acts Letters.

The next gift itemized is the "workings of miracles" (1 Cor. 12:9). The noun "workings" (ενεργηματα) is derived from two words which mean *to work in*. It's pronounced like our word 'energizing' and used to describe the Spirit's activity (1 Cor. 12:11; Gal. 3:5; Eph. 1:19; 3:16-20; Phil. 2:13). Next, "miracles" (δυναμεων) is replicated by the English noun 'dynamo'. Thus, *it's the Ability to Perform Miracles on Demand through the Dynamic of the Spirit* (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). And there's plenty of evidence this gift was prolific (Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7; 6:8; 10:38; 16:25-34; 19:11; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4).

However, not one clue in the post-Acts Letters corroborates the idea anyone should currently expect to possess this gift. Instead, this sensation is shown to emerge next when God revives His dealings with Israel and sends two witnesses to perform miracles the "Beast" can't match. This will happen during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:24-27; Rev. 11:3-6).

The next gift is "discernment (διακρισεις) of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). This noun comes from two words which depict *judging through* and mean to *decide* or *discriminate*. It's function is clarified in chapter 14, "let two or three prophets speak, and let the others discern" (διακρινετωσαν); then, "the spirits of the prophets are to choose to be made subject (middle/passive) to the prophets" (vv. 29, 32).[2]

This gift existed to provide another level of accountability by making certain those who claimed they taught "prophesy" were accurately sharing revelation from the Spirit. Prior to the written record, this is how the Church sustained doctrinal purity. In contrast to this, the latter Epistles teach we're to verify all instruction by "the pattern of sound words" found in the now-revealed "mystery" truth (1 Cor. 14:37-38; Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:24-28; 1 Tim. 1:4-11; 3:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 4:2-3; Tit. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:15-18).

Listed last is "interpretation (ερμηνεια) of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:10). Our term 'hermeneutic' is derived from this noun which is why *courses on biblical interpretation* are frequently titled 'Hermeneutics'.

This Spirit-infused gift enabled its bearer *to translate* what was spoken by another brother in a "tongue", or *language*, foreign to the assembly (14:2-4, 28). For, if no one understood his teaching and his words weren't translated, "edification" couldn't take place (14:5, 12, 26-28). Therefore, those who possessed the gift of "tongues" were to remain "silent" if an interpreter wasn't present. Likewise, it's logical to assume when "tongues" ceased, the gift to translate them went by the wayside too.

Other Events Appearing to Discontinue

More "signs" occur in the record of Acts which are linked to God's dealings with the Nation of Israel or to authenticating His new "mystery" program, but their continued operation isn't affirmed in the post-Acts Letters (1 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). Note the following deliberations.

The appearance of "visions" (ορ̀αματα & οπ̀τασιας) was prevalent in this transition period (Acts 7:56; 10:3-6, 9-19; 16:9-12; 18:9-10; 27:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:5-8; 2 Cor. 12:1). Then, First Peter 1:8 states, "whom

(Jesus), not having seen (ιδοντες), you love, unto who now not seeing (ορωντες) but believing, you rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory." These two participial forms of the verb "οραω", which means *to see*, share the same stem as the noun "οραμα". The first occurs in aorist tense form with the negative "ουκ" which indicates they "love" Christ *though they had never seen Him*. The second participle is in the present tense which specifies *they weren't currently seeing* Jesus either. This verse corroborates everything recorded in the latter Epistles, for they're silent about the presence of or expectation to see "visions".

Also, *Audible Directions were Widespread* during this time (Acts 8:26; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7-9; Gal. 1:11-12). This trend went beyond written revelation explaining God's current purpose, the nature of the Church, and how He wants us to live. For in Acts 13:2, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Indeed, separate Barnabas and Saul to me for the work which I have called them to'" (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15). Later, on Paul's way to Jerusalem he said, "city by city, the Holy Spirit is thoroughly testifying to me while saying that bonds and afflictions await me" (Acts 20:23). In similar fashion, leaders in Antioch

decided Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem to deal with the issue of whether gentiles should be required to "be circumcised in relation to the custom of Moses" (Acts 15:1-2). Then, when Paul references this same event, he says, "I went up (to Jerusalem) according to revelation" (Gal. 2:2).

This raises the question, **'Does the Spirit still give audible directions today?'** Once more, the absence of this phenomenon in the latter Epistles suggests the answer is **'No'**. Furthermore, at least three passages indicate the "Lord" did the same thing. The first two instances occur when Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus then assured "Ananias" it was safe to contact him (Acts 9:3-16). Later, the "Lord" told Paul he would reach Rome (23:11). However, the post-Acts Letters never hint that Christians should expect to hear the voice of the Spirit or the Lord, but always direct us to **Obtain Guidance from Recorded Revelation** (Col. 3:16; 1 Tim 4:6-16; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

Next, let's consider *Divinely Choreographed Movements* during this period. After Phillip was told by an

angel to take the road heading to Gaza, he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who was Treasurer for the Queen. When their meeting ended, "the Spirit of the Lord seized Phillip and the eunuch no longer saw him . . . also Phillip was found at Azotus." This instantaneous transport from one locale to another is similar to what we witness on the sci-fi TV show 'Star Trek' (Acts 8:39-40). Another divinely directed journey was when Barnabas and Saul, "after having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit", evangelized and established churches while heading to and in the region of Galatia (13:4).

Later, the Spirit "hindered" Paul, Silas, and Timothy from speaking "the word in Asia" or going to "Bithynia", then directed them by a "vision" to "Macedonia" (Acts 16:6-10). This corresponds with First Thessalonians 2:18 which states Satan "hindered" them twice from coming to that town. Keep in mind, the Devil's goal is to prevent the gospel from being proclaimed anywhere. At the same time, the Spirit retained control of the sequence in which these areas were evangelized, though it wasn't always in the order Paul "purposed" or "desired" (Rom. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:18).

In a comparable manner, "the Lord" assured Paul he would "testify" in "Rome", yet his Epistle to them clarifies he had desired to travel there for "many years" (Acts 23:11; Rom. 1:13; 15:22-23).

Even though Physical Guidance is common in Acts, *similar expectations are absent from the post-Acts Letters*. So, yet again, I think *this Spirit-Aided Activity had Ceased* by the time these Epistles were written. Given this is true, anyone who currently claims to be sent to a locale by God may easily be motivated by other factors. And to repeat: if we can't support our desires or actions with solid evidence from the Church Epistles, we're setting ourselves up to operate outside the Spirit's control.[1] Consequently, **Believers Shouldn't Invoke the Name of God to Sanction Any Kind of Geographic Relocation**.

A Special 'Calling' No Longer Exists

As I perceive it, the predominant view of **'A Divine Call'** today is: *The Lord Leads Individuals to Locations, Causes, Relationships, and Vocations, including Ministry*. This perspective is indefensible when the way

God presently works is ascertained from the Church Epistles.[1] For, this belief is *formed from how leaders were commissioned under the Law*, particularly prophets, priests, and kings.

Then, this practice continued as apostles were **'called'** throughout the Gospel period and Acts (Matt. 10:1-15; 16:16-20; John 15:14-17; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 4:6-13; 9:15-18; 15:9-11; Gal. 1:15-16). This procedure is defined in the Book of Hebrews which states no "high priest . . . takes the value (or *honor*) for himself, but the one being called (καλουμενος) by God, according as also Aaron" (5:1-4, cf. Exod. 28:1-3; 2 Chron. 26:16-21).

More documentation for this tradition is found in Acts 13:2, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Indeed, separate Barnabas and Saul to me for the work which I have called (προσκεκλημαι) them to'". This verb is composed of the preposition "προς", carrying the idea of *toward*, prefixed to the verb "καλεω", which means *to call*. The chapters which follow show the exact "work" they were "called" for was evangelizing and edifying believers. Later, Luke uses this same term when

Paul received a "vision during the night" to head for "Macedonia" since "God has called (προσκεκληται) us to evangelize (or "preach the gospel to") them" (Acts 16:9-10). Furthermore, both verbs are in the perfect tense specifying the *call happened, then the purpose for that call continued*.

In review, *God regularly selected individuals* to spread His truth and provide organization during O.T. and Gospel times when few had the Holy Spirit. Then, He continued using this same mechanism while the Church was being established and didn't have access to the written revelation of truth.

In contrast to the just discussed use of "καλεω", when this verb refers to God's current activity **it exclusively defines how believers "were called" to salvation** (Rom. 8:30, 33; 9:24; 1 Cor. 7:20-24; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:9). Accordingly, we're labeled "called ones" (κλητοι, Rom. 1:6-7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:2, 24). Then, in some passages this "calling" (κλησεως), or *summoning*, is correlated with God's *chosen* or *elect* (compare Rom. 8:28 –

9:24 with Rom. 11:29 & Eph. 1:4-5, 18 with 4:1, cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 2 Pet. 1:10).

However, instead of always translating "κλητος" as a noun, most Versions render it as a verb in Romans 1:1, 6, and 7, saying Paul was **'called to be an apostle'** and we were **'called to be saints'** (see also 1 Cor. 1:1-2). Literal renderings of these verses are, "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called one (κλητος), an apostle" (v. 1), "among whom you are the called ones (κλητοι) of Christ Jesus" (v. 6), and "to all who're in Rome, beloved ones of God, called ones (κλητοις), saints" (v. 7). Translations in this footnote properly render these nouns.[12]

Therefore, when the Church-Epistle use of this term is applied, **All Believers are Called to Salvation** and **We All Have the Same Calling**. Yes, Body members have different gifts for ministry, but **We're All In The Ministry**. First, all the saved are responsible to evangelize (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Phil. 2:12-18; Col. 4:5-6; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Pet. 3:13-16). Also, all members are to be involved with "teaching and admonishing one another" to generate personal and corporate growth within

the Church. And these activities fulfill the "calling" (κλησεως) for which we "were called" (εκληθητε – Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:1, 11-13; 5:15-33; Phil. 3:14-17; Col. 3:5-17; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:10).

At the end of the day, the only reason labels like **'Clergy'** and **'Laity'** survive is because Bible teachers and Organizations continue to wrongly incorporate and promote O.T. principles. As a former Catholic, *this practice of elevating some and demoting others* turns my stomach since it hinders Body members and, therefore, the entire Church from realizing our full potential. In addition, it feeds the mindset: **"The Called" Aren't All Equally Vital to Gain Victory in Our Spiritual Battle** (1 Cor. 12:18-26; Eph. 4:1-16).

Another factor which works against believers grasping this doctrine is when the statement "many are called but few are chosen" is applied to the Church (Matt. 22:1-14). This portion teaches *the elect* and *the called* aren't the same group which contradicts what's taught in the Church Epistles.[1] However, when this verse's historical setting is correctly linked with God's Jewish-oriented Law program, it specifies all

of Abraham's descendants were called or *invited* to follow God, but only the "chosen" or "elect" answered that call (cf. Rom. 9:6-13). On the other hand, when the terms "called ones" and "elect" apply to the Body, they're used interchangeably and refer to everyone who's saved (8:28-30, 33; 9:14-33; 11:1-32; 1 Cor. 1:21-31; 2 Pet. 1:10).

In Bible School I was lucky to learn everyone "called" to salvation is placed into the ministry. This truth greatly impacted me, so at age 20 I wrote a paper titled **'The Christian Call to Ministry'** which included prooftexts from the Word, though my understanding of the issue was far inferior to how I see it today. Furthermore, Martin Luther didn't derive all his doctrine from the Church Epistles, but he did promote **'The Priesthood of All Believers'**.

Some say it's wrong to call Body members **'priests'**. Yet, Paul tells us to "present your bodies as a living, holy, acceptable **sacrifice** (θυσιαν) to God, *which is* your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:5 – emphasis mine). Later he asserts he was "**working** the gospel of God **as a priest** (ιερουρ-

γουντα) in order that **the offering** (προσφορα) of the gentiles might become acceptable" (Rom. 15:16; Heb. 10:14, 18 – emphasis mine, cf. Phil. 3:17-18; 2 Tim. 4:6-7). Also, *All Believers Have Direct Access* to "the Father" and "grace" through "Christ" (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; 4:15-16; Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25).

Today, Leaders Are Appointed by Men

Like the **'divine call'**, *Spirit-Ratification* is often applied to appointing "elders". This view draws support from Acts 14:23 where Paul and Barnabas "designated elders church by church". But note, they did this "after having prayed with fasting", another Law practice that survived during this transition. In addition, they were apostles (Acts 20:28).

So again, claiming *Divine Sanction in This Process*, which has its N.T. roots in Jesus' teaching about the "kingdom of heaven", basically requires the belief "apostles" or their equivalent still exist. This view is founded on the same Scripture from the Gospels and Acts which the Roman Catholic Church uses to back their dogmas of Divine Appointment and Apostolic

Succession (Matt. 16:16-20; John 20:21-23; James 5:13-18).

Now, let's consider what the post-Acts Letters say about seating "elders". In First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, no instruction points to any basis for installment other than whether a brother meets the recorded qualifications. Then, Paul provides high-bar procedures for both choosing and disciplining elders (1 Tim. 5:19-25). In this portion, all leaders are charged to deal fairly and dispassionately with other elders who fail to maintain these requirements, for the integrity of the assembly must be preserved. This is to go down no matter how long the man has been a leader, how much clout they have, and how knowledgeable, well-liked, rich, famous, or charming they are.

Moreover, nothing in the later Epistles signals we should expect intervention in this activity. In fact, First Corinthians declares, "the house of Stephanus . . . appointed themselves for ministry to the saints" (16:15-16). Prayer is the closest heavenly function that can be applied to this process, as identified next,

but presently there's no guarantee God will answer this kind of request. So, if the Spirit no longer facilitates this endeavor or other similar procedures detailed in this section, **Any Person or Group that Claims Their Teaching, Practices, or Appointments are Divinely Led Shouldn't be Followed**. Bear in mind, *Cults Thrive Using These Exact Methodologies*.

Aspects of Prayer Have Changed

In addition to termination of gifts which enabled believers to receive prophecy and heal physical maladies, a large portion of Christendom recognizes there's been a significant change in how prayer functions. For, some prayer expectations which Jesus spoke about, were in effect during the Acts period and upheld in some General Letters, are totally absent from the Church Epistles.[1]

While on earth, Christ made all-encompassing assurances to His disciples which pertained to getting whatever they may ask, especially after they received the promises of the Holy Spirit and Law placed in their heart (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:38-39; Ezek. 36:26-27).

He said, "Ask and it will be given to you . . . for everyone who asks receives" (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15). Then, "where two or three are gathered for My name" they can be confident "concerning every practice which they might ask, it will come to pass for them from My Father" (Matt. 18:19-20).

Further proof for the *Efficacy of Kingdom Prayer* is found in Mark 11:24, where the Lord says they'll receive the things they request if they "believe". Also, "whatever you might ask in My name, this I will do in order that the Father might be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). Then, when the New Covenant's Spirit inhabits the Jewish faithful, "in that day . . . whatever you might ask the Father in My name, He'll give to you . . . ask and you'll receive" (16:12-15, 23-24).

These same truths are mirrored in the Book of James where "elders" are to convene to heal a person who is "ill". They're to "pray over him, after having anointed him with oil", and this "prayer of faith will save (or *restore*) the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up", plus his "sins . . . will be forgiven" (Mark

11:24-25; John 20:23; James 5:13-15). If anyone questions whether these directives should be taken literally, James solidifies his intent by citing an O.T. miracle. **His Readers can Expect Results Equal to Those Achieved by Elijah when His "effective prayer" as "a righteous man"** initiated 3.5 years of famine when it "didn't rain", then another 3.5 years of abundance when "the sky poured rain" (1 Kings 17:1; 18:42-45; James 5:16-18).

In contrast with *These Unconditional Guarantees Tied to Kingdom Prayer*, expectations in the Church Epistles are quite different.[1] For instance, we're assured our prayers will result in "the peace of God" and "will guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7). Also, Romans 8:26-27 contains a comforting promise, "the Spirit helps in relation to our weakness", and when we don't know "what (τι) we should pray", He "intercedes on our behalf" and makes our petitions palatable to the Father.

However, Body members are never assured to receive the things we ask. It's been said, **'God answers prayer with a *yes*, *no*, *maybe*, or *not yet*'**. That's fair. Still, if

we source revelation pertaining to the Church, there's no reason to think we can predict which reply He'll choose.

So, what specific prayers should believers utter based on lessons found in the Church Epistles?[1] In Romans 10:1, the heart of Paul is exposed in his "petition to God on behalf of . . . salvation" for his Jewish kinsmen, though he knew this plea wouldn't automatically be answered (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 7:16; 9:19-23; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 3:1). For, the surrounding context makes it clear *everyone who responds with faith in Christ does so because of the grace and mercy received as one of God's elect* (Rom. 9:6-24, 30-33; 11:1-10, 30-32; 2 Thess. 2:10-14).

Moreover, Paul's insight of how salvation comes about was *a major reason he was able to endure affliction while evangelizing*. For, he knew God's "elect" would respond: "as many as had been ordained for eternal life believed" and "I endure all things because of the elect in order that they might obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (Acts 13:48; 2 Tim. 2:10). Unexpectedly, to my knowledge, Romans 10:1

is the only portion in the Church Epistles which promotes praying for the redemption of unbelievers.[1]

Otherwise, prayer is prescribed for virtually every need connected with *Our Spiritual Warfare* (Eph. 6:10-13, 18; Col. 4:2-4). To help ground believers, Paul asked for prayer so he would "boldly make known the mystery of the gospel . . . as it's necessary for me to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20). And his recorded prayers teach we're to implore God that, through the Spirit's capacity, all saints might grasp truths which help "establish" and cause us to mature by being "filled unto all the fullness of God" (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:22-28). In the end, comprehending and knowing how to apply His Word **Outfits Believers to Handle Most Pivotal Issues in Our Conflict Against Evil**.

Paul also mentions appeals from fellow believers were a factor in his release from danger and captivity (2 Cor. 1:8-11; Phil. 1:19). Then, as our example, he regularly prayed for all Christians in every church (Rom. 1:8-10; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:28; Eph. 1:15-16; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:2-4).

Furthermore, we're exhorted to "persevere in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). Then, a key aspect is to "pray without ceasing; **give thanks** in everything, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" and "all the time **giving thanks** on behalf of all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God" (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:17-18 – emphasis mine).

These passages indicate gratitude for what He's accomplished for us will change the trajectory of our lives. When all's said and done, I see "prayer" as *Reliance on and Consulting the Father in Reference to His Will*. In essence, He wants "the things above" to govern our consciousness, not "the things upon the earth" (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:15-18; Col. 3:2).

To summarize, we're not limited to what we can pray for since we're told to "be anxious for nothing, but in every prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6; Heb. 4:16). Still, there's no guarantee these appeals will be answered with outcomes like physical health, material things, or extrabiblical direction for what we should do, who we should marry, and where we should live

or work. And, though Christians emphasize praying for ailments, have you noticed the Church Epistles don't advocate this?[1]

Instead, **Most of Our Training, Including the Documented Prayers, are Formulated to Foster Spiritual Development**. Conversely, many O.T. and Law contexts support the expectation God will answer all prayers which is a major difference between His past and future dealings with Israel when compared with **Prevailing Procedures related to Sanctification and Growth**.

Concluding this section, whether we consider the topic of supernatural gifts, calling, guidance, or prayer by specifications in the Church Epistles, we're instructed to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7, cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-25; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Col. 2:16-19).[1] Keep in mind, the only recorded failure to heal is when Paul, who possessed the gift, asked for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed (2 Cor. 12:7-8). Rather than getting anticipated relief, God responded by allowing Satan to continue inflicting Paul so he wouldn't become "proud" from the "abundance of revelations"

he'd received (12:1, 7). Plus, God taught him a valuable lesson which has lingered for us: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power (δυναμις – **I, A, D**) is perfected in weakness . . . for whenever I'm weak, then I'm powerful" (δυνατος or "strong"; 12:9-10).

Article Summary

Section One *Identifies the Primary Battlefield on which We Wage War*. Turns out it's the turf of our own mind and heart as we encounter **THE ENEMY** – celestial principalities and powers united with the Devil. In this conflict, we're "to avenge" (εκδικησαι) each devious thought entering our head, so we won't respond with "disobedience" (2 Cor. 10:5-6). We need to learn to head off every malignant threat by *sentencing it, then incarcerating it* to never see the light of day.

But, when others sin against us, we're not to resort to the "flesh" and repay "evil in the place of" their "evil". Instead, our Spirit-aided response should be to "overcome evil with good" by "taking thought beforehand" so we can react in a profitable way. Also, we're to aim

to be at "peace" with all and commit evildoers to God who, in His own time, will dole out appropriate "vengeance" (εκδικησις – Rom. 12:17-21; 13:12-14).

The latter part of this section contemplates passages that speak to putting to "death" sin which rises from our "old man" – an essential function of Christian growth. The Church Epistles lay out precise procedures to accomplish this goal as they guide us to **Utilize God's Provided Implements, Be Willing to Tolerate Wounds to our Ego, and Proudly Bear Battle Scars Suffered while We Forge Ahead with the Winning Strategy** (Gal. 6:12-17; 2 Tim. 1:7-8; 2:3-4; 4:6-8). All other methods which claim to produce spiritual maturity will fail. This is why so many who presently trust flesh-based philosophy, psychology, and counseling **Face A Spiritual Identity Crisis** which yields *Discouragement* and *Depression*.

Section Two veers in on how *Christians should Carry Out Divine Orders In The Arena of Evangelism*. At ground level, God wants us to share the Message of The Cross, for people must be saved and receive the Spirit before they can even desire to espouse other

biblical training (Rom. 8:7-8). Since regeneration provides the only means to escape Satan's "authority" and begin relating with God, **The Presumption Non-Christians should Live By His Ethical Standards is A Denial of the Gospel** (Rom. 6:20; 2 Cor. 4:2-6; Col. 1:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). Yet, this faulty conviction sways Body members to become social influencers, then rationalize this quest by Scripture intended for Israel.

However, when we search the Church Epistles to frame what our relationship with the "world" should be, these Letters paint a very different picture. We're taught to maintain a low profile; avoid getting into the business of others; provide for our own needs; aspire to live at peace; steer clear of contention, debate, or allying with unbelievers; circumvent slander and complaints; be subject to officials; and pray for all men. Compliance with these principles prevents us from creating undue "offences" or "stumbling blocks" which *Inhibit the Message We were Dispatched to Preach* (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:3-4).

Since these values align with our "calling", I'm very negative on Christians becoming involved in politics. In the United States, every citizen has the right to partake in choosing leaders and formulating law, but is this really how God wants us to spend our time and energy? If you've read this paper, you already know my answer. I've come to believe **Political Affiliation is One of The Most Destructive Deterrents for Witness-Based Evangelism** since both major Parties operate on fleshly platforms which insidiously affect their members. Both accuse the other of advocating **'Fear'** and **'Hate'**. And all Coalitions propagate some truth and some error, routinely quote Scripture out of context, and ignore most of the Bible's teaching.

With regard to my political background, I was molded in the Republican wing of Christendom. I remember hearing one Bible teacher exclaim, **'I don't know how a Christian can be a Democrat!'** Well, I've been friends with many good believers who identify with both Parties. I've not only dropped out of *This Civil Melee* but increasingly encourage others to do so and **Become Engaged in God's Spirit-Based Platform**. Assessing the situation, my wife says it best, **'God's not**

concerned about what goes on in our government or country, He's just interested in how we represent Him in it' (Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 2:11-13).

Why then are Body members so captivated by patriotic songs, pledges, and documents composed by sinful men? For, no human creed is fully consistent with revelation for the Church which provides all the guidance we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Eight years ago, a week before the presidential election, I shared in an assembly whether Donald Trump or Hilary Clinton prevailed, my ministry wouldn't change one bit. And it didn't. Then, Joe Biden won in 2020, and again my service to the Lord wasn't affected. Why? Because **Elections and Legislation have Nothing to Do with God's Purpose in this Dispensation of Grace**.

Moreover, just like the process of death begins the moment we're born, at the onset, Nations and everything else in this sin-fated world are doomed to corrupt and collapse. The only entity having upward potential to evolve is God's "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:16-17; Eph. 2:14-18). For, with the indwelling Spirit, members in the Body can undergo routine "renewal"

by being "transformed" from our wicked ways and getting clothed with "righteousness". And all of this by "dying" to sin (Rom. 6:16-19; 8:12-14; 12:1-2; 13:12-14; Phil. 3:10-16; Col. 3:5-11).

Lastly, because I'm not partisan, don't vote, and am transparent about my stance, this gives me a **Huge Advantage in sharing the gospel**. For, when non-believers learn my perspective, **The Barrier: You-Want-to-Force-Me-to-Live-Like-A-Christian** swiftly fades. A more peaceful atmosphere emerges which makes it far easier to bypass most of the stereotypical issues Christians push, begin dialogue about why evil exists in the world, and proceed to how reconciliation is possible with a holy God. When it comes to evangelism, *Real Victory Occurs* when God's elect are saved through the "savor" of the gospel, and this same "smell" condemns those who reject (2 Cor. 2:14-17; 2 Thess. 2:10-14).

Section Three catalogues a sampling of traits and behaviors Christians must "put on" to be equipped for *Our Ensuing Battle*. Our agenda consists of implementing godly character so we can grow individ-

ually, then serve others to edify the entire Church (Eph. 4:12-16). In *This Mission*, success isn't gauged by money, fame, or power but by how each member performs in our conscience, marriage, family, assemblies, and other relationships.

To become "qualified" for this type of ministry, we need to learn "mystery" instruction, then "pattern" our lives to this "sound teaching" (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:12; Col. 1:24-29; 1 Tim. 1:4-11; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 2:2). At the same time, we mustn't succumb to misleading "profane empty voices and oppositions of falsely named knowledge", a course the world deceptively promotes as **'Intelligence'** or **'Common Sense'**. Don't forget; the Devil utilizes identical rationale to advance his "schemes" (Rom. 16:17-20; Eph. 4:14; 6:10-16; 1 Tim. 6:20; Heb. 4:12).

Therefore, **Paul Challenges Christians to Wake Up** and "rise . . . out of" our "dead" state. We can do this by becoming "wise ones" to "understand what the will of the Lord is" while being "filled in the Spirit" (Eph. 5:6-21). Furthermore, we're told to be *Vigilant, Maintain a Holy Lifestyle, and Expect to Suffer* as we

Complete Our Mission (2 Cor. 1:3-7; Phil. 1:27-30; 1 Thess. 5:5-11; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Just like the oppressed saints in Judea, we need to "resist" with the Spirit's help. The nature of their stand was to "make" their "ways straight", "endure" the Lord's "discipline", not become "depressed", and realize they may have to shed "blood" for their faith like Jesus did (Heb. 12:1-14). Yet, the author of this Book didn't tell them to flee their region to preserve their own lives since all people need a living witness.

Section Four just ended, so I'm not going to re-summarize it. But the conclusions reached take me back to when I was a young believer. One of the thoughts motivating my circle of friends was, **'God said it; I believe it; that settles it'**. Truly, this is a great statement to live by.

However, a problem arises when an excerpt of Scripture which no longer represents how God works is cited to address a current issue. For instance, the time Jesus arrived at Martha's home after Lazarus had died. Then, she said, "I know that as much as

you might ask God, God will give to you", referring to her confidence He could raise her brother from the dead (John 11:22). And He did.

Later, Acts records Peter and Paul each reviving at least one person who had died (9:36-43; 20:7-12). So, based on events like these, each believer needs to determine for him or herself what part of the Word represents how the Spirit currently works among Body members and humanity. It's evident, when we actively apply principles intended for the Church, we're **'Practicing Our Faith'**. Operating outside of this standard is **'False Religion'**.

Concluding Thoughts

Today, believers should adopt the simple acrostic **'WWPD'** as our compass since *Paul received his revelation for the Church from our Risen Savior* (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 9:16-17; 14:37; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:2-3; Col. 1:24-28; 1 Tim. 1:4-11; Titus 1:2-3). This slightly differs but significantly varies from the one traditionally embraced. Keep in mind, **Just Because the Majority Follows Some Quip Doesn't**

Make It Right. And God holds each of us accountable to know what we believe and why we believe it.

I once had a teacher who repeated a lesson over and over to drive home a point. Then, he explained the reason for using this method was because it worked so well for Hitler. Added to this erroneous tactic, *Compromise* is just as destructive as *Indoctrination*. For, when teachers understand truth but keep quiet because of inevitable opposition, *They Starve Body members from Spirit-Nurturing Truth* (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:6; Heb. 4:12). The Devil loves strategies like these since they neutralize the potential "increase" of the Church and, simultaneously, **Inflict Collateral Damage from Friendly Misfiring** (Eph. 2:21-22; 4:11-16; Col. 2:19).

In this same vein, I'm reminded of when we travel to camp on the Oregon coast in our RV. From home, we take I-5 north, then turn west on U.S. 34. In a few miles we pass a town called 'Tangent' which invariably reminds me of what happens to Christians who aren't "established" in Church truth – *They Get Off on Tangents* (Rom. 16:25-26).

Too many naively follow Scripture not intended for us and are deluded to think they're being led by the Spirit. A poor grasp of the Word also exposes us to be misled by tradition which isn't even in the Bible. This is one reason Paul used the phrase "I don't desire you to be ignorant" (Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:13). For, not being "grounded" opens us up to all sorts of sinful acts, deviant theology, humanistic philosophy, conspiracy theories, etc., etc., and so forth (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 3:17-19; Col. 1:23).

To address this downward spiral of failure and defeat, we should follow the model we've been given (Rom. 7:14-25; 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 2 Tim. 1:12-14; 3:10-12). And, **sometimes, doing the right thing means we need to stand alone**. After the Jerusalem Conference, Paul did this very thing in Antioch when Peter caused all the Jewish brethren, even Barnabas, to commit hypocrisy "choosing to be caused to fear those out of the circumcision" – the Law-Keeping Jews who "came from James" (Gal. 2:11-14).[2]

Later, when he received a death sentence from Ceasar, Paul was all alone. How deserted he must have felt, yet he was able to declare, "the Lord stood beside me and empowered me" (2 Tim. 4:16-18). Each of us should ask ourselves, **'Do I have this kind of spiritual grounding and fortitude to stand for the Lord in every circumstance?'** And **'Is this My Combat-Frame-of-Mind?'**

Sadly, I'm aware of many brothers and sisters who have the mindset, **'I know the truth'**. These Body members tend to hang out with likeminded converts and *Get Caught Up in a Whirlpool of Theological Stagnancy*. For, they think they know almost everything about the Word except perhaps a few small tweaks of insight which, when learned and applied, don't really change a thing. A term I think describes this outlook is **'Christi-phony-anity'**. Those who pursue this Course will reach their destination, but it'll be distinguished by **A New and Mostly Fruitless Tradition**.

To avoid *This Attitudinal Pitfall*, we should routinely test our beliefs and actions by contemplating the reformative properties of grace. We can accomplish

this by simply learning the contents of the divine record intended for the Church, seek to adhere to each part of it, and be careful not to fall short of or go beyond its scope. Then, **We can Proceed with Solutions, Solutions, and more Solutions!** By staying on point, we'll maintain a clear vision, portray transparency, and exude a humble boldness as we live for the Lord. So, those who want to *Successfully Contribute to the Body, Our Community, and Society*, should make sure we're involved in **Solution-Oriented, Spirit-Aided Activities**.

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New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek texts. Old Testament quotes are from the NASV unless otherwise indicated. Rarely studied Bible Versions cited in this article can be accessed at studybible.info

Footnotes:

1) In my assessment, the central portions of Scripture which form the basis for the *Church Epistles* are Paul's 13 Letters since their content expounds God's present "administration" (οικονομια), *household management* or *dispensation*, that defines the nature and function of Christ's Body. This record is stated to be the revelation of formerly un-prophesied "mystery" (μυστηριον) truth which Jesus made fully known to Paul (Eph. 3:2-3; Col. 1:24-28). Also, I believe the content of Peter's two Letters and The Book of Hebrews fully align with Paul's writings and, as such, should be equally applied to the Church (2 Pet. 3:15-16). My perspective on John's Letters and the Book of James is explained in the text and footnote 21 of the article, 'Our Spirit Connection – Accessing His Power' found under the 'articles' tab on edifiedliving.net

2) In Koine Greek of the New Testament era, the **Middle Voice** in verbs, participles, and infinitives which express action (or being) basically indicates *the subject acts upon itself to perform their action (or being)*. This activity can be conveyed by the concept of *causing itself* to do (or be) something thus, in reference to people, it's well translated with the idea of *making a choice*. The **Passive Voice** indicates *the subject is acted upon by a force outside of itself*. This function *effectively turns the subject into a direct object* since the subject is *made* to do (or be) something by that outside force. Action words (or words of being) which occur in a Middle/Passive Form convey the meaning of both voices.

3) Other Translations render "ετεροζυγουντες" as 'yoked differently' – JMNT; 'bear a strange/stranger's yoke' – Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew; 'unequally yoked' – KJV, ASV, TGNT, LITV; 'diversely yoked' – DBY, Rotherham, CLV; 'incongruous ties/relations' – Moffatt, Goodspeed; 'unevenly yoked' – ISV, LEB, JMNT; and 'enter a mismatch' – WPNT, VIN.

4) This term is equally well translated 'not quarrelsome' – YLT, LITV, MLV; 'to avoid quarreling' – ESV; 'not to be contentious' – DBY, ASV; 'to be peaceable' – TGNT, NIV; 'be pacific' – CLV; 'to be no brawlers' – KJV; and 'adverse to strife' – Rotherham.

5) More literal Translations render this phrase as 'every human creation' – YLT, TGNT, MLV, CLV, Rotherham, Diaglott, JMNT; 'every creation proceeding from man' – Julia Smith; and 'every human framing' – JMNT.

6) Greek nouns refer to a person, place or thing just like in English. These designations represent real things containing *essence* or *substance*. So, when a verb is absent in the Greek text, a *present indicative verb of being is always understood* since essence (or being) already exists within the noun itself. This is why nouns, pronouns, adjectives, participles, articles, and infinitives with articles (parts of speech with declension endings) are called **Substantives** because they possess inherent substance and, therefore, essence or being.

7) The meaning 'absence of quality' is derived from *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, W. E. Vine, 1966, Vol. II, p. 25.

8) 'The love unfeigned' – YLT, Diaglott; 'Love, eunhypocritical' – ECB; 'Love unfeigned' – Julia Smith; 'Love without hypocrisy' – ACV. Also, see JMNT renderings.

9) The following definitions for 'hypocrite' are from *merriam-webster.com*: 'a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion' and 'a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings'.

10) Meanings for "ζεω", plus its Latin equivalent *fervere*, are from *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 298.

11) For more detailed exegesis of First Corinthians 13:8-13, see 'First Corinthians 13:8-13 – The Perfect Scenario' by Chuck Schiedler under the 'articles' tab on edifiedliving.net

12) In Romans 1:1, Etheridge renders the nominative singular noun "κλητος" 'called', then adds 'and an apostle', and JMNT translates it 'a called person'. In verse 6, the nominative plural form "κλητοι" is rendered 'the called' by KJV and NASV, 'called' in Etheridge and TGNT, 'called ones' in Williams, and 'called-out ones' in LITV. In verse 7, the dative plural form "κλητοις" is translated 'called-out' in LITV, 'called' in Etheridge, 'called ones' in JMNT, and 'having been called' by TGNT (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1-2 in JMNT, Julia Smith). Because most Versions don't consistently translate this noun according to its form, English readers can get the wrong idea, then use its verb action portrayal to support the teaching/doctrine of *A Specific Call to Ministry*.

13) See the article ‘“This Generation” & “These Things” – A Re-examination of Matthew 24:34’ by Chuck Schiedler under the ‘articles’ tab on edifiedliving.net

TRADI-TION HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Show Casing "Election"

A Bible based expose' about election and the rationale behind this aspect of God's purpose in salvation. It includes deliberations on 'free will' and other related points of view.

Chuck Schiedler

Show Casing "Election"

Today, the primary question resonating around the topic of "election" is whether a loving God can choose some to be saved and not others. If this subject is approached from a philosophical standpoint, for sure, God showing preference seems unfair. However, our theology shouldn't be derived from human reasoning but from what the Father reveals about Himself in His Word. And He makes statements like, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). So, as I see it, the real issue related to this theme is how much we're willing to abandon self-influenced rationale and surrender to God's way of thinking (Rom. 12:1-3; Eph. 1:16-19; 3:14-21).

Well, I've already spilled the beans. Therefore, I'm not going to pretend this article deliberates whether God chooses His children just as a ploy to keep people

reading. For, I’m confident anyone who studies the Bible for themselves can grasp this truth, and more so if they can apply principles from the Greek text. So, my aim isn’t to **‘Reinvent the Wheel’** by re-defining “election” but to compose a contemporary and practical presentation about the hub, spokes, and tread of this operation as it’s presented in terms of God’s “will”, “calling”, “foreknowledge”, “predestination”, and other language related to His “purpose”.

In the Church Epistles, **Instruction about Election Exclusively Refers to Conversion and Never to The Process of Sanctification**. So, nothing written in this paper should be applied to how the Spirit works in the post-salvation lifestyle of Christians. Since, only after being justified before God, made alive, and given the Holy Spirit can we produce good works by choosing to utilize His power. Unlike Scripture related to the New Covenant based Kingdom, **Truth Comprising The “Administration of Grace” Doesn’t Teach God Causes Our Good Works** (Ezek. 36:26-32; Zeph. 3:13; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 3:2-9, 16-19; 4:20-24).

Section 1: The Human Condition

As we begin this study, I think a good starting place is to address the elephant in the room – the frequently bantered around concept of **'Free Will'**.

What's Meant by 'Free Will'

With reference to salvation, Scripture mentions or alludes to the human "will" many times. Several contexts indicate everyone possesses a 'will' which is exercised to accept or reject the gospel. Therefore, we need to identify how this created feature of our makeup functions in the field of evangelism. After detecting its role, this data can be compared with the prevailing definition of 'Free Will': **Every Person is Able to Obtain Eternal Life by Choosing to Believe in Christ's Payment for Sin**.

So, what does the Bible say about how our human 'will' responds to the gospel? Recently, a friend shared he'd conducted a search in one of my articles for the terms of 'election' and 'free will'. It turns out, 'election' showed up a couple dozen times, but

‘free will’ didn’t strike any matches. He asked why I thought this happened. My reply was that the phrase ‘free will’ doesn’t occur in the N.T., so I’m inclined not to use it. Turns out, he already understood this point but just wanted to solidify his views on the matter.

We proceeded to discuss a few relevant Scriptures which affirm **The Salvation Message Should be Presented as An Appeal to The Will**. For example, Paul said to the jailkeeper at Philippi, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Many portions can be cited to demonstrate the principle **Human Volition is Involved** (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-23; 10:9-10).

Another question at the heart of this discussion is, **‘When people exercise faith in Christ or reject His redemptive work, is their choice Coerced or Forced?’** I know of no passage which includes these concepts; on the contrary, *Respondents are Portrayed as Making Sincere, Deliberate, and Glad Choices* (Acts 2:38-42; 7:54-60; 13:48-51; 16:14; 17:32-34; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; 2 Thess. 2:11-14). Both decisions are presented as entirely voluntary.

Nonetheless, an often-overlooked-factor which needs to be integrated into how people respond to the gospel are **Celestial Energies Working Behind the Scenes**. For, since *The Fall* triggered by Adam, *unsaved gentiles* exist in the following state: "And you being **dead ones** in regard to your transgressions and sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to **the ruler** (Satan) of the authority of the air of **the spirit now working in** the sons of **disobedience**" (Eph. 2:1-2). [Throughout this article, **relevant thematic terms in Scripture quotes will occur in *Red Bold Type* and should be recognized as *emphasis mine***]

This same context continues to present *unbelieving Jews* in a similar Lost condition, "and among whom we (Paul and other Israelis) all once lived our lives in the lusts of our flesh, while doing **the wills** (or "desires" – θεληματα) of the flesh and mind processes, and in reference to nature we were **children of wrath** as the rest", that is, gentiles (v. 3).

Added to this, Second Timothy 2:25-26 urges us to evangelize with a mild approach, ". . . lest once God

might give repentance to them unto a full knowledge of the truth and they might sober up out of the **snare** of the Devil, who have **chosen to be made captive** by him in the direction of that one's **will**" (θελημα).

Together with Ephesians 2:1-3, this portion specifies every unbeliever's 'will' is confined by the Devil's "will" since they "have chosen to be made captive (εζωγρημενοι – perfect, middle/passive form) by him".[1] In other words, the unsaved *willingly* or *volitionally* stay in this moral prison since "the spirit" of the world's "ruler" (Satan) is "now working in" (or "energizing" – present tense) them to function in a manner consistent with "disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

Based on these existing evil forces, how can anyone break away from their dominance? Virtually every theology espouses **An Entity Stronger Than the Devil is Needed to Escape his Grasp**, and that entity is **The Holy Spirit** (1 John 4:3-6). Thus, the conviction people can get out of the Devil's "snare" by independently accepting Christ is based on the assumption all unbelievers have a prior encounter with the Spirit which enables them to believe.

The main proof text for this point is John 16:7-11 which details the work of the "Spirit" – "the Comforter" (παρακλητος), *Counselor* or *Advocate* (cf. 14:26; 15:26). "And having come, that one will expose **the world** concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment; indeed, concerning sin because they don't believe unto Me, also concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me, also concerning judgment because **the ruler** (Satan) **of this world** has been judged". Also, John 1:9 is cited for support, "He (Christ) was the true light, which illumines every man who comes into **the world**".

The problem with this stance is **No Scripture Actually Teaches The Holy Spirit Functions Inside All the Unsaved**. On the contrary, in this same portion Jesus explains, "I will send Him (the Spirit) to you", meaning to *His disciples* (John 16:7). Then, after being "filled with the Spirit" they disseminated their convicting message to "the world" which exposed sin and garnered both positive and negative responses (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:51-60).

The notion the Spirit worked inside to convict each unbeliever who heard *Lacks Biblical Backing.* Therefore, no visible support exists for the idea that the Lost inherently possess what is sometimes called **'A Spark of Divinity'** which prompts them to believe. Without **This Phantom Capability**, mankind finds itself in a very bleak state.

So, in this *Morally Dead Darkness* how can a person see the light of the gospel (Eph. 2:1-2)? Second Corinthians provides an answer: "if our **gospel** has been and continues to be **covered** (κεκαλυμμενον – *hidden* or *veiled*, perfect tense), it has been and continues to be **covered** in those persistently **choosing to be made to perish**" (present tense, middle/passive, 4:3, cf. 2:14-16).[1]

The next verse explains *Why the Unsaved* have this "covering" (καλυμμα – 3:13-16) on their conscience, "in whom the **god of this age** (the Devil) **completely blinded** (aorist indicative) the thoughts of unbelievers unto the outcome for the **illumination of the gospel** of the glory of Christ **not to dawn**" (4:4). **This narrative depicts Satan in Complete Control of His**

Children whom he's "blinded" from seeing the need for "the gospel", a *key component of the consuming* "snare" to do his "will" (John 8:44; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26).

Happily, **The Remedy for This Dilemma** is quickly revealed, "because God is the one who said, 'Out of darkness **a light shines**', who shone **in our hearts** toward **illumination** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The noun "illumination" (φωτισμον) is the same term used in verse 4 which describes what "the god of this age" keeps from *dawning* or *rising like the sun* inside his children. Its use in verse 6 with the phrase "God . . . who shone in our hearts" divulges He's the ***Agent*** or ***Force*** **which Causes Enlightenment to Accept** the "gospel". For, He's powerful enough to pierce the Devil's realm and free "those who choose to be made captive" to his "will" (2 Tim. 2:26).

Note, this "light" appears "out of darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6). **The Essence of God is Light** so this "darkness" must refer to the Lost's *unillumined*, "dead" state (vv. 3-4; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; 1 John 1:5-7). For, Satan's

children, like their father, are consistently presented as consumed with "darkness" and void of any kind of light or **'Spark of Divinity'** (Matt. 4:16; Luke 1:79; 22:53; John 3:19; Rom. 2:19; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:8; 6:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 5:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Also, what does the pronoun in the phrase "our hearts" denote (2 Cor. 4:6)? Moving forward, we'll see it's used repeatedly with reference to God's chosen ones in whom the Spirit initiates acceptance of and belief in the "gospel" (Rom. 8:15; 10:9-10; Gal. 4:5-6, 9). If He didn't reach out and *shine in us* "toward illumination" and "give repentance . . . unto a full knowledge of the truth", we too would remain hostage under the Evil One's "will" (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Gal. 4:9; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:25-26). In conclusion, **the Word doesn't teach the Spirit resides inside all the unsaved; it only provides examples of Him operating within God's "elect"** (1 Cor. 1:23-31; 2 Tim. 2:10).

Man's Natural Will & God's Will

In this segment, we'll take a deeper look at the role the human 'will' plays in salvation. In Romans 9:11,

Paul writes that God "calls" men to accomplish His "purpose . . . according to election". A few verses later he identifies how this act is initiated, "Consequently therefore, *it's* not associated with **the one who wills** (θελοντος), also not associated with the one who runs, but associated with **God who shows mercy**" (v. 16).

This participle is derived from the same root as the noun "will" (θελημα), so its action specifies men aren't redeemed based on *human want, desire* or *volition*. Next, the term "the one who runs" (τρεχοντος) refers to *human exertion*, which is also a non-factor (Mt. 27:48; John 20:4; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Gal. 2:2; Heb. 12:1). Instead, in redemption, "God who shows mercy" (ελεωντος) replaces *man's volition* and *action*, that is, human "works" (Rom. 9:12, 18, 23; 11:30-32; cf. Eph. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:13-16; Tit. 3:4-7).

This **Behind-The-Scenes Divine Will** is expressed similarly in the Gospel Accounts. John 1:12-13 reads, "as many as received Him, He gave them authority to choose to become children of God, the ones **believing** unto His name, who not out of bloods, also **not**

out (εκ – or *from the source*) **of the will** (θεληματος) of the flesh, and **not out** (εκ – or *from the source*) **of the will** (θεληματος) of a man, but they were caused to be born **out** (εκ – or *from the source*) **of God**."

The infinitive "to choose to become" (γενεσθαι – middle voice) and the verb "were caused to be born" (εγεννηθησαν) are two forms of the root word 'γινο-μαι'. This verb of being means *to come into existence*, and its *resultant state* is described here by the *trans-action of becoming* "children of God". Also, the pas-sive voice form of the verb specifies an outside force "caused" this process, which is identified as "God". Being "born" as His children emerged "out" (εκ – or *from the source*) of Him, *from within His essence* or *Person* (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:8-9). So, just like Paul, **John isolates God as The Source and Cause of Rebirth**.

Later, Christ develops this concept, "I say these things in order that you might be saved" but "you aren't be-lieving who (Jesus) that one (the Father) sent" (John 5:34, 38). Then He concludes, "You search the Scrip-tures because you think to have eternal life in them, and they exist to testify concerning Me; and **you**

don't will (ου θελετε) to come to Me in order that you might have life" (vv. 39-40).

In the next chapter, the Lord explains who *do want* to come to Him; they're the ones "the Father gives to Me" (Jesus), also described as the *Chosen* or *Elect* (6:37-40, 65, 70). Then, John 8:44 further defines those who reject, "You are out (εκ – or *from the source*) of the father, the Devil, and **you will** (θελετε, or *desire*) to do the **lusts of your father**; that one was a murderer from the beginning, and he hasn't stood in the truth because the truth isn't in him".

In addition, Christ proclaims, "no one's able to come to Me except the Father who sent Me might draw him" and "except it might have been given to him out (εκ – or *from the source*) of the Father" (John 6:44, 64-65, cf. 1:13). He also explains how this works, "the **Spirit** is the **one who makes alive** (ζῳοποιουν), the flesh profits nothing" (v. 63).

In similar manner, right after Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul writes how these believers got out of their hopeless state. It was God's "mercy", "love", and "grace" which,

"while being dead ones, . . . **made** us **alive** (συνεζωο-ποιησεν) with Christ"; we were "saved" by a "free gift of **God**" (vv. 4-5, 8-9; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:13). So, both Jesus and Paul categorically teach **God, the Holy Spirit, Is The Source which Ignites the Will (θελημα) of the Chosen to Desire Christ**.

Concluding this Section

Taking into consideration the underlying spiritual forces which initiate positive and negative responses to the gospel, **No One Can Exercise Faith in Christ Apart From Divine Intervention**. For, **Without the Spirit's "illumination", Every Person will Voluntarily, Emphatically, and Automatically Refuse Redemption** (2 Cor. 4:4, 6).

This is because the idea of needing salvation is outside an unbeliever's natural realm of reason. The thought of having a need to be delivered from sin by an exterior force is illogical, ridiculous, and even insane (μανιαν = 'mania', Acts 26:24) to those confined under the Devil's "will" (Rom. 8:7-8; 2 Tim. 2:26).

On the flip side, when the Spirit intercedes, **He Supernaturally Enlightens Folks to See Their Need for Reconciliation and Gives Them Faith**. During this interface, **Those who Believe Never Feel Pressured but Gladly Accept Christ's Work on The Cross** (Rom. 8:14-16; 2 Cor. 4:6).

Historically, this interaction between man and Spirit has been termed **'Irresistible Grace'**, a concept taught by theologians including Augustine at the turn of the 5th century and Martin Luther in the 16th. In fact, Luther published one of his most famous books about the process of salvation, which he also considered his best, *The Bondage of the Will*.[2]

To review, today many Christians promote the idea the Spirit convicts the mind and heart of all unbelievers as the gospel is preached. This stance is united with the concept all people have a 'Free Will' capable of producing faith in Christ's payment by self-determination.[3]

But based on the above expositions, I don't believe this point of view is correct. For, I see Scripture teach-

ing: **Left to Ourselves, Men won't Accept the Gospel but, Instead, will Maintain Resolute Resistance**.

This principle is articulated in Romans 8:7-8: "on account of the cause the mindset of the flesh is at enmity in the direction of God, for it doesn't choose to be made subject (middle/passive) to the law of God, for also **it can't choose to be made able** (ουδε . . . δυναται – middle/passive); also those existing in the flesh, **can't choose to be made able** (ου δυναται – middle/passive) to please God" (cf. John 6:44 & 65).[1] Biblical revelation consistently portrays **Every Person Functions with This Doomed Capacity Unless God Intervenes**.

For, the Lost exist in a "dead" state, spiritually "blinded" to the gospel, and trapped in the Devil's moral prison to do his "will". Accordingly, all men are headed toward "wrath" until **God turns the tide** by applying His "love", "grace", and "mercy" to make His elect "alive with Christ".

“Election” is Compatible with ‘Free Will’

This Popular Conviction encompasses the thought God selects people for salvation, yet this act doesn’t inhibit or violate man’s ‘Free Will’. Sounds rather good, huh? For, this position lends credence to the scores of passages which detail “election” while it elevates the idea of ‘Free Will’ to equal status.

Having observed the ramifications of this dual belief, the part which stresses the Lost can generate faith tends to dominate while instruction about “election” is minimized or just ignored. In most cases, I’ve seen this stance cause Christians to bypass attention away from God’s awesomeness and exclusivity in regeneration. As a result, many Body members miss out on the benefits of comprehending truths which help kindle a sense of Divine security, well-being, humility, thanksgiving, and other paybacks akin to this heavenly practice.

Additional Matters Related to 'Free Will'

Some Christians equate an unbeliever's ability to generate saving "faith" with *Adam's Initial Decision* to eat the "fruit" since they perceive his act represents a 'free will' choice. However, when he sinned it's important to recognize he didn't need redemption because he wasn't in **A Fallen State Shackled by the Ball and Chain of Blindness and Captivity** to "disobedience" under the Devil's "will" (Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26). Furthermore, perplexing evidence exists as to whether Adam truly made an independent decision when he ate from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6).

This question stems from the fact God knew salvation from sin would be needed before he transgressed. For, we read, "knowing . . . you were redeemed . . . by the valuable blood . . . of Christ, indeed **having been foreknown** (προεγνωσμενου) before the creation of the world, also having been made manifest upon the last of the times because of you" (1 Pet. 1:18-20; cf. Acts 2:23-24).

Since God made provision for redemption *before* Adam’s original sin, how should we think about the way his devastating choice came about? Did he really make a ‘free will’ decision or was it somehow prearranged by the Creator? As far as I can see, there’s no clear-cut answer, but we know Scripture always holds him 100% responsible for sin entering the world (Rom. 5:12-19). For reflections on how his decision may have transpired, see **Appendix I**.

Beyond this comparison, some relate man’s so-called ‘free will’ decision making capacity to Jesus’ choices. However, like Adam, Christ didn’t need redemption and never was “captive” to the Devil’s “will”. And unlike all human beings, Jesus was both God and Man, so He always functioned in perfect concert with the Father’s “will”. Consequently, His decision-making shouldn’t ever be cited to represent how humans make choices for, unlike us, He was without sin and not dogged by the “old man” (Heb. 4:15; 7:26). Further reflection on the Lord’s decision-making process is found in **Appendix II**.

Finally, regarding the concept of 'Free Will', believers should bear in mind after we're made alive in Christ and receive the Spirit, we enter a new state of "freedom" (ελευθερια) from the Law and its entrapment to sin (Rom. 7:7-25; 1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1, 13). For, we're no longer "slaves" to "sin" but a "new creation" in "Christ" who can choose to "walk in" and be controlled by "the Spirit" (Rom. 6:4-16; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16-18; 6:15; Eph. 5:18).

In this **Newly Liberated State**, it's appropriate to define choices Body members make to obey or disobey God's dictates as **'Free Will' Decisions** (2 Cor. 10:5-6). For, our victory over sin isn't automatic like it'll be for the Redeemed in the Future Messianic Kingdom (Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:27; 37:23-24; John 3:21).

Section 2: Divine Intervention

The Source of Saving Faith

Since Satan has "covered" the "minds" of the spiritually "dead" from experiencing "illumination" from the gospel, how do folks come to trust in Christ (2 Cor.

4:3-6; Eph. 2:1-3)? The answer is found in several contexts which portray **God Works in People so they can** "sober up out of the snare of the Devil" and **Accept Salvation** (2 Tim. 2:26, cf. John 3:20; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:1-9; 4:18).

This marvel is exemplified by the conversion of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to take heed to the things being spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). The Book of Acts documents his preaching in many places; some who heard responded with "faith" and others didn't. So, what do we learn about those who believed?

Earlier, Luke records the response which followed the apostle's first recorded message at Antioch of Pisidia, "having heard, the gentiles were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as had been arranged (τεταγμενοι) unto **eternal life believed**" (Acts 13:48, entire address vv. 16-47).

This participle is derived from the verb "τασσω" which means *to arrange* or *put in order*.[6] Most Translations render it **'appointed'** or **'ordained'**, either of

which properly represents the idea. These same Versions emphasize the term's *perfect tense* and *passive voice* which correctly portray the intent, **Those Who Accepted Paul's Preaching Had Already been Positioned and Conditioned to Believe since God** (the outside force) **Elected Them Before Creation** (Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:9). Those interested in how the Greek grammar develops this thought should read **Appendix III**.

Similarly, following Paul's message on Mars Hill which ended abruptly when he brought up *The Resurrection*, Luke writes, "Also, certain men **believed, after having been caused to join** (κολληθεντες) him, and among whom was Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman by the name of Damaris and others with them" (Acts 17:34, entire address vv. 22-31).

This aorist passive participle specifies *these individuals were acted upon by an outside force to join Paul before they* "believed".[7] This term indicates *God caused them to be glued* or *to cleave* "to him", then trust his message about "the Man (Christ) He (the Father) ordained" to "judge the inhabited world in

righteousness" (v. 31).[8] Other passive voice terms and contextual dialog in this Book illustrate how God set the table for people to believe for salvation (Acts 9:1-19; 10:29-33 w/43-45 & w/11:13-17; 11:24; 16:14; 18:9-11; 22:14; 26:15-16).

While conducting his ministry, Paul's outlook was based on this reality. Therefore, he didn't take people's reaction to the gospel personally but persisted in boldly proclaiming it. That's because he realized some would be offended by his preaching but also knew "the **elect**" would believe it to "obtain **salvation** in Christ Jesus with **eternal glory**" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22- 28; 2 Cor. 2:14-16; 3:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:9-10). So now, let's **Examine This Apostle's Perspective on How the "elect" Receive Saving Faith** by surveying sections from his Epistles.

Philippians 1:27-29

These verses challenge Christians to "conduct" ourselves "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" amid the persecution we face (1:27). We're not to be "frightened in anything by those who oppose, which

to them is a **display** of destruction, also of you *a display* of salvation, and this from God" (v. 28). This passage teaches how we can thrive while suffering scary resistance when we adhere to "salvation" affirming truths, "because the thing (το) **was graced** to you on behalf of Christ, not only the (το) outcome to **believe** unto Him, but also the (το) outcome to suffer on His behalf" (v. 29).

The verb "was graced" (εχαρισθη) is built on the same root as the noun "grace" (χαρις), so it depicts *an act of unmerited favor*. Most Versions translate it 'given' or 'granted', neither of which make crystal clear *God's grace is the source*.[9] Also, the neuter nominative article "the thing" (το) is the subject of this verb. This article's initial occurrence serves like a pronoun *standing in for two subsequent article-led phrases* which are the real subjects: "the outcome to believe" (το . . . πιστευειν) and "the outcome to suffer" (το . . . πασχειν).[10]

These infinitive constructions express action, but since they're subjects of the passive voice verb "was graced" (εχαρισθη), this relationship makes them

direct-object-activities done by an outside agent, which is identified as "God" (Phil. 1:28).[1] Applying this grammar to the first phrase, the *Resultant Action* (infinitive) *of Ongoing* (present tense) *Belief, Trust* or *Faith* was "graced" to us by Him.

Note, this response wasn't given to all men, but "to you" (υμιν), the Philippian believers. Their persecutors who didn't receive divine intervention had the opposite reaction of *rejection* and *antagonism*, an outward "display" (ενδειξις) of the "destruction" they're headed for (Rom. 9:21-22; Eph. 2:3; 2 Thess. 2:10-12).

In contrast, Body members have "salvation, and this (τουτο) from God" (Phil. 1:28). Demonstrative pronouns *represent concepts conveyed* by single terms or contextual ideas. Here, "this" (τουτο) includes *the contextual activity* related to "salvation", namely *endless* (present tense) *faith and suffering* (v. 29). And most noteworthy to the theme of this composition, **We're Able to Believe Because this Act "was graced" to Us by "God"**.

The second phrase, "the outcome to suffer", is an identical grammatical construct, so it too specifies *God "graced" us to undergo affliction*. Dozens of passages expand on the fact He saved us to do battle amidst inevitable anguish "on His behalf" (Rom. 5:3-5; 8:18-25; 2 Thess. 1:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:12; 4:1-8). Though most believers champion this facet of God's purpose, many still minimize or ignore its equally true counterpart – **Unmerited Favor Infuses the Elect with Trust in Christ** (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:4-9; 1 Tim. 1:14).

First Timothy 1:12-17

Historically, this is the final context which testifies to Paul's conversion. So, what did he need to be redeemed from? He was "formerly a blasphemer and persecutor and malefactor, but I **was shown mercy** because, while being ignorant, I acted in unbelief" (απιστια – v. 13).

This term affixes an alpha "α", negating an adjoined word, to the noun "πιστις", which depicts *faith, belief,* or *trust*. This account adds to the picture of Paul's spiritual darkness and defiance as he acted

out Satan's "will" (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:26). So, how did he escape this wicked state? He "was shown mercy" (ηλεηθην – 1 Tim. 1:13).

This verb means God *didn't give him what he deserved*, which was "wrath" (Eph. 2:2). And *the reason* given for needing "mercy" is "because" he operated "while being ignorant" (αγνοων) in "unbelief" (Rom. 9:18, 23; 11:30-32; Eph. 2:4; Tit. 3:5). This word transliterates into our term 'agnostic' which portrays *a state of not knowing* – the psychological gridlock in which all unbelievers are obliviously stuck (Rom. 2:4; 10:3; 2 Pet. 2:12).

In conjunction with "mercy", "the **grace** (χαρις) of our Lord overabounded" (υπερεπλεοναση), *though Paul didn't merit* or *deserve* it (1 Tim. 1:14). This verb affixes the preposition "υπερ", which means *above*, to the verb "πλεοναζω", meaning *to be more than enough* or *exceed*. Thus, God's "grace" *hyper-outperformed* Paul's depravity which is why he could be saved.

Next, like Philippians 1:29 states, God's "grace" cascaded into his life "with **faith** and **love** in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14). This specifies, his "faith" (πιστεως), the *ability to believe*, was *One of The Elements* "with" (μετα) or *accompanying* the "grace" he received. Prior to meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road, Paul lacked trust in Christ as well as godly "love". But since the Lord's plan for him was to become the "**pattern** of those about to **believe** upon Him unto **eternal life**", Paul "was **shown mercy** in order that in me, the foremost (sinner), Christ Jesus might display (ενδειξηται) **all longsuffering**" (1 Tim. 1:16).

One of the Father's main goals in redemption is to "display" or *reveal* His traits, and this passage features His immense "longsuffering" (Rom. 3:25-26; 9:17, 22; Eph. 2:7; Phil. 1:28). Also, note the verb "I was shown mercy" (ηλεηθην) is repeated a second time which **Stresses Divine Pity is Basic** to how He saves men (1 Tim. 13, 16, cf. Rom. 9:15, 18, 23; 11:30-32; Eph. 2:4). Furthermore, by making Paul a "pattern" or *representation* of "mercy" plus "grace . . . with faith" shows God can redeem worst-case-scenario offenders.

Before leaving this passage, I encourage each reader to check out all seven accounts of Paul's salvation. You'll find they vastly differ from most 'testimonies' heard today since **None of Them Contain a Hint that Paul Chose to 'Believe'**. Nor does he ever say he 'came to know the Lord' or claim he had any part in his redemption (Acts 9:1-19; Gal. 4:9).

On the contrary, we just saw his "faith" was a result of God's abounding "grace". Also, Acts 9:15 designates him as a "chosen (εκλογης or "elect") vessel". And *the exact time he was converted* is described in terms of "when God was well pleased", which connects this event with God's eternal "purpose" for him (Gal. 1:15, cf. Rom. 9:11-12; 11:1-6).

Moreover, Philippians 3:8 says he "was caused to lose (εζημιωθην) all things" – Jewish accolades he boasted about prior to salvation (vv. 4-7). This passive voice verb indicates *an external force* "caused" him to reject self "righteousness" in favor of the "righteousness of God through the faithfulness (πιστεως) of Christ" and enabled him to respond by "faith" (v. 9, cf. Acts 22:3-16; 26:4-18; Rom. 7:7-12; Gal.

1:13-17; Phil. 3:4-9). Recapping: **God Extended "Mercy" and "Grace" Along With Saving "Faith" to Paul so he Could Be a Current Pattern for How Even Treacherous Sinners are Regenerated**.

Ephesians 1:13

On the surface, this verse may seem unrelated to the topic at hand, but its grammar brings it front and center. A literal translation is: "and in whom you, after having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your **salvation**, and in whom, after having **believed**, you were sealed with reference to the Holy Spirit of promise."[11]

First, the two phrases "in whom" (εν ῳ) tie this portion back to verse 3 which states God has blessed us "in every spiritual blessing in the heavens **in Christ**". Then, on **Ten More Occasions**, verses 4-14 expound on these blessings by framing our access to them with the adverbial phrases "in Christ" (εν Χριστῳ), "in whom" (εν ῳ), "in Him" (εν αυτῳ), and "in the beloved" (εν τῳ ηγαπημενῳ).

Each phrase includes the preposition "εν", and **Each Word Group Serves an Adverbial Role Describing the Action Words** they're paired with. So, in verse 13, the phrase "in whom" (εν ῳ) modifies two nominative plural aorist participles. Also in this verse, the nominative plural pronoun "you" (υμεις) serves as the subject of these participles in addition to the verb "you were sealed" (εσφραγισθητε). These points of grammar combined form the core sentence: "after having heard" and "after having believed", "you . . . were sealed".

Now, what relationship do these participles have with this adverbial phrase? The first "εν ῳ" describes *the realm* or *sphere in which* these believers heard "the word of truth, the gospel". It happened *within an in-Christ realm* which is the same way God "caused Himself to choose" (εξελεξατο – middle voice)[1] them "in Him (εν αυτῳ) before the creation of the world" (Eph. 1:4).

The only method He could've used to *select us* in eternity past was to look forward to Christ's payment for sin, apply it to us, accept us "in Him", then view us

as "holy and blameless" (Rom. 3:24-28; 4:22-25; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). This contextual link to the first adverbial phrase in verse 13 specifies those who "heard" or *responded with reception to* "the word . . . the gospel" (accusative *direct objects*) did so because *They Were Previously Chosen "in Christ"* (cf. John 6:44-45, 60-65; 10:3, 27-30).

Likewise, this linguistic connection applies to the second phrase, "in whom (εν ῳ), after having believed" (πιστευσαντες), which signifies those who heard "the word . . . the gospel", also "believed" it (Eph. 1:13). However, some Translations render this phrase **'believed in Him'** which makes Christ the direct object instead of "the word" and "the gospel".[12] This rendition loses the adverbial force of the words "in whom" (εν ῳ) and deters the reader from corelating the acts of *hearing* and *believing* in verse 13 with the divine action contained in verse 4.

Consequently, Ephesians 1:3-14 teaches **God's Chosen Ones "in Christ" Hear the Gospel Message, Believe it**, then are "sealed . . . unto redemption . . . unto the praise of His glory". Correctly understood,

this section portrays the same truth as Acts 13:48, "as many as had been arranged unto **eternal life believed**".

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For in reference to grace you have been saved through faith, and this *is* not out of you, *it's* the free gift of God; *it's* not out of works in order that no one might boast."

Most Translations render these verses in a similar manner. However, Greek terminology behind the phrase "you have been saved" (εστε σεσωσμενοι) warrants a closer examination which is found in **Appendix IV**.

These verses are one of the most cited portions to identify the source from which Christians obtain belief, yet they're interpreted in several ways. Some claim the demonstrative pronoun "this" (τουτο) refers to the word "grace" (χαριτι); others say it refers to "faith" (πιστεως). Actually, both viewpoints are incompatible with the Original since this neuter pro-

noun doesn't match the gender of either feminine noun. So, "τουτο" doesn't relate to them in the same way most pronouns function in the Greek language.

We've already seen this same demonstrative pronoun in Philippians 1:28. There I pointed out "this" (τουτο) *represents the contextual concept of properties surrounding "salvation"* which includes the acts of belief and suffering (v. 29).

Some years ago, I came to realize all demonstrative pronouns convey a concept about nouns they agree with in form. But when they appear in this neuter nominative/accusative form, they *Demonstrate A Contextual Concept* or *The Concept Conveyed by the Neuter Nouns They Agree With* in gender and number. For evidence to support this definition, those interested can read **Appendix V** which covers the nine other times "τουτο" occurs in this Epistle.

Accordingly, here "τουτο" **represents the entire process of being saved by grace through faith** (Eph. 2:4-5, 8). That's why the text proceeds to explain "this" (τουτο) isn't "out (εξ) of you"; it's not "out (εξ) of"

human "works"; it's a "free gift (δωρον) of God". Since **God is The Source of *This Package Deal***, no person can "boast" in any part of salvation unless we *brag about the Person who accomplished it in us* (v. 9, cf. Rom. 3:20, 27; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; 3:21).

For clarity, "εξ" is a form of "εκ" which is used several times to specify spiritual birth isn't "out (εκ) of the will of the flesh, also not out (εκ) of the will of a man, but out (εκ) of God" (John 1:12-13, cf. 6:64-65; Rom. 9:11-12; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Tit. 3:4-7). Therefore, **When Properly Understood**, **"this"** (τουτο) **Refers to Saving "Faith" Bundled With the "Grace" Given to God's Elect** (Eph. 1:4; 2:8).

Romans 8:8 + Hebrews 11:6

Connecting precepts garnered from these two passages tell a singular truth: **The Lost are Unable** *"to Please God"***, So They Can't Produce** *"Faith"*. Note, Hebrews 11:6 says, "apart from **faith**, it's impossible **to please** (ευαρεστησαι) *Him*, for it's necessary for the one who comes to God **to believe** that He exists and becomes a rewarder to those who diligently

seek Him." This infinitive unites the adverb "ευ", portraying the idea of *good*, with the verb "αρεσκω", which means to "please" or *make amends*. Together, they convey *to be well pleasing* or *make good*.

Romans 8:8 also contains an infinitive form of this root verb, "the ones existing in the flesh aren't choosing to be made able (present tense, middle/passive)[1] **to please** (αρεσαι) God". This portion characterizes the reality of all unbelievers – apart from divine intervention, they "aren't . . . able" to *vigorously complete* (aorist, active) the act of making amends with God.

This lesson combined with Hebrews 11:6 depicts the reflexive principle of mathematics: if 'a' = 'b' and 'b' = 'c', then 'a' = 'c'. So, since **unbelievers** can't **"please"** God and it's not possible to **"please"** Him without **"faith"**, **Unbelievers Can't Generate "Faith"**. These simple statements add up to an astronomical truth.

Second Thessalonians 2:13-14

"Also, we're indebted to give thanks to God always concerning you, brethren **having been loved** by the

Lord, because God caused Himself to **choose** (middle voice)[1] you as first fruit (or "from the beginning" – textual difference) unto **salvation** in **sanctification** associated with the Spirit and **faith** associated with the truth, unto which He **called** you through our gospel, unto possession of the **glory** of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There's a lot going on in this portion. Initially, Paul says he and his fellow ministers "are indebted" (οφειλομεν) or *obligated* to give thanks to God for these Christians. Why? Because *The One Who Called Them for Salvation* should receive "thanks", *appreciation*, or *gratitude* for His work (see 1:3). And how did He benefit them? He "caused Himself to choose" (ειλατο – middle voice) them.

This aorist indicative form of the verb "αιρεω", meaning *to take* or *seize*, indicates He *completed this act in past time* (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). The usage of this term is virtually synonymous with "εκλεγω", the verb commonly used to designate God's *election* or *choice* of His children (Mark 13:20; Luke 6:13; 9:35; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2; 13:17; 1 Cor. 1:27-28; Eph. 1:4; James 2:5).

The text goes on to indicate what we were chosen for; it was "unto salvation", a transaction described by two adverbial phrases. First, this act was achieved "in sanctification (εν αγιασμῳ) associated with the Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13). This noun depicts a positional *setting apart* or *separation from sin* "in Christ" which is why God accepts us as "holy (αγιους) and blameless ones", then designated "saints" (αγιοις – Eph. 1:1, 3-4, cf. Rom. 11:16; Eph. 2:21; Phil. 4:21).

This operation couldn't originate with humans since we were stuck under the Devil's "will" and practiced unrelenting rebellion by "disobedience" to God's standards (Rom. 8:7-8; Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:26). So, the "Spirit" had to initiate this *Judicial Separation* when He "elected" us "in Christ Jesus, who was made wisdom to us from God, both righteousness, **sanctification** and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:27-30; 1 Pet. 1:2).

Second, God picked us for "salvation in" (εν), *within*, or *in the realm of* "faith (πιστει) associated with the truth" (αληθειας – 2 Thess. 2:13). Note this rendering, for genitive nouns consistently express *association*, and most of the time Versions render this

phraseology with **'of'** to signify *affiliated possession*. The English word 'of' depicts a large portion of what this case represents so I too often render it this way or with the words *belonging to*. The KJV also translates this construct 'belief **of** the truth', and by doing so more accurately preserves *the foundational meaning*. Furthermore, the KJV generally renders other phrases consisting of the word "faith" followed by a genitive noun in this same way, a precedent set by both Wycliffe and Tyndale, then predominantly followed for centuries.[13]

However, almost all English Versions published over the past 70 years translate this construct 'faith **in** the truth' which T*ends to Bolster Support for the Idea Humans Can Produce Saving Faith* (see Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16, 20; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:12). This includes popular Translations such as NASV, NIV, NKJV and ESV. In these Versions, rare exceptions occur such as Romans 3:3 where most still read 'faithfulness **of** God' (πιστιν του θεου).

Fortunately, sites like studybible.info provide access to older Translations that render constructions like

this with the word **'of'** irrespective to which Greek Edition they're translated from (cf. Acts 3:16 – "on the basis of the faith associated with His name" [επι τῃ πιστει του ονοματος αυτου]).

When this deduction is applied, rather than denoting we generate "faith" in the "truth", our "faith" is "associated with" the "truth" in similar fashion to how "sanctification" is "associated with" the "Spirit" (2 Thess. 2:13). Just like the Spirit is *the pertinent source of our setting apart*, the truth is the pertinent source of our faith. Consequently, I think these phrases teach at salvation the "Spirit" *makes God's elect holy* in Christ when *He gives us "faith" affiliated with* "the truth" (cf. Rom. 10:14-17).[14] To sum up this verse's thought, **During His Sanctifying Work at Salvation, "The Spirit" Uses Gospel "Truth" to Initiate Saving "Faith" in those "God Caused Himself to Choose"**.

Two additional statements which help define the election process are contained in this portion; we've "been **loved** by the Lord" and were "**called**" (2 Thess. 2:14). These features of God's purpose repetitively arise in contexts describing "election", so their

relationship to this subject will be observed as they occur in coming passages from the Church Epistles.[15]

Romans 12:3

Directly following an appeal for believers to live a life of service to God, Paul states, "For, I say through the **grace** having been given to me to everyone being among you not to think above (υπερ + φρονειν) beyond what is necessary to think (φρονειν), but to think (φρονειν) unto the outcome to think soundly (σως + φρονειν) as, to each one, God has measured a measure of **faith**."

You can see this verse contains four infinitive forms of the verb "φρονεω", which means to "think" or *use the mind*. The first is combined with the preposition "υπερ" and signifies not to think in a manner "above" what we ought, for this practice allows *routine* (present tense) *pride* or *arrogance* to control our outlook. The last occurrence, prefixed by the noun "σως" which depicts *soundness*, specifies we're to *maintain* (present tense) *a spiritually healthy mindset*. Two more present infinitives rest between which *stress*

the need to retain a humble frame of mind in the successful pursuit of Christian behavior.

What exactly is Paul proposing which can assist this conducive attitude while we seek to present our "bodies as a living, holy" and "acceptable sacrifice to God" (Rom. 12:1)? First, we're to put these exhortations into practice "through" His "mercies" (οικτιρμων). This noun ties in with its verb form "οικτιρω" which occurs twice in Romans 9:15 and details how God carries out His "purpose" by "showing mercy" (ελεωντος & ελεει – Greek synonyms, v. 16) to "vessels of mercy" (ελεους – 8:33; 9:11-24; 11:30-32). These "elect" Jews and gentiles are the same ones who've been "measured a measure of faith" (12:3).

After categorizing humanity as morally bankrupt, chapters 3 and 4 of Romans explain how we've become acceptable to God by being "justified by faith". Chapters 5 – 8 teach how our position in and affiliation with Christ anchors victory over sin in the sanctification process. This section closes by introducing "election" and touching on our guaranteed glorification. Finally, chapters 9 – 11 **Teach the Elect are the**

Ones Who'll Receive God's Mercy and Respond by "faith" to the Gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:10).

Next, in the process of finalizing how God chose His "remnant" (λειμμα) "according to election", Paul attaches the thought that God had **"measured** (εμερισεν) **a measure of faith** to each one" of these saved "Jews" and "gentiles" (Rom. 12:3 & 11:5, cf. 9:11, 24; 1 Cor. 7:16-17).

This verb's aorist indicative form points to *past completed action* when God gave us a "measure" or *needed quantity* "of faith" at the time of regeneration. When Christians realize we personally received saving "faith" based only on divine "mercy", **It's Easier to Maintain a Humble Mindset** concerning our redemption, growth, edifying ministry, and evangelism.

Colossians 2:11-12

The final passage of this section reads: "and in whom you were circumcised in relation to a circumcision not-made-with-hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, after having

been buried with Him in baptism; and in whom you were raised with *Him* through the **faith** associated with the operation of God, the one having raised Him (Jesus) out of the dead."

This spiritual "circumcision" happened to us following the aorist participial action, "after having been buried with" (συνταφεντες) Christ "in baptism".[7] Since, physical "circumcision" represented *separation from sin*, our Lord's sinless lifestyle under the Law combined with His death on our behalf – His "circumcision not-made-with-hands" – **Accomplished a Judicial Parting from Sin which Allows Believers to Be Fully Acceptable to God** (Lev. 12:2-3; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 4:15). At salvation, we assumed this position when the Spirit "baptized" us "into His death" by the "one baptism" (Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5). Also, **This "Baptism" Activated Our Entrance into The "Body"** (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:27-28).

The next result of this "baptism" is "you were raised with (συνηγερθητε) *Him"*, which enables us to "walk in newness of **life**" (Rom. 6:4; 7:6). Prior to redemption, we were morally "dead in transgressions and

sins" (Eph. 2:1). Afterward, we're no longer enslaved to sin but positioned to "walk in the Spirit", "as if **living** out of the dead", and able to "present" ourselves "as **instruments of righteousness** to God" (Rom. 6:6, 12-16; Gal. 5:16-18). Tying these thoughts to the topic at hand, **We Entered This Resurrection-Powered Life** "through the faith associated with the operation of God" (Col. 2:11-12).

This phrase is grammatically identical to the one just covered, "faith associated with the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). For, "faith" (πιστεως) is followed by a genitive noun, which means it's ***of*** or "associated with" God's "operation" (ενεργειας), *working*, or *energizing*. Again, most older Versions render this phrase 'faith **of** the operation (or 'working') of God', and most newer Ones read 'faith **in**' His efforts which permits the idea that saving "faith" originates from us. However, when correctly represented, the grammar specifies **We were Circumcised at Our "Baptism" by "the Faith" which has *Its Associated Source* or *Affiliated Base* in God's "Operation"**.

One final thought, take note of the phrases "in whom" (εν ῳ) and "in Him" (εν αυτῳ – Col. 2:10-12). Combine their adverbial sense with the passive voice action words they modify: "having been filled", "were circumcised", and "were raised with", which imply *the underlying external force of deity*. Then, compare this grammar with the just concluded exposition of Ephesians 1:4 &13. It's apparent these passages teach similar truths: "in Christ" the elect are "made alive with Him", after being "raised", "circumcised", and "filled" with the "fullness of" His "deity". **As Occupants of Christ's Holiness, We're Entirely Acceptable to God** (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:4; 2:4-5; Col. 2:9-13). How astonishing is that!

Section 3: Passages Describing Election

To complete this study, features of "election" will be identified and developed by probing key portions which define the celestial campaign. These segments are categorized according to three aspects of God's "purpose": Determinations in eternity past, how His decisions play out in the annals of time, and objectives reached by these undertakings.

- - Pre-Creation Activity - -

Romans 8:28-30

"Also (δε), because we know to those who continuously **love** God, He works all things in the direction of good to those who continuously exist **as called ones** according to *His* **purpose**. And, because, who He **foreknew** He **predestined** as conformed ones associated with the image of His Son unto the outcome for Him to be firstborn among many brethren; and also (δε) who He **predestined**, these He **called**, and who He **called**, these He **justified**; and also (δε) who He **justified**, these He **glorified**."

To gain an accurate perspective of verses 29 and 30, it's necessary to solidify a few points in verse 28. Then, after considering the last two verses, we'll double back to calculate how that truth influences the meaning of the first verse.

Initially, the noun "called ones" (κλητοις) defines *those summoned to salvation* (v. 30). As more passages containing forms of this term are evaluated,

it'll become evident **They Represent A Component of God Drawing The "elect" to Himself** (**nouns:** Rom. 1:1, 6-7; 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 24, 26; **verbs:** Rom. 8:30; 9:7, 12, 24-26; 1 Cor. 1:9; 7:15-24; Gal. 1:6, 15; Eph. 4:1, 4; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Another significant noun is the word "purpose" (προ-θεσιν – Rom. 8:28). This term combines the preposition "προ", which conveys the idea of *before*, with the noun "θεσις" signifying *a placed thing*.[16] Our English word 'thesis' is derived from this noun and refers to *a submitted proposal*. Similarly, God **Previously Set Forth His Plan *for Redemption***, He *Placed it Out Beforehand*, then operates "according to" (κατα) or *in line with* **This Published Blueprint**.

Regarding *Salvation and Redemption*, "προθεσις" occurs in Romans 9:11, Ephesians 1:11 & 3:11, and Second Timothy 1:9 which affirms, "God . . . has **saved** and **called** us with reference to a holy **calling**, not according to our **works** but according to (κατα) His own **purpose** and **grace** which was given to us in Christ Jesus **before eternal times**". Likewise, it's verb is used in regard to revealed "mystery" truth which

Explains All Aspects of His Current Plan including the Justification of Sinners (Rom. 3:25; 5:9-11; 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9-10; 4:24; Col. 1:24 – 2:3).

Allied with this "purpose" for the "called ones", the conjunction "also" (δε) is noted in the above translation. Not only does this term *connect words or thoughts* like the most common conjunction "and" (και) but *it anticipates additional content*. Here, it separates aspects of God's "purpose" into distinct timeframes.

The initial "δε" creates a parenthesis which envelopes verse 28 with His foreknowing and predestining – *movements in eternity past*. Its second appearance sets apart His acts of calling and justifying which *transpire in real-time conversion*. The third "δε" sections off God's future act of glorifying when the "elect" ultimately become "conformed ones" to "the image of His Son" (vv. 29-30, 33).

Besides these designations, this section contains another linguistic abnormality. The verbs "foreknew", "predestined", "called", "justified" and "glorified" all

exist in aorist indicative form which means *these acts were completed.* We humans tend to think of these events taking place at different intervals of time. However, the grammar suggests God can and does visualize these as *accomplished activities*. Based on this unique attribute, from “before eternal times” and “according to *His* purpose” He deems the “called ones” as already occupying eventual “glory” (Rom. 8:18, 21, 28, 30; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Accordingly, these verses **Present Redemption as Secure** because it’s founded on the enacted plan of God; **Our Salvation is Guaranteed** since it’s rooted in His Omniscience and Omnipotence. That’s why the text proceeds, “who will bring a charge against the **elect** (εκλεκτων) of God? **God is the one who justifies**” (Rom. 8:33). Then, verses 37-39 read, “we more than conquer through the one having **loved** us, for I have been persuaded that . . . **no . . . created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God** in Christ Jesus our Lord”. We too are part of creation, thus, even we can’t alter this celestial bond of “love”.

The Manifold "Love" of God

The latter part of Romans 8 was written to describe how the Father's movements place and preserve His "elect . . . in Christ Jesus". This portion explicitly teaches our eternal destination stands secure since every aspect of salvation is an offshoot of heavenly "love" (αγαπη – vv. 35, 39). Strengthening this idea, the aorist participle, "the one having loved (αγαπησαντος)[7] us", stipulates we received *this charity* which enables us to *routinely* (present tense) "more than conquer" or *experience victory* amid persecution (v. 37, cf. 8:18-27).

To summarize, His previously endowed "love" toward the "elect" germinates a "faith" response to the gospel then cradles "those who continuously love" (αγαπωσιν) God" and "continuously exist (ουσιν) as" His "called ones" (present participles in v. 28, cf. Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4-5, 13; Phil. 1:28-29; 1 Tim. 1:13-14).

That being said, divine "love" is multi-faceted with regard to salvation. One widely understood component was shown when God sent His Son to pay the penalty

for all sin, laying the basis for men to be freed from eternal judgement (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 5:18-19; 1 John 2:2). However, redemption only takes effect when a person receives this payment (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:23-25; 5:17; 10:9-10; 2 Thess. 2:10-12). Positing the fact the Lost are "blinded", held captive under the Devil's "will", and stuck in a state of wicked-"spirit"-prompted "disobedience", *How Can Anyone Believe?* (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:26)

It's possible because **Exercising "Faith" Results from being God's "Elect" Who've Received an Additional Aspect of Divine "Love"** (Rom. 8:33-35, 37, 39; 9:11-13; Eph. 1:4-5; 2:4-9; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:13-14). In conclusion, God extended *A General Kind of* "love" by providing a way for all men to be saved. Also, *He Gave an Extra* **"measure"** of **"love"** *to The Chosen* which enables us to place "faith" in Jesus' perfect sacrifice (Rom. 12:3; Heb. 10:14).

God's Foreknowledge

Now let's return to the exposition of Romans 8:28-30 and focus on the statement God "foreknew" who

would "believe" the gospel. Some hold the concept: **God previously knew who would exercise faith, yet this reality in no way violates man's free choice in the matter**. However, this stance isn't verified in N.T. contexts which discuss His 'foreknowledge' or 'fore-knowing'. So, let's analyze the portions this term appears in to understand how this attribute in God's Nature functions in reference to redemption.

First, this section states God **"foreknew"** (προεγνω) the "called ones" (Rom. 8:28-29). This verb unites the preposition "προ", meaning *before*, with the verb "γινωσκω", which portrays *knowing with a sense of understanding* or *being aware of*.[17] Then, this term is followed by the verbs "predestined" and "called", activities also accomplished by the Father. Furthermore, it occurs alongside phraseology such as His "purpose" and "the elect of God" (vv. 28-29, 33). This contextual affiliation implies *He carried out these acts in conjunction with His foreknowledge*.

Then, this term is used when Paul says, "God didn't push aside His people who He **foreknew**" (προεγνω), a statement which is applied to his own salvation plus

that of Elijah and 7000 more in their historical time-frame (Rom. 11:1-4). Immediately, these examples are linked with God's "remnant" who're saved based on "election associated with grace" and not human "works" (vv. 5-6). This context also *couples God's fore-knowledge with other terms explaining how He "calls" individuals* (cf. Rom. 9:6-13). Additional occurrences of this verb refer to humanity's 'foreknowledge' but, unlike God, men can't cause anything to happen by our premonitions (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17).

Next, its participial form defines how *God foreknew Christ would shed His blood to redeem man* "before the creation of the world" (προεγνωσμενου – 1 Pet. 1:18-20). To corroborate this teaching, its noun appears in Acts 2:23, "in reference to God's **determinate counsel** and **foreknowledge** (προγνωσει), this one (Jesus) was given up through the hand of the lawless, *who* you killed after having fastened *Him* to *the cross*". Both portions *conclusively tie* God's *foreknowledge to Christ's payment* for sin (Acts 3:20-21; Rom. 3:23-25; Heb. 9:22-26).

This noun appears one final time regarding Jewish believers who're labeled the "**elect** . . . according to the **foreknowledge** (προγνωσιν) of God" and "in sanctification associated with the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:1-2; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13). Again, *The* "elect" (εκλεκτοις) *and The Spirit's Work are linked to Divine* "foreknowledge".

After considering all available data surrounding this term, it signifies: **God's Foreknowledge is Inseparably Bonded to His "purpose" and "will" as well as His Decisions to Make, Predestine, Choose, Call, and Justify "vessels of mercy"** (Rom. 8:28-29, 33; 9:11, 20-21, 23-24; Eph. 1:4-6, 11). In essence, **God's Foreknowledge of Events Governs the Certainty They'll Take Place**.

Now let's revisit Romans 8:28. Like any passage, we should apply it based on contextual relationships. In 8:15-39, Paul explains Body members "received the Spirit", can handle sufferings as "sons of God", are the Father's "heirs", and possess the "hope" of being "gloried with" Christ. These guarantees are secure because we're His "called ones" and "elect", thus no one can "separate us from" His "love".

Consequently, *Verses 28-30 Exist in A Context Which Specifies How We're Saved*. So, there's no reason to interpret the phrase "all things" in verse 28 to include any part of the Christian sanctification process.

For, Romans 6:12 – 8:14 details our post-salvation lifestyle of putting off "sin" and putting on "righteousness". Later, chapter 12 picks up with further instruction about incorporating Christ's qualities. Between these portions, chapters 8:15 – 11:36 *Serve as A Literary Interlude* which explains how God predetermined, positioned, and guarded His "elect" to occupy a regenerate state wherein we're now able to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:1-6; 7:4-6; Gal. 5:16).

Accordingly, **The Famous Romans 8:28 Phrase, "He works all things in the direction of good", should be Confined to The Celestially Coordinated Stages of Salvation and Not Extended to Events in Our Christian "walk"**.

In the future Kingdom, God's elect will be divinely empowered and caused to do good works. In contrast, today Christians are responsible for how we

react to each challenge with the foundation of knowing God "made" us "alive with Christ", provides direction in His Word, and affords infinite "power" through the indwelling "Spirit" to understand and obey these dictates (Ezek. 36:26-31; 37:23; Zeph. 3:12-13; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 2:4-5; 3:1-19; 5:15-21).

Ephesians 1:4-6

". . . according as He caused Himself to **choose** us in Him before the creation of the world for us to continually be holy and blameless ones in His presence after having **predestined** us in **love** unto son-position through Jesus Christ unto Himself according to the good thinking of His will unto the praise of the **glory** associated with His grace which He graced us with in **the beloved**."

These verses make up the first section of an amazing opening paragraph which describes the heavenly, spiritual blessings we possess "in Christ" (v. 3). At the forefront, Paul writes, "He caused Himself to choose (εξελεξατο) us." This verb literally means *to speak out* and is well translated *to choose, select, pick,* or

elect. Also, its middle voice indicates *God acted upon Himself* to "choose us". And its aorist indicative form specifies this act was c*ompleted in past time* which is pinpointed as "before the creation of the world".

Next, the phrase "for us to continually be (ειναι) holy and blameless ones in His presence" discloses God's desired *outcome* in this matter. For, the infinitive form of this verb of being conveys the Father's pre-creation vision of our *resultant essence* or *presence*, which is "holy and blameless".

Some Versions translate the phrase '**that we should be** holy and blameless' which allows for thinking this verse teaches *we ought to work on our holiness after conversion* (Rom. 6:12-22). Instead, the grammar indicates **The Resultant Continual Existence** (present infinitive) **of Being "Holy and Blameless"** ***Materialized*** **the Moment God Elected Us "in Christ"** (Rom. 3:24-26; 8:33; Eph. 1:3-4). Translations more accurately representing the Greek text are listed in these footnotes.[18,19]

Before proceeding, I think it's necessary to counter a theological hypothesis currently being promoted in conjunction with Ephesians 1:4. This concept is commonly labeled **'Corporate Election'** and asserts God chose a group of people prior to creation then, over time, unbelievers by 'Free Will' exercise faith in Christ and become members of that group. In other words, this view claims the Lost can generate faith which places man, not God, in the driver's seat of conversion.

First, Scripture covered so far doesn't support the idea people can trust in Jesus apart from prior divine intervention, for multiple passages show saving "faith" is given to God's "elect" in accord with His predeterminate "will". Second, this interpretation contradicts the teaching of this context, for Ephesians 1:13 ties those who effectively *hear* and *believe* the gospel with the ones *chosen* "in Him" prior to creation (1:4).

Third, advocates of this belief ignore portions that unmistakably prove **God Selects Individuals for Salvation** (Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:1 [Paul]; Acts 16:14-15 [Lydia]; Rom. 9:7-9 [Issac]; Rom. 9:10-13 [Jacob]; and

Rom. 11:1-7 [Elijah and 7000 others]). Sadly, this is just another philosophical attempt to get believers to turn a blind eye from simple truths in the Word.

Moving on Paul writes, "after having predestined (προορισας) us" (Eph. 1:5). This aorist participle indicates God *accomplished this act before* He chose us, which is why it's rendered "after having".[7] This term is composed of the preposition "προ", which means *before*, affixed to the verb "οριζω", signifying *to designate*.

Our word 'horizon' is derived from its root which symbolizes *a line of demarcation* or *separation* between land/water and sky. Combined with "προ", both noun and verb forms convey *prior designation, determination beforehand* or *foreordaining*. With reference to redemption, it appears three more times, then twice more with different subject matter which help confirm this meaning (Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:11; cf. Acts 4:28; 1 Cor. 2:7). At least seven Versions adequately translate this participle plus provide a good rendition of verse 4.[18]

This foreordination happened "through Jesus Christ unto" (εις), *in the direction of*, or *for* the Father "Himself" as well as "unto" (εις) our "son-position" (Eph. 1:5). These prepositional phrases have the adverbial function of describing how God carried out predestination *in a manner directed toward* "Himself" and "son-position" (υιοθεσιαν).

This noun is often translated **'adoption as sons'** which is exactly what happened when we "were baptized into Christ", God's "Son" and "seed", and the Spirit initiated us into the "body" as *divine family members* (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:16, 19-29). The term "υιοθε-σια" occurs five times, once in reference to O.T. elect of Israel, and the rest pertain to Jews and gentiles in the Church (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5).

In Romans 8:15, this *sonship* is contextually coupled with the idea the Father "predestined" us "as conformed ones associated with the image of His Son" (v. 29). Between these two verses, additional language links our "son-position" with the "hope" of "the revelation of the sons of God" and being "glorified with" Him. That event includes "the redemption

of our body" and "freedom associated with the glory" (vv. 17-24). Meditating upon and internalizing these tremendous promises enables us to "wait for" them "through endurance" (v. 25).

Returning to Ephesians 1:5, four additional prepositional phrases serve an adverbial function to describe the act of predestination. First, God undertook this "in love" (εν αγαπῃ). Since He foreordained "us" *in this beneficial manner*, "love" was a motivator behind predestination just like His practice of "election" (Rom. 8:35, 37, 39; 9:11-13; Eph. 2:4-9; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:13-14).

The next adverbial combo indicates He foreordained us "for son-position through Jesus Christ" (δια Ιησου Χριστου). This modifying phrase refers to redemption procured by His death and resurrection which allowed God to accept us as "holy and blameless" children (Rom. 3:25-26; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Eph. 1:4).

The third phrase describing foreordination is "according to the good thinking (κατα την ευδοκιαν) of His will" (Eph. 1:5). This blend of terms conveys the idea

God's saving work toward us was *in keeping with* His *favorable plan* and directed by His "will" (θεληματος – cf. v. 9; Gal. 1:15).

In reference to salvation, God's "will" is alluded to in a two-dimensional way, much like His "love". For, *in an indeterminate manner*, He "wills (θελει, or "desires") all men to be saved and come unto a full knowledge of the truth". This act is in line with extending *common* "love" to address all men's sin (1 Tim. 2:4, cf. John 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:10). But also, He dispensed *an extra aspect of "love"* to His chosen which is like how *an additional facet of His "will"* (θελημα) functions behind the elect's belief in the gospel (John 1:13; 6:38-40; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 10:10, **verb forms:** John 5:21; Rom. 9:16, 18, 22). In each context, adjacent language specifies whether His "love" and "will" should be understood in a **Causal** or **Non-Causal Sense**.

The fourth adverbial modifier is "unto the praise associated with the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6). This indicates He pre-arranged our future "unto" (εις), *in the direction of*, or *for* the "praise" (επαινον),

approval, or *commendation* "associated with" His "glory". And all of this from an outpouring of His *Unmerited Favor* or "grace".

At the end of the day, **God is a Jealous God who Wants and Deserves Recognition for What He's Done, Is Doing, and Will Do**. Studying, believing, applying and teaching the revelation He's made known about His "purpose" in redemption are avenues we can take to recognize *The Sonship Position* procured for us (vv. 9, 11). So, let's seek to propagate our role as celestial sons which will help us inch closer to "praise" His "glory" (δοξης) as **others perceive divine traits represented in our disposition** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14, cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

One final observation. The accusative pronoun "us" (ημας) appears four times in this passage and depicts "us" as *objects, the recipients* of "His grace (χαρι-τος) which He graced (εχαριτωσεν) us with in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4-6). These providential benefits are based in *unmerited favor* flowing from His "will", "good thinking" and "love", features which motivated Him to *predestine* and *choose* us to be "holy and

blameless" *sons* "through Jesus Christ", His "beloved" Son.

- - Election in Real Time - -

First Corinthians 1:18-31

This extended passage begins, "For, indeed, the message of the cross exists as **foolishness** to those choosing to be made to end in ruin, also it exists as the **power** of God to those choosing to be **saved**".[1]

Here Paul utilizes two participles in dual voice form to explain how people react to the gospel. The first one, "those choosing to be made to end in ruin" (απολλυμενοις), refers to folks who *act on themselves* (middle) "to be made" (passive) *by an outside force* to "end in ruin" or eternal *devastation*. This rejection parallels the previously covered response which should be expected from the Lost who *continuously* (present tense), *volitionally* and *enthusiastically* refuse Christ since they're *controlled by an evil energy* which holds them "captive" to Satan's "will" (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26).

The second, "those choosing to be saved" (σωζομεν-οις) depicts folks who *continuously* (present tense) *act upon themselves* (middle voice) to accept Christ's payment because of *divine intervention* (passive – cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-17). Their *realization of sin* and *exuberant reception* corresponds with portions which show **How the Spirit Enlightens Men** to see past the Devil's blinding effect **and Prompts Them to Believe** (Acts 13:48; 16:14-15; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Phil. 1:28-29; 1 Tim. 1:14). The rest of this chapter *Provides Insight* for why these opposing responses to the gospel occur.

Initially, the Lost perceive the "cross" as "foolishness" (μωρια), the first of six times this term contributes significant meaning to the tone of this context (1 Cor. 1:20-21, 23, 25, 27). Our vivid English equivalent describes how the world views redemption as *moron-ish* or just plain *stupid*. In contrast, the "called" recognize Jesus' sacrifice "exists as" (εστιν), *is*, or *substantially represents* God's "power" (δυναμις) or *dynamo*, which the "Spirit" uses to spawn "faith" (v. 24; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

In support of this premise, Paul draws upon Isaiah 29:14, "for it has been written, 'I will ruin the **wisdom** of the **wise**, and I will dismiss the understanding of those who understand'" (1 Cor. 1:19). This verse specifies God "will ruin" or *devastate* the "wisdom" (σοφιαν), *cleverness*, or *skill* of those who think they're "wise".[20] Based on this Greek term, the favorable name *Sophia* depicts *one who correctly responds to truth*.

This verse teaches unbelievers can't come to God through their "wisdom" since, simultaneously, *by His own skill* He'll "dismiss" their *foolish conclusions* and *lifestyle*. It's noteworthy part of Isaiah 29:13-16 is also quoted in the narrative about "election" in Romans 9:19-21. Also, this is the first two of seven times the nouns "wise" and "wisdom" make their impact in this portion.

Now, Paul challenges the Corinthian's perception, "Where is the **wise one**? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God **made foolish** the **wisdom** of the world? – 'yes'" (1 Cor. 1:20). These questions imply if these believers analyze a cross-

section of members in their assembly, they'll **Detect a Significantly Lower Proportion of Intelligentsia or Privileged** than exist on average in society.

This thought is augmented by the last question which indicates God has "made foolish" the world's "wisdom" since it contains the negative "ουχι", specifying a positive response.[21] So, "yes", **Part of God's "purpose" is to Expose the "foolish" in the Human Race by Not Choosing an Equal Number of the Elite** (vv. 26-31; cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11).

Paul further develops this thought, "For now, based upon if in the **wisdom** of God, the world didn't know God through the **wisdom**, God was well pleased through the **foolishness** of preaching to **save** those who **believe**" (1 Cor. 1:21). This verse communicates "if . . . God was well pleased through the **foolishness** of preaching to save those who believe", He certainly could. And He did take this route "based upon . . . the wisdom" (τῃ σοφιᾳ), His "wisdom", and "through the wisdom" (της σοφιας), also His "wisdom", "the world didn't know" Him.

The KJV and ESV correctly render this phrase, but other commonly used Translations render the second occurrence, ‘through **its** wisdom’. This reading implies the world’s wisdom is meant by the second use of “σοφια” though no pronoun exists in the Greek text to support this translation. Based on the absence of a pronoun plus the fact both nouns occur with an article and the first is designated to “God”, I think the intent is “through” His “wisdom” God devised a means of salvation which He knew *the perishing* would consider “foolishness” (μωριας) and then reject (1 Cor. 1:18, 23).

With this objective in mind, the opening term of this verse, “now, based upon if” (επειδη), means: “if” (ει) God established *this condition* to humiliate men “based upon” (επι – preposition) *His wisdom*, “now” (δη – a particle) He’s accomplished this goal.[22]

This same term begins verses 22-23, “and now, based upon if (επειδη) Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek **wisdom**, also we preach Christ having been crucified, *which* indeed *is* a scandal to Jews also **foolishness** to gentiles” (or “Greeks” – textual difference).

So, "now . . . **if**" Jews function "based upon . . . signs" and Greeks seek human "wisdom", **Then** these profiles, both of which are true, set them up to reject *A Crucified and Resurrected Christ*. Therefore, God formulated this salvation message knowing it would be viewed as *a stumbling block* by secular Jews, who saw Jesus as an imposter, and "foolishness" (μωριαν) by Lost gentiles. Basically, this section expands on the reasoning raised in verse 21.

But wait! There's a third group: "also, to the **called ones** themselves, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the **power** of God and **wisdom** of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). Those labelled "called ones" consist of individual "Jews" and "Greeks" **Who Were Hand-Picked by God** and, through no ability of their own, gladly chose "Christ" instead of concluding the cross is "foolishness" (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15, 28-29; 1 Cor. 1:26-28; Eph. 1:4-5).

This development places divine "power" and "wisdom" as *Foundational Components of Redemption* (cf. Rom. 9:24-30; 10:19-20). So, why did God offer salvation by using a method men consider irrational?

"Because" it proves "the **foolishness** (μωρον) of God is **wiser** (σοφωτερον) than men and the **weakness** of God *is* **stronger** than men" (1 Cor. 1:25).

From here on out, sociological answers are provided for the questions posed in verse 20, "For, brethren, look at your **calling**, because not many **wise ones** *exist* according to **the flesh**, not many **powerful ones** *exist*, not many of good birth *exist*" (1 Cor. 1:26).

To *provide background information* in support of the storyline, this verse begins with the conjunction "for" (γαρ). Then, it adds a present imperative verb "look" (βλεπετε) to *demand* the Corinthians *place consistent focus on* fellow assembly members to consider their former secular affiliations. This is followed by the conjunction "because" (οτι) to zero in on *the reason* their church contained just a few of the high and mighty.

While assessing their comrades, they observed there weren't "many wise ones (σοφοι) or *intellectually skilled* "according to the flesh". Also, they didn't see "many powerful ones" (δυνατοι), *influencers* or *dominant persons*. Nor could they spot "many of

good birth" (ευγενεις), *noble*, or *the privileged*. Next, Paul discloses why the fabric of the Body of Christ consists of a small percentage of the upper class. "But God caused Himself to **elect** (εξελεξατο – middle voice) the **foolish things** of the world in order that He might customarily **discredit the wise**, and God caused Himself to **elect** (εξελεξατο) the **weak things** of the world in order that He might customarily discredit **the strong**" (1 Cor. 1:27).[1]

In no uncertain terms, this middle voice verb is repeated to declare **"God" Acted upon "Himself to elect", *Pick* or *Choose* People Who Represent the Lower Class**. And this technique was used "in order that" (ινα) or *for the purpose that* He "might customarily discredit" (καταισχυνῃ – present tense) those society celebrates as "wise" or "strong".

This term unites the preposition "κατα", conveying the idea of *down*, with the verb "αισχυνω", meaning *to disfigure* or *make ugly*; and together they're generally rendered 'to make ashamed'.[23] Subjunctive verbs *require a condition to occur if their action is to happen*. So here, **God's Distinct Act of Selecting**

Foolish and Weak Down-Casts fulfills The Condition that He "might . . . discredit", *shame-down*, or ***debunk the thought:*** **Fallen Men, By Their Own "wisdom", Can Muster a Positive Response to The "foolish" Message of The Cross**.

This line of reasoning continues in verse 28, "and God caused Himself to **elect** (εξελεξατο) the low-born of the world and the despised, the things not being, in order that He might neutralize the things being **so that no flesh might boast** in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:28-29).[1] The noun "low-born" (α + γενη) means *lacking birth* and contrasts with the word "good birth" (ευ + γενεις) in verse 26, which describes culture's upper crust. Then, the downtrodden in verses 27-28 are given one final designation – "the things not being" (τα μη ουσα).

This present tense participle (ουσα) of the verb of being portrays *enduring essence* or *substance*. Applied to the narrative, this three-term phrase indicates most of the **"elect"** do *"not"* (μη) *have substantial worth* "according to the flesh", that is, in the world's estimation. But **God Turned the Table by Choosing**

Misfits "in order that He might neutralize the things being" (τα ουσα) – *those thought to have substantial worth* or *importance* based on societal "wisdom".

The verb "He might neutralize" (καταργησῃ) is the same term in First Corinthians 13:8 which specifies the gifts of "prophecy" and "knowledge" will *be deactivated, neutralized*, or *stop operating* (**same verb:** Rom. 3:3, 31; 6:6; 7:6; 1 Cor. 6:13; 13:10-11; 15:24; 2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13-14, 17; 2 Tim. 1:10).

So, in answer to the question, '**Who saves?**', God's intent is to ***"neutralize"*** **or *Stop* any Thought that Worldly Education or Intelligence, Social Standing, Financial Wealth, or Human Power, has Anything to Do with Trusting in Christ**. To deflate this rational, He created and **elected** "vessels" to inhabit the underclass "so that no flesh might boast" (χαυχησηται) in His "presence" (Rom. 9:19-24; 1 Cor. 1:28). This section's third subjunctive verb signals God hand-picked His children **As the Condition to Show No Act of Human Volition or Exertion Plays Any Part in Salvation**. Therefore, He alone has the right to "boast", brag or gloat (Rom. 3:27; 4:2; 9:15-18; Eph. 2:8-9).

After recording how God eliminated human value-judgments in redemption, Paul adds, "Also, out of Him you exist in Christ Jesus, who was made **wisdom** to us from God, both righteousness and holiness and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). The phrase "out of Him" (εξ αυτου) specifies ***God is The Source* Who Placed the Elect "in Christ Jesus"**. As covered earlier, regeneration doesn't materialize "out (εκ) of" our "will" but "out" (εκ) of God's (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:15-18; 11:5-7; Eph. 2:8-9).

Furthermore, this verse states we "exist" (εστε – present tense) or *occupy our ongoing state* "in Christ . . . from" (απο) or *rising from* the Person of "God" (1 Cor. 1:30). Therefore, these truths combine with the remaining text to indicate *Our Current and Substantial Worth is Equated With* the Lord's "wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3), "righteousness" (Rom. 10:4; Phil. 3:9), "holiness" (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), and "redemption" (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7).

Closing the chapter, Jeremiah is cited to reiterate a central aim in God's practice of election, "in order that according as it has been written, 'Let the one

who **boasts** (καυχωμενος) **boast** (καυχασθω) in the Lord'" (1 Cor. 1:31; Jer. 9:22-23). Here, the term which first appears in verse 29 is repeated two more times to place a triple emphasis on this part of **The Divine Agenda**: When it comes to saving men, **God Expects and Deserves All the Credit** – **Total Bragging Rights** (1 Cor. 3:18-23; 4:6-7).

- - More Goals Achieved Via Election - -

Romans 9

Historically, in reference to "election", this context is the most cited and for good reason since no other portion features such a comprehensive angle on how and why God saves men. Paul's approach was prompted by questions from fellow-Jews about why he hadn't patterned his ministry around them instead of gentiles. In the reply, the Spirit had him recount God's past dealings with Israel, what He's currently accomplishing with both Jews and gentiles, and what He'll do in the future to fulfill His "purpose" (Rom. 8:28-30, 33; 9:11-12). For the sake of brevity, this

exposition majors in content which contributes to the subject at hand.

After Paul expresses feeling "great grief and unceasing pain in" his "heart" over unsaved Jewish brethren, in part from the impact of his former opposition to "Christ", he begins answering his detractors. "Because also, *it's* not the sort *of reality* the word of God has failed, for not all those out of Israel, these *exist as* Israel" (Rom. 9:1-2, 6). Initially, he wants to put to rest the view: **Since Israel was God's Chosen Nation, All Its Members are His Elect Children**.

Paul attains this goal by specifying not everyone who physically descended from "Israel" – Jacob's nickname and his offspring's National Identity – *Those who Comprise The Redeemed of "Israel"* (Gen. 32:28). Otherwise, God's stated objectives in His "word" would've "failed" or *collapsed*.

The text proceeds to support this premise, "Because also, not all Abraham's **seed** are children, but 'In Issac the **seed** will be **called** in reference to you', that is, not the children of the **flesh**, these *are* children of

God, but the children of **promise** are considered for **seed**" (Rom. 9:7-8, cf. Gen. 21:12).

This suggests God insured Abraham and Sarah's ill-conceived plan of birthing a child according to the "flesh" with Hagar (Ishmael) wouldn't be the catalyst to fulfill His *guarantee* they'd become a great Nation. Even after this monumental mistake, God kept His "promise" to multiply Abraham's "seed" by miraculously overcoming reproductive impotence and causing the birth of Isacc as His "called" heir (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:17-19; 18:10-14; Rom. 9:9).

Regarding the next generation of God-ordained "seed", Isaac and Rebekka conceived twins (Rom. 9:10). "For not yet having been born, also not having practiced anything good or evil, in order that the **purpose** of God might continuously remain according to **election**, not out of **works** but **out of the one who calls**, it was said to her that 'The greater (Esau, the first born) will serve the lessor' (Jacob), just as it has been written, 'I **loved** Jacob and I hated Esau'" (vv. 11-13, cf. Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:2-3).

This portion graphically teaches "out of the one who calls" (the Father), *in line with* "election" (His choice), and *to fulfill* His "purpose", *God picked Jacob* to be His "seed" though Esau was the eldest and rightful heir according to the "flesh" (Rom. 9:8).

To illustrate the "election" of Jacob wasn't based on merit, this verse states God *Picked* him prior to birth, before he had a chance to do "good or evil . . . works". Then, the quote from Genesis combined with one from Malachi spell out a related component of "election"; God "loved Jacob", that is, *Extended an Extra Aspect of "love" which Made him His "seed"* (cf. Rom. 8:28, 35, 37, 39; Eph. 2:4- 5; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:10-14; 1 Tim. 1:14).

Furthermore, **The Phrase "out** (εκ) **of the one who calls" Designates God as the Source of This Redemption**, which is the same lesson taught in John 1:12-13 and Ephesians 2:8-9. For, all three contexts stress salvation isn't initiated "out (εκ) of the will of man" because it's not "out (εξ) of works" (Rom. 11:5-7; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Finally, to express the *Reason God Selected Jacob* in this fashion, the conjunction "in order that" (ινα) is used (Rom. 9:11). This *term of intent* is followed by a present subjunctive verb which indicates God operated sovereignly that His "purpose . . . might continuously remain" (μενῃ) or *may endlessly persist* "according to" (κατα) or *in line with* "election" (εκ-λογην). Merging this grammar conveys: To execute His "purpose" (προθεσις) or *plan*, **God's Personal Choice is The Sole Factor Determining Who's "called" as His "seed"** (v. 7).

"Therefore, what shall we say? Does **unrighteousness** *exist* with God? – 'no'. Let there be **no possibility!**" (Rom. 9:14). This verse begins with the conjunction "therefore" (ουν) which signals *a deduction* or *conclusion* is forthcoming. Note how Paul gets people to think along with him by voicing, "what shall **we** say?" Then, he asks if "unrighteousness" (αδικια), *a wrong which causes injury* or *injustice*, exists in God's Dealings.

This issue is central to the Book of Romans and was first addressed in 3:1-8. That portion raises the ques-

tion: **Can man's** "righteousness" **legitimately be compared with God's**, then *Quickly Discredits This Thought as Ridiculous.* However, this portion speaks to the point on an elevated level since it **Questions Whether these Recorded Acts of God** (9:6-13) **Exhibit Proper Character – If His Performance is Acceptable!**

To make sure everyone knows this line-of-questioning is inappropriate, Paul unequivocally states there's no way the transactions just chronicled represent any trace of "unrighteousness" or *injustice*. First, the phrase "Let there be no possibility" (μη γενοιτο) combines the negative "μη" with an optative form of "γινομαι", which means *to come into existence*.

Basically, this phrase specifies *the question of whether God could be wrong* (the contextual subject) has "no" *potential* or "possibility" (optative mode) to be true since *the subject causes itself* (middle voice) *to complete* (aorist tense) the concept His actions can't *materialize* (verb of being) as unrighteous. In essence, this verbiage shuns the thought God could do something immoral and implies **This Idea is An Affront to His Nature**.

Furthermore, the question, "Is there unrighteousness with God? – 'no' (μη)?" clarifies itself since it contains the adverb "μη" which infers an *expected negative answer*.[21] Therefore, this verse contains a strong double denial designating there's absolutely "no possibility" the sinful condition of "unrighteousness" can accompany His behavior. Based on this conclusion, Paul proceeds to present rationale endorsing the thought God can do what He wants with humanity and ultimately establishes the point: **Whatever He Does is Right**.

Justifying God's Movements

To defend this flat denial that "unrighteousness" characterizes anything God does, Exodus 33:19 is cited to show His acts are carefully calculated to carry out His "purpose". "For, He says to Moses, 'I will show **mercy** (ελεησω) to whoever I might show **mercy** (ελεω), and I will show compassion to whoever I might show compassion" (Rom. 9:15).

Consistent with Hebrew writing which often stresses a principle by using two similar statements, the

synonyms "mercy" and "compassion" occur jointly with regard to the salvation process. **This Inclusion of Heavenly "mercy" is Well Documented** (Rom. 9:15-16, 18, 23; 11:30-32; 1 Cor. 7:25; Eph. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:13, 16; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:10).

Observe, the present tense verb used to indicate God "says" (λεγει) or *speaks* to Moses, for it marks this citation as *Living Scripture which Currently Identifies How God Works* (1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23). This text conveys how God "will show", *have*, or *extend* "mercy" – *not getting the wrath we deserve* – to "whoever" (ον αν – singular pronoun), *any individual*, He "might show mercy" (ελεω – Rom. 9:15).

This subjunctive verb is central to the intended meaning because it focuses on *the condition needed* for a person to be numbered with the "called"; it specifies **They must Receive "mercy" Based on God's Prerogative**. Unfortunately, this detail of grammar isn't transmitted by most popular Versions. And since this expression in the Greek text is so significant, consider the following more precise renderings of this phrase.

The Concordant Literal Version and Others translate this subjunctive verb with the term ‘**may**’ in place of “might” (BLB, ACV, Sawyer, BIB, JMNT). Thompson says God ‘will have mercy on whomsoever **I please**’ which also portrays the extension of mercy *is based on His prerogative*. Others render the verb ‘**I choose to** have mercy’ which, again, depicts this act as a *divine decision* (Goodspeed, MNT, Williams, NSB). Lastly, the AUV offers another good rendition: ‘whoever **I want**’.

Next, Paul doubles down by using a second subjunctive verb, “I might show compassion” (οικτιρω). This duality highlights the concept that God gives *sympathy* or *pity* to those He “might” or *may be pleased to*; He extends this olive branch of “mercy” to whoever He *wants* or *chooses to*. This declaration satisfied Moses because he recognized **Divine Privilege: God Holds the Right to Self-Determination** (Exod. 33:12-23).

Having established This Modus Operandi, the text continues, “Consequently therefore (αρα ουν), *it’s* not associated with **the one who wills**, also *it’s* not

associated with the one who runs, but *it's* associated with **God who shows mercy**" (Rom. 9:16).

So, what contextual subject is represented by the implied pronoun and verb of being, *"it's"*? Scanning this portion shows it centers on God's act of "calling" people to salvation (vv. 6-15; cf. 8:30) by His "love" (v. 13; cf. 8:28, 35, 37, 39) and "mercy" (v. 15); "calling" those He's *foreknown, predestined*, and *elected* to fulfill His "purpose" (8:29-33; 9:11). Of these terms, "mercy" is the most recently added and from this point is featured as ***The Primary Action*** **which underlies Paul's Reply to his Critics about Who We should Expect to Respond by Faith to the Gospel** (9:23; 11:30-32).

As this verse begins, the particle "Consequently" (αρα), speaking of *result* or *consequence*, is paired with the conjunction "therefore" (ουν), which portrays a *deduction* or *conclusion* (Rom. 9:16). To some degree these terms overlap in meaning but when they occur together, they introduce important conclusions as is evident by their usage (5:18; 7:3, 25; 8:12; 9:18; 14:12, 19). Therefore, to summarize the

consequential meaning of verses 11-16, God carries out His "purpose" by **electing** "whoever" He "wills" to show "mercy".

First Paul states this "calling" is "not" to be "associated with the one who wills" (θελοντος – Rom. 9:16). We've seen this term several times showing **Human-Initiated-Volition is absent from the salvation process** (John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; 2:1-9; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Tit. 3:4-7). For, redemption has nothing to do with human "works", which are also represented by the phrase "the one who runs" or *exerts effort* (Rom. 9:12, 16).

Then, Paul employs the conjunction "but" (αλλα) to pen a *sharp contrast* to what salvation does pertain to. This *Consequential Summary of God's Technique* used to "call" His people is "associated" or *affiliated* "with" the one "who shows mercy" (ελεωντος – genitive participle). This term signifies **The "called" are Predicated Upon The Divine Actor Who Delivers Saving Pity to "whoever" He "wills"**.

Next, to eliminate confusion about how regeneration works, the Spirit prompted Paul to add a *contrasting illustration*, "For the Scripture says to Pharoah that 'For this reason **I raised you up** in order that I might **display My power** in you and in order that **My Name might be proclaimed** in all the land'" (Exod. 9:16; Rom. 9:17).

Many Christians think this Pharoah initiated the hardening of his own heart; however, God owned this reaction before Moses ever confronted the Ruler, **"I will harden his heart** so that he will not let the people go" (Exod. 4:21). This O.T. data is consistent with the theme of this context which presents **God's Foundational Aims** or **"purpose"**: He wants to **"display"** His **"power"** and **"wrath"** by judging **Non-Elect** "vessels of wrath" and "to **make known** the richness of **His glory** upon vessels of **mercy**" – **His Elect** (Rom. 8:33; 9:11, 22-23).

Now that Pharoah and Esau have been set forth as models of rejection, Paul boils down his total message, "Consequently therefore (αρα ουν), He shows **mercy** to who He **wills**; also, He **hardens** who He

wills" (Rom. 9:18). This means *everyone* "who" (ον – singular) God *actively* and *continuously* "wills" (θελει), He *actively* and *continuously* "shows mercy to" (ελεει). And *each one* "who" God *actively* and *continuously* "wills" (θελει), He *actively* and *continuously* "hardens" (σκληρυνει).

These four present active verbs specify **God Resolutely Uses the Methods of Mercy to Call His Elect for Salvation and Hardening to Condemn the Rest to Wrath**. This short statement serves as **The Platform Undergirding God's Plan** which is developed from this juncture through chapter 11.

But before we move forward, I'd like to address the issue of whether God has the right to do what has just been deliberated. If you're wondering about this, it's well-timed since the context focuses on this point next. Likewise, some may be asking whether I'm interpreting this text properly or if some of my deductions are compatible with moral fairness. These are legitimate questions so they should and will be discussed. However, I ask each reader to be patient

until the portion explaining what God has done is covered, which concludes in verse 23.

"Therefore (ουν), you say to me, 'Why does He still find fault, for who has stood against His **counsel**?'" (Rom. 9:19). In reference to these lessons about divine "election" and "mercy", once again *a man is earmarked* by the singular verb "you say" (ερεις). More than likely he was an influential Christian in Rome who dissented with Paul's teaching and argued that God shouldn't find fault with any sinner since no human can *begin* and *continue* (perfect tense) to *stand* "against" (ανθεστηκεν = αντι + ιστημι), *resist*, or *oppose* His "counsel".

The noun "counsel" (βουληματι) portrays a similar connotation as the term "will" (θελημα), though it adds the idea of *group collaboration* (Luke 23:51; Acts 5:38; 27:43; 1 Pet. 4:3). This thought could mean, prior to creation, the Father *consulted* Other Members of the Godhead in regard to His "purpose" of *predestining* people "according to the counsel (βουλην)

associated with His will" (θεληματος – Eph. 1:11, cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28; 20:27).

To counter this renegade's attack on how God functions, Paul exclaims, "O man, indeed therefore, who are you, the one answering back to God? Does **the thing formed** say to **the one having formed** it, 'Why did You make me likewise?' – 'no'" (Rom. 9:20). Wow! This is one of the fieriest comebacks in the Epistles. For, the phrase "O man" (ω ανθρωπε) appears in the vocative case, meaning Paul *directly addressed* this person. Also, his subsequent questions are prefaced by the conjunction "therefore" (ουν) combined with the particles "indeed" (μεν) and "γε", which both *bring intensity* to this impassioned reply.

It starts with a challenge, "who are you?" Again, these singular terms identify *a distinct guy* and question whether *he's substantial enough* (verb of being) to judge God. To me, this verbiage condemns arrogance much like phrases my grandma used, **'Who do you think you are?'** and **'You really think you're something, don't you?'**

Then, Paul describes this man’s Critique of Divinity with the clause, “the one answering back (ο αντ-αποκρινομενος) to God”. This three-part word, which literally means *to judge from against*, defines his insolent attitude as *rebellious* or *defiant against* (αντι) God’s “counsel”. **For, he’s Not Only Rejecting The Divine Plan of Action but Also Questioning its Validity**. Take note this participle and verse 19’s verb both contain the preposition “αντι” which brands this protestor as *Anti-God* since he *Opposes The Father’s Right* to extend “mercy” to whoever He “wills”.

Next, Paul resorts to creation to counter this fallacious denunciation since everything in the universe was “formed” (πλασαντι) by God. Our words ‘plastic’ and ‘plasma’ are derived from the root of this participle as well as the noun, “the thing formed” (πλασμα).

Then he restates this similar concept with the verb “You make” (εποιησας) which is also used with reference to the design of created objects. Obviously, we nor anything the Creator “formed” has a right to ask, “Why did You make me likewise” (ουτως), *in*

this manner, or *thus*? Moreover, because this inquiry includes the negative "μη", it conveys the expected response of "no".[21] Clearly, no one can oppose "His counsel" (Rom. 9:19-20).

Paul continues to further confront this man's insult toward God, "or does the potter have **authority** in association with the clay to make out of the same lump, indeed, one **vessel for value**, also one **vessel for lack of value**? – 'yes'" (Rom. 9:21).

Biblical analogies are famous for being simple, and everyone knows a "potter" holds the "authority" (εξουσιαν), *right* or *prerogative* to take a "lump" of "clay" and "make" (ποιησαι) whatever he wants. In God's case, He executed His "will" in eternity past by determining to "make" two kinds of vessels which, in time, become **Living Vehicles** to carry out His "purpose" (vv. 11-18).

On the one hand, He made "one vessel for value" (τιμην). This noun is used to symbolize the "price" (τιμης) of redemption, *the precious blood* of Christ (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). It also denotes the *monetary*

"value" (τιμης) "elders" who do a good job are "worthy of" if their commitments to the Body don't allow them sufficient opportunity to provide for their family (1 Tim. 5:17). Later in that Book, this term represents slaves *activating the* "worth" (τιμης) in their lives to serve their "masters" (6:1).

Similarly, Romans 9:21 uses it to indicate each "one vessel" (singular) or *individual person* was created "for" (εις), *in the direction of*, or ***with the purpose of* Possessing Heavenly "value"** – "vessels of mercy" God "called" to "make known the richness of His glory" (vv. 23-24, cf. Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 3:7).

On the other hand, some were created as "one vessel" (singular) or *individuals* intended "for" (εις), *in the direction of*, or *with the purpose of* having "lack of value" (ατιμιαν). This noun adds an alpha (α) to "τιμη" which negates its meaning. Most often, it's translated 'dishonor'; however, its meaning of *being void of redemptive "value"* is seen by the contextual relation to its definition in verse 22. Before heading there, it's important to observe the negative "ουκ"

signals a *positive expected answer* to this question; "yes", the Heavenly "potter", does have "authority" or *right* to create what He "wills" or *wants* (Rom. 9:16-21).[21]

At this point Paul finishes reproving this man's critique of our Father, "Also, if God while **willing** to **display the wrath** and to **make known His power** bore in much longsuffering **vessels of wrath** having chosen to begin and continue to be produced for ruin, and in order that **He might make known** the **richness** of **His glory** upon **vessels of mercy**, which He previously prepared for glory, and **us** who He called not only out of Jews but also out of gentiles" (Rom. 9:22-24).

Why does verse 22 lead off with the conditional, "if" (ει)? In this context, it introduces the rationale **"if"** God wishes to accomplish His "purpose" by creating "vessels" of opposite intrinsic "value" with the intent to "display" **His Agendas of Judgment and Glorification**, **Then** "O man, . . . who are you, the one answering back to God?" For, all believers should accept the principle, **No Created Entity is Entitled to Challenge The Creator's Motives** since He has definitive

"authority" to use everything He designed as He "wills" (see vv. 11-12, 18-21).

Within this protocol, verse 22 amplifies two previous illustrations: God "hated" Esau by circumventing him as the "seed" of "promise", plus He *hardened* Pharoah's heart to the extent he refused to let Israel depart from Egypt. Also, this verse defines the climactic conclusion modeled by both men, "He hardens who He wills" (θελει – Rom. 9:18). That verb and its participial form "willing" (θελων) in this verse occur in the present tense which stipulates **God *Sustains An Ongoing Want* or *Desire* to Highlight His Trait of Justice** by judging "vessels of wrath" crafted "for lack of" redemptive "value" (vv. 21-22).

The infinitives "to display (ενδειξασθαι) the wrath and to make known (γνωρισαι) His power" reveal God's *desired outcome* and help define this central component of His "purpose". The first infinitive just appeared in verb form to indicate He wished to "display" (ενδειξωμαι), *show* or *exhibit* His "power" through the struggle with Pharoah (Rom. 9:17, cf. Phil. 1:28). This same Greek root also occurs

to "display" God's Positive Attributes, including "love", in acts related to "election" (Rom. 3:25-26; Eph. 2:4, 7; Phil. 1:28; 1 Tim. 1:13-16).

Remember, **Our Father's not Only A Loving God, He's Also A Just God**. And this section verbalizes the *Demonstration of Sovereign "power"* via condemning "vessels" created to *show* His "wrath". Next, Paul adds He "bore" (ηνεγκεν) or *carried* these "vessels of wrath" with "much longsuffering".

It's interesting to note this quality of "longsuffering" (μακροθυμια), *patience*, or *taking a long time to become angry* is seen in God's dealings with Fallen Men in reference to both condemnation and redemption (1 Tim. 1:16). He distinctly wants mankind to understand **Celestial "mercy" is The Only Route** which can enable a sinner to traverse the Satan-controlled gap between us and God; from "ruin" ending in the Lake of Fire to salvation ending in "glory" (Rom. 9:22-23, cf. John 3:16; 1 Cor. 1:18ff; 2 Cor. 2:14-17; Eph. 2:1-4; Col. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

Finally, these "vessels of wrath" are described as "having chosen to begin and continue to be produced" (κατηρτισμενα) or *completed* for "ruin" (απωλειαν) or *devastation*, which ends in eternal judgement (Rom. 9:22; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:9-11; 20:11-15). The perfect tense indicates these "vessels . . . *begin*" then *"continue" onward* as fated toward "ruin".

Also, its dual voice signifies *they'll act upon themselves to choose* (middle) to *be made* to "be produced" (passive) for this result *by outside evil forces* (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:26).[1] This punishment of "wrath" awaits all who God "hardens", a procedure further described in chapter 11 (Rom. 9:18; 11:7-10, 25).

Other than this portion, to my knowledge the only other N.T. passage directly coupling the concept of "election" with doomed individuals is the record of Judas' betrayal of Christ (John 6:70-71). Condensing Romans 9:22, **God Places His Justice on Center Stage by Judging "vessels of wrath" in order to "display" Divine "power"**.

Before exegeting verse 23, let's revisit the segment's flow of thought: "**If** God while willing . . . to make known His power . . . and in order that He might make known the richness of His glory"; **Then**, as the Creator, He possesses "authority" to carry out both aspects of this "purpose" (Rom. 11-23).

Consequently, equal to the goal of *publicizing* (γνωρισαι) His "power" by condemning "vessels of wrath", God also called "vessels of mercy" for salvation "in order that" (ινα) or ***With the Intent that* "He might make known"** (γνωρισῃ) **or *Broadcast* "the richness of His glory"** (v. 23). This aorist subjunctive verb depicts when He shows "mercy" to the "elect", He *completes the necessary condition* to "make known" this key celestial trait of "glory".

The noun "δοξα", occurring twice in this verse, shouldn't be thought of as some otherworldly concept that's difficult to grasp, for at its foundation the term portrays *what is thought about something*, thus its *perception* or *representation* (Matt. 6:28-29; Acts 22:11; 1 Cor. 11:7, 15; 15:40-43; Phil. 3:19). **The promise of "glory" – Being Conformed to Christ's**

Image – is the eternal destination all "vessels of mercy" await; **It's The Pinnacle and Prize associated with God's "purpose"** for us (Rom. 5:1-2; 8:18, 21, 28-30; 9:11-12; Eph. 1:6, 11-12, 14; 3:11-13; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:3-4).

In addition, this text expresses God wanted to "make known the richness (πλουτον) of" this "glory" (Rom. 9:23). In singular form, this noun conveys the idea of *wealth* or *resourcefulness* and represents the *nature* or *quality* of something; here, God's "glory". It doesn't portray amount or abundance, nor is it plural in number as the common rendering **'riches'** would suggest.[24]

The noun "πλουτος" appears *in singular form* a dozen times as Paul describes the *abundant wealth* Body members possess because of various revealed "mystery" benefits we have "in Christ" (Rom. 11:12 [twice], 33; Eph. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27; 2:2). When astronomers discovered Pluto, they must have deemed the orb a *rich addition* to our solar system, for *Pluto* was the Roman god of the underworld associated with *wealth* and *riches*.

Romans 9:23 concludes with the phrase, "vessels . . . previously prepared (προητοιμασεν) for glory". This verb's only other occurrence reads, "good works which God *prepared beforehand* (προητοιμασεν) that we might walk in them" (Eph. 2:10, cf. Isa. 28:24 [LXX]). That instance speaks of the "good works" God *readied in eternity past* for those "created in Christ Jesus", and now He expects us to *obey the condition* of the subjunctive verb, "that we **might** walk in them".

In this Romans text, this same verb depicts how God exercised "authority" to extend "mercy" to "vessels . . . previously prepared" or *made ready* "for glory". Its aorist indicative form means the Father *completed this act* when He created these human vehicles to represent eternal "value" so that His "purpose . . . **might** remain according to election" (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-23).

Reflections About God's Dealings

It's time to take that intermission to address potential reactions to my commentary of Romans 9. In Christian circles I've heard questions like, **'Are we just**

pawns in God’s game?’ and **‘Are people just robots?’** As I comprehend it, this context teaches divine “election” portrays the thought salvation comes about by God’s movement and totally apart from human volition. It details how men are rescued from “wrath” and granted “glory” when “mercy” is extended to whoever He “wills” (Rom. 9:11-23; Eph. 2:1-9).

From our standpoint, this could be defined as **Destiny** or **Fate**; from God’s perspective, **This Course of Action Fulfills His “purpose”**. And relative to The *Concept of Fairness*, this portion affirms the idea: **Everything God Does is Fair**.

At the end of the day, we ought to realize **Every Design of The Creator, including Us, is His Intellectual and Material Property**. Therefore, He has the “authority” or *Right* to utilize every part of it as He “wills” (Rom. 9:20-21). At the same time, we need to face the fact we’re not God, we didn’t devise an eternal plan, we don’t exist of our own accord, we didn’t save ourselves, *nor Do We Own Our Person*.

"Or, don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which *is* in you, and you have from God, and **you aren't your own** (or "don't belong to yourselves")? For, **you were bought** with a **price**; now glorify God in your body!" (1 Cor. 6:20-21). In truth, the Father redeemed us with the "price" of our Lord's blood to "the praise of His glory" so all of creation would "boast" in Him and recognize the preeminence of His "eternal purpose . . . in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30-31; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:7-9; 3:8-13; Phil. 2:10-11; Col. 1:19-20).

In addition, I've heard responses like **'Then, God is mean!'** and **'I don't want to serve a God like that!'** I can only suggest to those who express comparable thoughts to ponder Scripture detailing His activity with an awareness that everything He does is without a trace of "unrighteousness" (Rom. 3:3-6; 9:14-20).

We should all grapple with these Spirit-penned lessons and seek to dialog with others about how we should decipher what's written (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Also, each reader should realize the particulars related to "election" in this article are by

no means exclusive, but very similar to what countless Bible teachers have taught over the centuries.

And keep in mind, a Bible Instructor's job is to research the Word, share what we learn, plus promote the study of and belief in its content. It's not our place to judge God's actions, try to adapt them to human logic, or explain them away. Though, if my current thinking was influenced by the world view gained in my religious upbringing or from other secular sources, I too would entertain questions like those just mentioned.

So, may we all examine and apply His Word while praying for guidance to help purge our natural reasoning so we can be "transformed by the renewal of the mind unto the outcome to approve what the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God is" (Rom. 12:1-2, cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Eph. 5:14-18).

Back to Romans

After delineating goals God achieved by "election", Paul ties this teaching to "**us**, who He **called**, not

only out of Jews but also out of gentiles" (9:24). Just like the noun "vessels" (σκευη) in verse 23, the pronouns "us" (ημας) and "who" (ους) are accusative plural in form which specifies *We Too are Direct Objects* of God's work – "vessels of mercy . . . previously prepared for glory". This point likens current saved "Jews" and "gentiles" to Isaac, Jacob and All Past Disciples as we all serve to perpetuate God's "purpose" (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:6-23).

Unfortunately, some Christians propagate the idea Romans 9 – 11 only speaks to God's dealings with the Nation of Israel and in no way applies to how He "calls" members of the Body. **This Verse Contradicts that Stance**, for the "us" includes Paul and all the Christians in Rome (9:24). Also, note the aorist indicative verb "called" (εκαλεσεν) is the same form found in Romans 8:30, both of which tie us in as those God designated for salvation in eternity past (cf. Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Thus, everyone adhering to this conviction should heed Peter's warning about how "the unlearned and unestablished twist" or *distort* Paul's writings just like

the "rest of Scripture" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). For, the apostle to the gentiles teaches we're saved in the same manner as past saints since God has always "called" folks by "faith" issued to His "elect" in accord with His "will" (Rom. 4:1-8; 8:33; 9:11; 11:5-7; Eph. 1:4-6; Heb. 11).

Jews "Called" into the Body

Having deliberated how and why God saves men, the Spirit directs Paul to bolster these lessons with O.T. support. Initially, he references Scripture to establish the method God uses to "call" Jews into the Body of Christ. "And as in Hosea He says, 'I will **call** the one not *being* My people as My people and the one not having been **loved** as having been **loved**; and it will be in the place where it was said to them "you're not My people", there they'll be **called sons** of the living God'" (Rom. 9:25-26, cf. Hos. 1:9-10).

The adverb "as" (ως) indicates God currently saves Jews *in like manner to* how He did centuries ago. In that day, He told Hosea to name his daughter "Lo-ruhamah" to indicate He'll "no longer have com-

passion" (or "mercy" – KJV) on "the house of Israel" (Hos. 1:6). Later, He instructed him to name a son "Lo-ammi" to illustrate the Jews are "not My people" (1:9).

Paul draws upon this unusual line of events to confirm **The "called" are Drawn and Initiated by God's "mercy", Not by Human Choice or Merit**. For, He didn't give them the "wrath" they deserved. And, once again, note how Scripture exhibits God's "love" as central and fundamental to the redemptive process (Rom. 9:25, cf. John 6:44).

"Also, Isaiah cries on behalf of Israel, 'If the number of the sons of Israel might be as sand of the sea, the **remnant** will be **saved**'; for, while completing and cutting short, the Lord will accomplish the word upon the earth" (Rom. 9:27-28, cf. Isa. 10:22). Like then, at present just a part of Abraham's descendants "will be saved" (cf. Rom. 9:6-8). It's noteworthy this verb is used interchangeably with the predominant verb in this section – "called".

This Demonstrates: The "Called" and "Saved" are The Same People (8:28-29; 9:7, 12, 24-26). In one respect, God "bore in much longsuffering vessels of wrath" who were *hardened* and, thus, reject the gospel. Conversely, through His "mercy", "the remnant" (υπολειμμα) or *remaining portion* "will be saved" (σωθησεται). This verb's passive voice points to "the Lord" as the *Outside Agent* who puts this redemption into effect.

Next, Paul adds a third quote, "And according as Isaiah previously said, 'except the Lord of hosts **left a remnant** for us as **seed**, we would be made like Sodom and we would be caused to be like Gomorrah'" (Rom. 9:29, cf. Isa. 1:9). Here, the primary focus is if God hadn't "left a remnant" (εγκατελιπεν) or *set aside* certain Israelites for His "seed", all would've faced ruin like those who stayed in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:15-26; Rom. 9:7-8).

Another significant point is this compound term contains the verb **'to remain'** (λειπω) which has the same root as the noun **"remnant"** (λειμμα) in verse 27. These are the first two of five times this term

occurs in reference to **God's Elect Remnant**. The other three are found in 11:3-5 near the conclusion of this context's exposé on "election".

Gentiles "Called" into the Body

"Therefore, what shall we say? Because the gentiles, while not pursuing **righteousness**, received **righteousness**, also the **righteousness** out of **faith**; also, Israel while pursuing the law associated with **righteousness** didn't attain unto the law. On account of why? Because, not out of **faith** but as out of **works** they stumbled in relation to the stone of stumbling according as it has been written, 'Behold, I place in Zion (Jerusalem) a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, and the one **believing** upon Him won't be made ashamed'" (Rom. 9:30-33, cf. Isa. 8:14; 28:16).

These verses begin with the conjunction "therefore" (ουν) which signals a *conclusion*. A second conjunction "because" (οτι) *marks what caused* this conclusion – "the gentiles" received "righteousness" even though they weren't "pursuing" it. Next, Paul defines how they obtained it, which was "out of faith". In

other words, gentiles who weren't "pursuing righteousness" received it anyway simply because they *believed* the gospel. And what prompted their "faith"? The adjacent context links this volitional act of *belief* to God's "election", "will", "calling", and "purpose" (Rom. 9:11-12, 18, 24).

Furthermore, observe how the conjunction "also" (δε) in the final phrase of verse 31 *introduces the concept of* "faith" (πιστεως) *into this context* (Rom. 9:30). From this point through 10:17, this noun and its action forms appear 13 more times which **Emphasizes It as A Prominent Focus**.

Similarly, a couple dozen terms with the root of "πιστις" occur from Romans 3:22 to 5:2, but after that these terms disappear with reference to regeneration until their reintroduction here. Deducing from these two sections which highlight "faith", the early chapters establish the principle, **Justification is by** "faith" **alone**. Still, **The Source of That Trust** isn't disclosed until chapter 9, where **It's Correlated with the "elect" and Confirmed to Originate from God** (Rom. 8:28 – 11:36, cf. John 6:34-71).

Next, verse 31 begins with the same conjunction "also" (δε) to signal *another new concept in the storyline*: **Although "Israel" was "pursuing" (διωκοντα) or chasing after "righteousness", many "didn't attain" it**. "On account of why? Because" they weren't "pursuing" it "out of faith, but as out of works" (Rom. 9:32).

In essence, a lot of Jews were striving to practice "the law associated with" or *affiliated with* "righteousness" (δικαιοσυνης). That is, **They were Trying to Keep the Law of Moses** *to "attain" a right standing with God* though Paul had explicitly taught, "out of **works** of the law, no flesh will be justified (δικαιωθησεται or "made righteous") in His presence, for through the law is the full knowledge of sin" (3:20).

Therefore, Jews who sought to establish their own "righteousness" by "works (εργων) . . . stumbled in relation to the stone of stumbling", which is Christ. But they should've known better since their own Scripture teaches "the one **believing** on Him won't be made ashamed" (Isa. 28:16). For, **The "righteousness" He Procured Through a Perfect Life, Death and**

Resurrection is the only basis for anyone to become acceptable to our holy God (John 14:6; Rom. 3:21-26; 4:25; 9:32-33; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 3:8-9).

Finally, the preposition "εκ" in verse 32, which depicts *source*, occurs in both the phrase "out (εκ) of faith" and its contrasting counterpart, "out (εξ) of works". Remember, earlier the phrase "out (εξ) of works" was contrasted with "out (εκ) of the one who calls" (Rom. 9:11-12). So, this passage also includes this grammatical link between individuals who exercise "faith" in the gospel and the "called" or "elect" (v. 24, cf. John 1:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:8-9).

Romans 10

As the narrative flows, Paul again directs attention back to fellow Jews, "Brothers, indeed, the good pleasure of my heart and petition toward God is on behalf of them for **salvation**. For, I testify to them because they have a zeal associated with God, but not according to full knowledge" (vv. 1-2).

He recognizes their "zeal" or *fervor* "toward God", however, many of them had a misplaced enthusiasm since they're ignorantly "seeking to establish their own righteousness". And together with this approach, they aren't "subject to the **righteousness** of God" (v. 3). Again, note how the term "salvation" parallels the "called" of God in this running context (see comments on 9:27).

Next, Paul provides the remedy for this indictment, "For Christ is the completion of the law resulting in **righteousness** for everyone who **believes**" (Rom. 10:4). This means "the completion" (τελος)[25] or *culmination* of **God's Standard of "righteousness" expressed in the Law of Moses** can only be attained by one "who believes" or *places trust* in Christ (Rom. 7:7-14).

For, Jesus is the lone Person who's been confirmed in perfection – the "righteous requirement of the law" – which He attained after living a sinless life, suffering death, and being resurrected as our substitutionary sacrifice (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 3:10-14; Heb. 4:15; 9:11-12). All others "seeking . . . righteousness" based

on "works" can never reach the **Required Level of Sinless Perfection** to be accepted by God but will only encounter "condemnation" (Rom. 3:19-28; 8:1-4; 9:12, 32).

Having established this *Single Real Path for Redemption*, Paul sets forth two ways the Law of Moses sets forth how **"righteousness"** can be gained. In verse 5, he cites how a man "will live" if he completes the works of the "law". However, as already discussed, our Lord is the only one who ever accomplished this feat (Lev. 18:5; John 14:6; Rom. 3:19-22; Gal. 2:16).

Second, Deuteronomy 30:11-14 is referenced to illustrate how men are saved today through "the word of **faith** which we preach" (Rom. 10:6-8). This method is distinct from "seeking . . . "righteousness" by "the works of the law" and is exemplified by the well-known verses: "because if you might acknowledge the Lord Jesus in your mouth and you might **believe** in your heart that God raised Him out of the dead, you'll be **saved**. For with the heart he **believes** resulting in **righteousness**, also with the mouth he acknowledges resulting in **salvation**" (vv. 9-10).

After asserting **This Current Algorithm for Regeneration**, Paul quotes more O.T. verses to show how "both **Jew** and **Greek**" come to Christ: "Everyone **believing** upon Him won't be made ashamed", and "Everyone who might **call upon** the name of the Lord will be **saved**" (Rom. 10:11-13).

The first quote is the same passage cited in the last chapter, so its replication accentuates the principle derived from Isaiah that "righteousness" is obtained by "believing" (Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33). Its counterpart from Joel 3:5 introduces the term "call upon" (επι + καλεω) to the dialog, a verb which closely allies in meaning with the primary contextual term "faith" and provides a segue moving forward.

Accordingly, verses 14-15 reason that no one can "**call upon** the name of the Lord" unless they first *believe*; this belief requires *hearing* (ακουω); and this audible message requires *someone to preach it*. Then, Paul states, "But not all" the Jews "obeyed (υπο + ακουω = *to hear under*) the gospel".

Next, he cites Isaiah for support, "Lord, who **believed** our **heard message**?" (ακοῃ – or *report*, Rom. 10:16; Isa. 53:1). Finally, he deduces, "consequently, **faith** *is* out of the **heard message** (ακοης), also the **heard message** (ακοη) *is* through the word associated with Christ" (v. 17). In conclusion, he makes the exclamatory inquiry, "But I say, did they **hear** (ηκουσαν)? – 'yes'" (v. 18).

There's a lot going on in this portion. First, several Greek terms are noted to show the emphasis on **Hearing** the gospel message. Second, the question in verse 18 is answered by the presence of both negatives "ου" and "μη" which together indicate *a positive response*; so **"yes"**, **All the Israelites Heard**.[21]

Third, the *conclusive* term "indeed therefore" (μεν + ουν + γε – also used in Rom. 9:20) *intensely confirms* **the Entire Nation Heard**, which is reinforced by Psalm 19:4, "their utterance went out unto the whole land, and their words *went out* unto the ends of the inhabited earth". Fourth, the *conjunction of contrast*, "But" (αλλα), which introduces verse 18, also begins verses 16 and 19. Fifth, the question in verse 19, "But

(αλλα) I say, did Israel **know**? – 'yes'", also contains "ου" and "μη", so just like verse 18, this indicates **"yes"**, **All the Jews Knew**.[21]

With all these details in mind, the triplicate use of "αλλα" helps to develop the chapter's explanation of why more Jews hadn't believed the gospel. For, as a Devil's advocate, Paul employs this conjunction in defense of his people. '"But" (αλλα), they didn't **hear**!' (v. 18). **Oh yes, they did**. '"But" (αλλα), they didn't **know**!' (v. 19). **Yes, they also knew**. **"But** (αλλα), **not all obeyed the gospel**" (v. 16). **That's it!**

This statement Strikes The Bullseye of Thought Targeted by The Spirit and is reminiscent of what Jesus said, "My sheep ***hear*** My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 6:44-45; 10:25-27). In every circumstance, **Only God's Elect Can & Will Respond with "faith"**.

More Scripture supports this conclusion, "First Moses says, 'I will **provoke you to jealousy** based on *that which is* not a nation; I will **provoke you to wrath**

based on a nation without understanding (ασυν-ετῳ)'" (Rom. 10:19; Deut. 32:20-21).

This adjective is a three-part word consisting of an *alpha* (α), which negates the meaning; the preposition "συν", conveying the idea of *with* or *together*; and the verb "ιημι", which means *to send*. It identifies times when God saved gentiles who were *incapable of putting together* revelation in regard to His offerings. Despite this, God saved some of them to "provoke" or *perturb* "Israel" to "jealousy" and "wrath". **This Course of Action Verifies that Men Can Only be Redeemed by Divine "mercy"**, a truth frequently propagated in the extended context (9:14-18, 23; 11:30-32).

Paul cites a second prooftext, "Also, with daring, Isaiah says, 'I was found among those **not seeking** Me; **I made Myself manifest** to those **not asking** for Me'" (Isa. 65:1; Rom. 10:20). This refers to *How God Approached Gentiles*: He "was found" by "those not" *actively* or *continuously* "seeking" (ζητουσιν – present, active) Him. For, the passive voice verb "I was found" (ευρεθην) denotes indifferent gentiles

responded to the gospel because they were *prompted by an outside force*.

Also, the middle voice of the second verb supplements this idea by indicating *God* "made" *Himself* "manifest" (εγενομην)[1] to those "not" *actively* or *continuously* "asking" (επερωτωσιν – present, active) for Him. Like the last verse, this quote *Features and Defines God's Elective Mercy* to gentiles. And based on this message, it's easy to fathom why "daring" assertions like this caused many Jews to be angry with Isaiah and other Prophets.

To wrap up, Paul continues in the same portion, "Also, He says to Israel, 'The whole day I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people'" (Isa. 65:2; Rom. 10:21). Combining these quotes from Deuteronomy and Isaiah underscores how God revealed Himself to uninterested gentiles while many from "Israel" were *actively* and *continuously* "disobedient and contrary" (two more present, active participles, cf. Matt. 23:37-39).

The primary point of Romans 10:14-21 is **God proves He's the Savior** by extending "mercy" to some in His Chosen Nation along with Gentile Outsiders for the "purpose" of **Making Defiant Jews Jealous** (Acts 13:48; 16:14-15; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Eph. 2:1-5).

Synopsis of Chapter 10: Paul establishes the fact "righteousness" is available to anyone who "calls upon" the Lord with "belief". But during O.T. times as well as in his day, many Jews who knew about the Messiah sought "to establish their own righteousness" by keeping the works of the Law. Based on this stubborn rebellion, Scripture is targeted to develop the principle: *God Reveals Himself to Gentiles who showed No Interest Simply to Provoke "Israel" to Jealousy* (10:3, 19-21).

This theme rolls into chapter 11 which finalizes definitions for **Election** and **Hardening** (1-10). Then, Paul returns to God's current purpose of provoking Israel to "jealousy" (11:11ff). Moreover, the closing of Romans 10 directly integrates the divine procedure of initiating "faith" in gentiles with truths connected with "election" and recorded in chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 11

"Therefore, I say, has God pushed aside His people? – 'no' (μη).[21] Let there be no possibility! For, I'm also an Israelite out of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 12:1). Paul gets personal here. The fact he believed the gospel shows God hadn't "pushed aside" all Israelis who rejected the Messiah, for he too had previously renounced Christ but is now a prime example of God's "election" (Acts 9:15; 1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Regarding this matter, "God didn't push aside His people who He **foreknew**. Or don't you know what the Scripture says in Elijah as he intercedes to God against Israel? 'Lord, they killed Your prophets; they tore down Your tables of sacrifice, and only **I was left** (υπο + λειπω), and they seek my life'" (1 Kings 19:10, 14; Rom. 11:2-3). Then God's response, **"I reserved** (κατα + λειπω) for Myself 7000 men who haven't bent their knee to Baal" (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:4). Based on this historical event, Paul *concludes*, "Therefore, likewise in the now time **a remnant** (λειμμα)

has come into being according to **election** associated with **grace**" (Rom. 11:5).

Breaking down this text, it asserts, "likewise" (ουτως), or *in like manner* to how Elijah and 7000 Israelites became God's "remnant", "now" (νυν), or "in the" *present* "time", **People are Saved in The Same Way**. And Paul presents himself as *Exhibit One*, an "elect (εκλογης) vessel" (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 11:1; Gal. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Beyond these examples, the context has solidified this point several times: **Unless God "calls" Someone, Neither Jew or Gentile Would Come to Him**. So, if a "remnant" (λειμμα) or *remaining number* is to believe and exist as a testimony, they must first receive "mercy" as a "vessel" of God's "election" (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:14-18, 21-29).

The text goes on to state this "remnant" of believers "has come into being (γεγονεν) according to election associated with grace" (Rom. 11:5). This perfect tense verb of being indicates a Group of Redeemed *came into existence* and *continues to persist* by divine

"election" (εκλογην), *choice*, or *selection*. Next, this saving recipe is "associated with grace" (χαριτος); *it's directly tied to unmerited favor*. Then, Paul further defines this process, "Also, if *it's* in reference to **grace**, *it's* no longer out of **works**, since **grace** no longer becomes **grace**" (Rom. 11:6).

The first part of this verse expresses "if" redemption is conditioned on God's "grace", *His unmerited work*, it can't be "out of works" (εξ εργων), i.e., *sourced or rooted in man's endeavor*. Paul already illustrated this principle by recounting how Jacob was "called" before birth "in order that the purpose of God might remain according to election" and not "out of" his "works" (Rom. 9:11-12). There, "election" is contrasted with human "works", but this passage marks the first time "grace" is equated with "election". Therefore, **These Two Acts of God work Hand in Hand to Contrast with Man's "works"**.

Continuing this thought, Paul expresses salvation is "no longer" (ουκετι) or *isn't still* sourced in man's "works", for previously the Law of Moses had proposed this formula (Deut. 30:1-20; Matt. 19:16-22;

Rom. 3:19-20; 10:5). But now, new revelation confirms this is "no longer" offered; we must be saved **by Our Lord's Merit Available through "faith" in His Work on the Cross** (Rom. 3:21-28; 4:22 – 5:2).

For, those "seeking to establish their own righteousness" are completely off base, no matter the "zeal" exhibited in their pursuit (10:2-3). And this section designates the act of "believing" the "gospel" is "according to" (κατ') or *in line with* "election" and "associated with grace" (10:16-21; 11:5).

If this wasn't the case, the following statement would be true, "since grace no longer becomes grace". The term "since" (επει) combines the preposition "επι", meaning *based upon*, with the *conditional* "ει", which is generally translated "if" as it is at the forefront of this verse. So, this term indicates "if" the first section of this verse is true – "if . . . works" contribute to salvation – *based on that condition* "grace" could "no longer" be defined as *unmerited favor*.

The verb of being "becomes" (γινεται) strengthens this idea since it signifies the *essence* of the word

"grace" would "no longer" *exist* "if" human effort/merit is involved. Therefore, **"if" Saving "faith" is Sourced in Man's "will", Human "works" Play A Role in Salvation, which Contradicts This Divine-Dictionary-Definition that "Grace" is Inseparably Tied with "Election"** (Rom. 9:11-23; 11:5-6).[26]

Having established this point, Paul applies the lesson to current Jewish reaction to the gospel. "Therefore, what *is it*? Which thing **Israel** is seeking for, it didn't attain this; also, the **election** attained *it*; also, the rest **were hardened**" (Rom. 11:7). The conjunction "therefore" (ουν) indicates this verse contains a *conclusion*. And whenever a verb is absent in the Original, it's justified to add the verb of being. So, by voicing this question, Paul *introduces a conclusion* about "what" *the essence* of the spiritual principle laid out in verses 5-6 *"is"* or *means* when applied to "Israel".

To begin with, the demonstrative pronoun "this" (τουτο) refers to the *contextual concept* of "righteousness" people from "Israel" are *currently* "seeking for" (επιζητει – present tense) or *pursuing* (Rom. 11:7). However, we've already seen "this" wasn't

achieved by a single Jew who sought it by "works" (10:2-3; 11:6). Also, this verse adds support for the assertion introduced in Romans 9:6-7 which specified not all of Abraham's "flesh" descendants are "children of God", His "seed", or *Spiritual* "Israel".

Then, Paul employs the conjunction "also" (δε) to connect two *statements that add info* to the storyline which explains why some Jews reached their goal of "righteousness" and others didn't (Rom. 11:7). First, every individual included in God's "election attained *it*"; they were "saved" because the Spirit enabled them to "believe" or "call upon the name of the Lord" (10:9 – 11:6). Their receptivity to the gospel proved they were created "vessels of mercy"; part of God's "election"; ones He "foreknew", "predestined", and "called" (Rom. 8:28-33; 9:11-24).

On the other side of **The Divine Ledger**, "the rest were hardened" (επωρωθησαν) or *made callous* (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 20:12, 15). This verb's passive voice points to *an outside agent which caused this response*. Based on the context, these are "vessels of wrath" and could be categorized as **Non-Elect** like Esau, Pharoah,

all except 7001 in Elijah's time, and every past or present Jew and gentile who refused "Christ" (2:5; 9:12-22; 11:25; 1 Pet. 2:7-8).

Again, Paul cites Scripture *To Elucidate This "Hardened" Response*, "According as it has been written, 'God gave to them a spirit of slumber (or "deep sleep"), eyes associated with the outcome **not to see** and ears associated with the outcome **not to hear**, until this very day" (Rom. 11:8, cf. Deut. 29:2-4; Isa. 29:9-16; Rom. 10:16-21). This text substantiates these Jews couldn't "see" or "hear" the saving value of the gospel **Since They were Suppressed by Divine-Sourced "slumber"** (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9-17).

If this citation didn't adequately explain their callous reaction, Paul cites David, "Let their table be made (γενηθητω) for **a snare** and for a trap and for an offense and for a recompense to them; let their eyes be darkened (σκοτισθητωσαν) associated with the outcome **not to see**, and let them bend their back over continually" (Rom. 11:9-10, cf. Psalm 69:22-23).

These two passive voice verbs reveal *an outside force behind these actions*. Like verse 8, **The Clear Agent is "God"** who makes sure everything on their "table" ends badly, blinds them from truth, and facilitates their bent "back", "stiff-necked", *rebellious* response (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; Deut. 9:6; 31:27; 2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Current Implications of God's "Purpose"

Now that this lengthy discourse on the particulars of **Election** and **Hardening** is complete, Paul *concludes*, "Therefore, I say, did they (Israel) stumble in order that they might fall? – 'no' (μη).[21] Let there be no possibility! But, in reference to their **transgression**, **salvation** *exists* for the **gentiles** unto the outcome to **provoke** them to **jealousy**" (παραζηλωσαι – Rom. 11:11).

Paul begins to finalize an answer to his detractors by explaining why his ministry didn't revolve around Israelites but focused on gentiles. His rationale includes **Israel's "transgression" of Rejecting Their Christ** plus the fact he was commissioned to be "an apostle of the gentiles", a task which aligned with God's cur-

rent aim "to provoke" Israel "to jealousy" (10:19-21; 11:11). Hence, he majored on a gentile "ministry . . . if somehow I might **provoke** my flesh **to jealousy** (παραζηλωσω) and might **save** certain ones out of them" (vv. 13-14).

Essentially, Paul claims he's operating in concert with the Father's "purpose" of "calling" more gentiles to "salvation" which inevitably triggers Jews "to jealousy". **His Divine Orders Parallel the New Strategy that No Longer Positions Israel as A Favored Nation nor Better than Previously Alienated Gentiles** (Eph. 2:11-14). For, in this present "administration of grace" He wants all to realize those who come to Him do so by "mercy" and "election", not human "works" (Eph. 2:4 – 3:12).

To illustrate this *Celestial Change*, Paul pens the "fig tree" analogy which demonstrates God's "kindness" (**Election**) has resulted in some placing "faith" in Christ, but His "severity" (**Hardening**) ends in judgment for those who reject (Rom. 2:4-5; 11:15-24; Eph. 2:7). And since God is in full command of who are redeemed, it's evident none of us should take

any credit or "boast" (Rom. 3:27; 4:2; 11:18; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Eph. 2:8-9).

After this theological graphic, Paul applies its relevance to the happenings of his day. "For, brethren, I don't want you to be ignorant of this **mystery** in order that you might not be thinkers beyond yourselves (i.e., *your own capacity*) because a partial **hardening** has happened and persists in reference to **Israel** until which time the fullness of **gentiles** might come in, and likewise **all Israel** will be **saved** . . ." (Rom. 11:25-26).

The noun "mystery" (μυστηριον) represents the principle suspending promises to Israel and initiating the current plan to save the "fullness" or *full amount* "of gentiles" was a *secret* until it was revealed (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:6-10; Eph. 3:1-12). In other words, Paul wants these "brethren" not "to be ignorant" but **Recognize This New Body of Truth Contains God's Current Standard which Defines How He Relates with Men**.

For, "this mystery" includes the reality: since the time "Israel" rejected their Christ, they exist in "a partial hardening". From one perspective, this context speaks about some Hebrews being saved. However, this wasn't happening *In Fulfillment of O.T. Promises* or in vast numbers like gentile conversions, but in accord with God's "purpose" to bring more non-Jews in as equal members of the Body (Rom. 9:24; 11:1, 5-7, 17; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:11-22).

Additionally, "mystery" revelation provides details for when Israel's "partial hardening" ends, for **Then God will Fulfill all His Promises to Them** (Rom. 11:26-29). This thought is conveyed by the perfect tense verb "has happened and persists" (γεγονεν) which specifies this "hardening" *began* with their National rejection of the Messiah and *continues* with an ongoing stance of resistance (vv. 11, 15). The "time" this **Blind Spiritual Condition** will end is when "the fullness of gentiles might come in" (εισελθῃ) or *arrive*.

This verb's subjunctive mode indicates when *the condition for this phase* of God's Plan comes, "likewise" (ουτως), *thus*, or *in this manner*, "all Israel will

be saved" (Rom. 11:26). In other words, the Jews won't experience their O.T. promises until God finalizes the "mystery" part of His "purpose" which adds an unspecified number of "gentiles" **While this New Un-Prophesied Program of The Church Endures** (Eph. 1-10).

When this Gentile-Influx is complete, since His Chosen Nation still exists "as beloved because of the fathers according to election", all aspects of "God's gifts and calling" which "are irrevocable" will come to pass. These include Christ's return, eliminating "ungodliness from Jacob", and the New Covenant promise – He'll "forgive their sins" (Rom. 11:26-29, cf. Isa. 59:20; Jer. 31:33; Rom. 10:19-21; 11:11-14).

Now that Paul has finished answering his critics by educating them about the Jewish Nation's current place in God's "purpose", he pinpoints **The Core Reason** the Spirit had him write this treatise on "election" (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11). "For just as you (gentiles) at one time were **unpersuaded** in reference to God, also now you (gentiles) were shown **mercy** in reference to their (Jews) **non-persuasion**; and likewise, now these

(Jews) were **unpersuaded** in reference to your (gentiles) own **mercy** in order that they (Jews) might be shown **mercy**. For, God locked together all (both Jews and gentiles) unto **non-persuasion** in order that He might show **mercy** to all" (Rom. 11:30-32).

It's important to grasp what the terms "unpersuaded" and "non-persuasion" imply. These nouns and verbs consist of the letter alpha (α), which *negates the meaning*, prefixed to the root verb "πειθω", which means to *persuade*, *convince*, or *sway* (cf. Rom. 2:8; 10:21; 15:31; Eph. 2:2; 5:6).

So, the first phrase in verse 30 expresses these gentiles weren't *convinced* (aorist indicative) they needed God's help, for they weren't "pursuing righteousness", nor "seeking" or "asking for" Him (Rom. 9:30; 10:20). Therefore, the only way their lack of interest could change to "belief" is with divine intervention.

This is exactly what took place, for "at one time" (ποτε), or *in the past*, these "gentiles" were *in unbelief*, but "now" (νυν), or *presently*, "were shown mercy" (ηλεηθητε) because of Israel's "non-persuasion"

(Rom. 11:30, cf. 9:11-12; 11:11-14; Eph. 2:11-13). The Jew's "transgression", their "rejection" of the Messiah, set in motion "salvation" being sent to "gentiles" as the Book of Acts recounts (13:46-48; 18:6; 28:25-28). Also note, this verb's passive voice *designates God as the outside agent* who determined to give each "elect" gentile "mercy" in line with His "will" and "purpose" (Act 7:51-60; Rom. 9:11-12, 14-18, 23; 11:11,15; Eph. 2:1-5).

Furthermore, just as gentiles had been "unpersuaded", "likewise" (ουτως), or *in this same manner*, many Jews are "now" (νυν) or *presently* in the "non-persuasion" mode of "jealousy" as they react to gentile receptivity (Rom. 10:19; 11:11-14, 31). This scenario materialized "in order that" (ινα) or *for the purpose that* Jews "might" occupy the same position gentiles already held – the need to "be shown mercy" (ελεηθωσιν).

This verb doesn't only point to *outside intervention* (passive voice), its subjunctive form means the action is *conditional*. And this form is a virtual match to an earlier verb in the dialog, "I will show mercy to

whoever I might show mercy" (ελεω – Rom. 9:15). So, subjunctive verbs in both passages emphasize **God's *Prerogative* is The *Operative Condition* for "whoever" He "might", *May*, or *Choose To* "show mercy"** (9:14-18, 23).

In closing, Paul encapsulates his point, "For, God locked together (συνεκλεισεν) all unto non-persuasion in order that He might show mercy to all" (Rom. 9:32). This verb is composed of the preposition "συν", meaning "together" or *with*, prefixed to the verb "κλειω", which means *to shut*, *close*, or *confine*.[27]

Its aorist indicative form indicates *God had already closed the door* on "all" by relegating Jews, who used to receive His favor, to the same level of "non-persuasion" as gentiles. Therefore, verse 32 combines the conclusion of the last two verses: **God Has Universally Cornered All Men in the Circumstance of Needing "mercy" to Be Saved**. Check out the footnote for Translations which more accurately render the subjunctive verbs in both Romans 9:15 & 11:31-32.[28]

Moreover, the *Listed Reason* God took this approach is "in order that" (ινα) "He might show mercy" (ελεησῃ) to all" (Rom. 11:32). This verb, just like the last, is subjunctive in mode so it repeats the point God "might", *may*, or *can* exercise the *conditional choice* to "show mercy" (Rom. 9:15, 18; 11:30-32). And these three chapters clearly demonstrate He does "show mercy . . . to all" Jews and gentiles who were created as "vessels" of His "grace" and "election" (9:11-12; 20-24; 11:5-6). In the end, **The Father Wants "all" to Know Redemption is Soley Based on His Choice of Extending "mercy" to "whoever" He "wills"** (cf. Eph. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:13, 16; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2:10).

In review, **Chapters 9 – 11** delineate God's current relationship with Israel; they're no longer His special people, so their advantage over gentiles has ceased (Rom. 3:1). Instead, they find themselves in the equally condemned position of depending on divine "mercy" for salvation (3:21-26; 9:15, 18, 24; 11:30-32). Amid this disclosure, Paul closes the book on those questioning why his "ministry" wasn't patterned around fellow-Jews.

He repeats the known facts that he was made "an apostle of the gentiles", thus his routine mirrors God's current "purpose" to "provoke" Jews to "jealousy", a consequence which *may prompt* more of them to be saved (11:11-14). Also, he clarified any past or present Israelites who "believed" exercised this positive response because they were counted among "vessels of mercy" God had "elected" (8:28-33; 9:11-12, 23-29; 11:1-10; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Within this reply, Paul's opponents could rationalize his unconventional "ministry" provided great value for Israel, and it took him off the hook as the Spirit guided his hand to *'Pass the Buck to God'*.

A Synopsis of "Election"

This topic can be summed up by the record of Ephesians 2:1-10. For, that context depicts unregenerate men as "dead" in "transgressions and sins", under the control of Satan's "spirit", naturally inclined to produce "disobedience" which results from "lusts" originating in "the wills of the flesh and mind"; and these folks are destined for "wrath" (vv. 1-3; 2 Cor.

4:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:26). They're **physically alive but Not Morally Capable of Choices which Please God**.

Therefore, if anyone is to be saved, **God Must Intervene**. So, He "elected" some before creating the world, then in time infuses still "dead" folks with His "love", "mercy", and "grace". While instilling these reviving attributes, God makes us "alive with Christ" to become examples of His "kindness" in future "ages" (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Eph. 1:4-5; 2:4-7).

Verse 8 defines "this" (τουτο) transaction – being "saved by grace . . . through faith" – as a "free gift of God". This means **Redeeming "faith" is an Extension of His "grace"**, for if any part of this procedure rises "out of you", it would include "works" and give men reason to "boast" (Acts 13:48; Rom. 3:27-28; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Tim. 1:13-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). But since God accomplished all of "this" to "the praise of His glory", **He Alone Can "boast", *Brag* or *Flaunt*** (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Eph. 1:4-6).

The reality people can see the need to be saved from sin is because "our hearts" encountered the Spirit's

"illumination" which spurs our yearning to be rescued from the "authority of darkness" and delivered to the Son's "light" (Acts 13:48; 16:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph. 5:8-9; Col. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 John 1:5-7). Before that event, as detainees of the Devil's "will", our decisions were restricted to acting out "disobedience".

After we were redeemed – "baptized into Christ" and received the "Spirit" – **Our Will was Freed to Overcome Slavery to "sin" and Practice "righteousness"** (Rom. 6:3-16; 8:15). Consequently, the concept of **'Free Will'** should never be used to characterize the spiritually "dead" but, instead, "living" believers who can choose to "walk" in the "Spirit" and produce "good works" (Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 2:10; 3:16; 4:20-24; 5:18; Titus 2:11-14).

The Value of Embracing This Doctrine

I agree with many proponents of "election" who say the most significant benefit which arises from this Divine Act is a better appreciation for our Father and His "purpose". While I sympathize with this conclusion, I still think there's a more fundamental value.

For, ***How We Approach Scripture*** **forms the Entire Basis For All Beliefs** including the issue of "election".

Therefore, I believe the best way to neutralize the semi-philosophical theology in Christian culture today is to **Practice and Promote the Literal Approach to Biblical Interpretation**. Because when subjective teaching or commentary is allowed to distract us from this method, it can easily tempt us to question what we plainly see in *The Inspired Text*.

Consequently, we should take care not to be influenced by assertions like, ***'This passage appears to teach (fill in the blank) , but this concept can't be true since the Bible doesn't teach that'***, or equally damaging, ***'. . . my theology doesn't support that'***. The accurate application of God-given truth is at stake on every issue if believers don't stay the course of conscientiously adhering to what we see written.

Endeavoring to follow this approach, I've arrived at the following **Portrait of Our Father**: He created the universe, including His unique design of man. And He holds inherent "authority" to use *His Intellectual and*

Material Property as He "wills" (Rom. 9:14-18). Thus, He desired to express His "purpose" with humanity by forming "vessels of mercy" to "make known the richness of His glory" and "vessels of wrath" to "display His power" (Rom. 9:20-23; 2 Thess. 2:11-14). He attained these goals through **"election"** and **"hardening"** with a view to bring "praise" and "glory" to Himself (Rom. 11:33-36; Eph. 1:4-14; 3:20-21).

We, His "children", have received "kindness" as heavenly "heirs". He's given us "life" through our Lord's death and resurrection so we're "acceptable" to Him. We're recipients of His "mercy", "love", and "grace". We've been given the "pledge" of the indwelling Spirit plus guaranteed a blissful and eternal "glory".

Furthermore, when the teachings of "election" are factored into our outlook, it radically alters our perception of the Father's all-encompassing *unmerited favor*. For, if "grace" is defined in a manner which includes "works" in the redemptive process, its real meaning is diluted (Rom. 11:5-6). In return for all this, **He Merely Expects Recognition and Devotion**.

The argument **'God's Unfair if He Only Saves Some'** sounds reasonable except Scripture repudiates it. So, we have a choice. We can allow ourselves to be wave "tossed" and wind "blown" by Human Philosophy or guided by Biblical Truth (Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:20-21). The Word portrays our Father in absolute control of redemption; He wishes all to know who He is and what He's done; and **He Deserves and Demands Credit for All of It**. This is *The Way God Chose to Portray His Awesomeness*. He's way bigger than we are and far beyond our capacity to fully grasp. Yet, He's been gracious enough to **Make Himself Known in The Pages of Scripture**. To use modern lingo, **HE WANTS TO BE SEEN!**

Furthermore, until we meet Him, I believe divine actions like "election" exist to force us to abandon flesh-instituted reasoning in favor of **His Disclosed Revelation** with the intent to commit us to *A Surrendered and Humble State*. Other truths having a similar effect include but aren't limited to Instruction about The Triune Godhead, Adam's Accountability for Sin though God Knew it Would Happen, and How the Spirit can Inhabit Saved Sinners. Although I don't

completely comprehend these quandaries, I attempt to cope with them by the wisdom in a catchphrase heard in my youth, **‘God says it, I believe it, that settles it’**.

Taking the Word at face value on “election” not only promotes an understanding of the Person of God but it also enables us to **Accurately Assess Mankind**. We’ve seen Scripture detailing how the minds and hearts of unregenerate men and women are controlled by “the god of this age”, held “captive” in his “snare”, and “blinded” to do his “will” (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Eph. 2:12 Tim. 2:26). In this “dead” condition, Fallen Men can do nothing, let alone generate “faith”. *Thus, Believers Should Adopt This Pessimistic Image of Humanity*.

In contrast to this view, those who hold the Lost possess a ‘Free Will’ don’t really comprehend their spiritual predicament. For, this secular-based theology is formed from the idea that all people, prior to regeneration, can autonomously make a ‘Free Will’ decision to accept Christ. However, we’ve seen the Bible solidly teaches God the Holy Spirit must first

illuminate the unredeemed if they're to be freed from Satan's "will" and show interest in the gospel.

The Significance of Applying This Appraisal changes the way Christians approach life and ministry. For, when we assess the unsaved to be in spiritual confinement, we'll tend to share the only remedy – the gospel – rather than try to alter folks' worldview or cultural lifestyle. Also, we'll have an incentive to encourage Body members to engage in spiritual growth – "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new" / "holiness" / "sanctification" (Rom. 6:6-16; Eph. 4:17-32).

By majoring in transformation of mind and character, we'll develop magnetic and complementary traits which help while sharing Christ. Then, the world won't only hear our message, but they'll see **Living Products of The Gospel** who have "hope", show "love", are "kind", exhibit "humility", and promote "peace" (Rom. 12:17-21; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 4:5-6; Titus 2:3-10; 1 Pet. 3:15).

This thought serves as a bridge to the next advantage of advocating "election"; **This Perception of Humanity Affects Our Evangelism**. First, we're told to share what Christ accomplished on the cross while knowing it'll be considered "foolishness" unless God intervenes, in which case it'll be received as His "power" (Acts 17:22-34; 1 Cor. 1:18-24).

By understanding *This Spiritual Dimention of Regeneration*, we're less likely to revert to philosophical, psychological or intellectual methods to negotiate belief. Instead, we'll more faithfully depend on the simple recorded message, "Jesus Christ and this one having been crucified". Paul said it best, his "preaching" wasn't "in persuasive words of wisdom but in display of Spirit and power in order that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

A second benefit of Comprehending Man's Condition is it avoids wrecking relationships. When we interact with unbelievers as if they should know better than believe in evolution, practice deviant sexual behavior,

use ungodly speech, or hold to other philosophies we perceive to cause harm, we'll burn bridges.

But if we gently approach them with Christian love – **Like God's done with us** – in time He may open their heart and give them "repentance unto a full knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25). Also, we'll be around to offer direction, and they'll be more likely to join up with true Bible believers. However, if we're critical, they'll likely sidestep us and look for churches which accept sexual immorality, human values, and secular ethics. So, **How We Do Our Job is Crucial** to retain the opportunity of edifying the "elect" after they're "saved".

Third, when our evangelistic message is typically rejected, which we should anticipate, we won't tend to take it so personally. We'll be far more able to "endure" as we perform our job with the confidence souls can be won since the "elect" are out there waiting to "believe" for "eternal life" (Acts 13:48; 2 Tim. 2:9-10).

"Thanks to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ and manifests the savor of His knowledge through us in every place. Because we exist as a good smell to God among those choosing to be saved (σῳζομενοις – present, middle/passive)[1] and among those choosing to be ruined (απολλυμενοις – present, middle/passive)[1], indeed to some we're a savor out (εκ) of death resulting in death, also to some *we're* a savor out (εκ) of life resulting in life; and who *is* qualified for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

Fourth, we can proceed with a mindset of feeling privileged God has determined to bring people to Himself by using imperfect "earthen vessels" like us to deliver the "treasure" of the gospel message (2 Cor. 3:4-6; 4:6-15). May we present our Lord Jesus Christ in a way which pleases Him and respects men with an eagerness to participate in the salvation and growth of the "elect".

A Brief History of Election

I've come to realize most Christians don't know For **The Greater Part of a Century following The**

Reformation (1517) **everyone taught salvation was linked with divine "election"**. Yes, Martin Luther imparted this truth, and his views are recorded in his commentary on Romans. Another noted contemporary, John Calvin (1509-1564), later also taught on and wrote extensively about "election".

The idea *saving "faith" could originate from man's will* didn't exist in the theology of believers who'd left the Catholic Religion until the latter 1500s when Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) is credited with introducing the concept. Still, his views weren't published or widely propagated until after his death. While living, Arminius was asked, **'If we can produce faith, can we also stop believing?'** He replied that *True Believers Can Lose Salvation by Falling Away from Faith*.

Today, the conviction God chose some people to "believe" is most often called 'Calvinism', but this label is misleading since he's simply one man who wrote a lot about the subject. The fact is, this doctrine existed long before Mr. Calvin, and that's why I took the approach of **Developing the Theme of "election" From The Only Inspired Text**. Moreover, Luther, Calvin, and

many others hold a variety of views about the specifics related to "election". However, *All Who Teach God Freely and Separately Selects Who He "wills" Agree*: the 'Free Will' stance of Arminius doesn't reconcile with Scripture.

To cap off, we can see the prominence of "election" showcased in Paul's earliest Epistles. In his first, he refers to the time of his own redemption, "when **God was well pleased**" (Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:6). Later in the Book, by use of a double-take, he describes the salvation of gentiles, "Also now, after having known God, also rather, **after having been known** (γνωσθεντες – passive) **by God"** (Gal. 4:9).[1, 9]

Then, just a few months after initial conversions at Thessalonica, he says, "knowing, brethren having been **loved by God**, your **election**" (εκλογην – 1 Thess. 1:4, cf. 2:17). This text reveals **He Didn't Baby Believers but Taught This Reassuring Truth as soon as they came to the Lord**.

Closing Thoughts

Biblical teaching on "election" offers ongoing benefits. It challenges us to **Acknowledge His Superiority and Holiness**. Also, pondering these truths should Humble Us in Our Inferior Role since **God Crafted the Gospel to Put Us in Our Place**.

These self-deprecating lessons express a universal need for His "mercy" in redemption, thus they should help us view the entire Body as **Equally Significant Role-Players in The Celestial Performance of Disclosing His "glory"** (Eph. 3:10-13; Phil. 2:6-11). For, "God placed the members, each one of them, in the body according as He willed" (ηθελησεν – 1 Cor. 12:18). Therefore, for our own spiritual good, let's magnify the Father by demoting ourselves and faithfully advancing **The Important & Eternal Truths which Reveal His Person**.

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New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek texts. Old Testament quotes are from the NASV unless otherwise indicated. Most Rarely studied Bible Versions cited in this article can be accessed at studybible.info

Footnotes:

1) In Koine Greek of the New Testament era, the **Middle Voice** in verbs, participles, and infinitives which expresses action (or being) basically indicates *the subject acts upon itself to perform the action (or being)*. This activity can be conveyed by the concept of *causing itself* to do (or be) something thus, in reference to people, it's well translated with the idea of *making a choice*. The **Passive Voice** indicates *the subject is acted upon by a force or agent outside of itself*. This function *effectively turns the subject into a direct object* since the subject is *made* to do (or be) something by that outside actor. Action words (or words of being) which occur in a Middle/Passive Form convey the meaning of both voices.

2) *The Bondage of the Will*, Martin Luther, translated by Henry Cole, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, pages 38-39. "This, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: *that God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will*. By this thunderbolt, 'Free-will' is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed into pieces. Those, therefore, who would assert 'Free-will', must either deny this thunderbolt, or pretend not to see it, or push it from them."

3) In the 13th century, a prominent Catholic theologian, Thomas Aquinas, threw his weight behind a philosophy which explains how natural men can act by 'Free Will'. He hypothesized when Adam Fell, his physical body completely fell in regard to sin, but his mind didn't. So, Aquinas concluded man's mind, in its natural state, still holds the capacity to make positive spiritual choices, a thought which is fully debunked in Ephesians 2:3 as well as Psalm 14:1-3 (cf. Rom. 3:10-18).

However, his influence has added lasting and unbiblical fuel to the argument which supports the thought unregenerate man has this ability. This heresy is embraced by the Roman Catholic Church in their doctrine about human works involved in gaining salvation. For, they claim Christ's death on the cross simply released mankind from the curse of Adam which now enables them to work their way to God. Then, half a dozen decades after the Reformation, this false teaching about 'Free Will' had a revival when it was championed by Jacob Arminius and began to infiltrate the thinking of some Protestant Christians.

4) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 78.

5) Regarding the form of this participle in First Timothy 2:14, some Greek Editions don't have the preposition "εκ" prefixed to the verb "απαταω". However, all major Greek Editions contain the compound form of this verb in Second Corinthians 11:3. In 1 Tim. 2:14, Versions rendering the force of the prefix "εκ" are: 'entirely deceived' (Twentieth Century); 'thoroughly deceived' (WNT, MNT); 'utterly deceived' (Williams); and

‘completely cheated’ or ‘thoroughly deluded’ (JMNT). In 2 Cor. 11:3, Versions rendering this verb based on its combination with “εκ” are: ‘completely deceived’ (Julia Smith, Rotherham); and ‘thoroughly deceived’ or ‘fully deludes’ (JMNT).

Note, directly following this First Timothy occurrence, the context delves into qualifications for Church elders. One ramification of women potentially being “thoroughly deceived” is this disadvantage prevents them from attaining the spiritual stability needed to guide assemblies amid certain difficult circumstances. Today, many concessions in assemblies and groups result from women being allowed to occupy leadership positions since they can’t hold strong enough lines to sustain doctrinal and/or moral standards.

6) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 692.

7) In the Greek language, action (or being) conveyed by an Aorist Participle always precedes the action (or being) of verbs, participles or infinitives modified by it, even when these associated words of action (or being) are in the aorist tense. I was first taught this definition in Bible school and have confirmed it by routinely testing its multi-hundreds of occurrences in the N.T. The *basic meaning* conveyed by any grammatical form is determined when some contexts require its meaning to be understood in a particular way, then this same concept can be applied to every occurrence. A few examples where contexts necessitate aorist participial action (or being) preceding the action (or being) of associated words are

John 12:36; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:9, 11, 13, 20; 2:14-15; Heb. 5:9.

8) Unlike how most Translations accurately convey the intent of the Greek text with reference to the passive voice in Acts 13:48, the sense conveyed by the aorist passive participle in 17:34 is almost universally ignored. JMNT represents the only remote depiction of this passive voice that I could find, 'being glued (joined; attached; welded)' – studybible.info.

9) Translations which render the verb "εχαρισθη" as expressing the active unmerited favor of God are: 'it is a favor bestowed upon you' (Mace); 'granted as a favor from Christ' (Worsley, cf. Haweis and Worrell); 'to you it is graciously given' (Living Oracles, cf. Riverside, CLV, Williams, and LEB); 'upon you it was conferred as a favor' (Julia Smith); 'you have had the privilege granted you' (Twentieth Century, WNT, cf. Goodspeed); and 'to you folks it is given by grace' (JMNT) – studybible.info.

10) Technically, the article "το" by form can be nominative or accusative, so the context must determine which it is. Here, all three are nominative since they serve as subjects of the verb. However, since both article-led phrases command a passive voice verb, these phrases become direct objects of an *outside force* which, in this case, is designated as "God" (v. 28).[1]

11) Three Translations accurately rendering Ephesians 1:13 are: Young's Literal Translation, The Godbey N.T., and the Modern Literal Version which can be viewed on studybible.info.

12) Commonly used Versions that adequately translate Ephesians 1:13 are the KJV, NASV, and NKJV. However, the ESV and NIV incorrectly render it, 'In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and ***believed in him***, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit' (ESV).

13) The following Versions render the phrase "in . . . faith of the truth" (εν . . . πιστει αληθειας) similar to my translation: Coverdale, Great, Geneva, Bishops, DouayRheims (a Catholic Version), Westley, Webster, Diaglott, YLT, DBY, Rotherham, TGNT, LITV, and more recently by MLV (1987) as well as JMNT ('Truth's faith' – 2010) – studybible.info.

14) See studybible.info/JMNT/2%20Thessalonians%202:13.

15) In my assessment, the central portions of Scripture which form the basis for the *Church Epistles* are Paul's 13 Letters since their content expounds God's present "administration" (οικονομια), or *household management*, which defines the nature and function of Christ's Body. This record is stated to be the revelation of formerly un-prophesied "mystery" (μυστηριον) truth which Jesus made fully known to "apostles and prophets", but Paul was the primary one chosen to record it (Eph. 3:2-5; Col. 1:24-28). Also, I believe the contents of Peter's two Letters and The Book of Hebrews fully align with Paul's writings, so they should be equally applied to the Church (2 Pet. 3:15-16). My perspective on John's Letters and the Book of James is explained in the text and footnote 21 of the article, 'Our Spirit Connection – Accessing His Power' found under the 'articles' tab on edifiedliving.net.

16) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 316.

17) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 142.

18) **Commonly Used Versions** most accurately rendering Ephesians 1:4, are: NIV, Modern English Version (MEV) & Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

19) Translations most accurately rendering Ephesians 1:4-5 are: 'according as He did choose us in him before the foundation of the world, for our being holy and unblemished before Him, in love, having foreordained us to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will' (*YLT*); 'As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and blameless before him in love: Having determined us beforehand for adoption as a son by Jesus Christ to him, according to benevolence of his will' (*Julia Smith*); 'even as he chose us in him before a casting down of a world, to have us holy ones and blameless ones in sight of him; in love having previously marked out us for sonship through Jesus Anointed for himself, according to the good leasure of the will of himself' (*Diaglott*).

Additional Versions are: 'just-as he chose us in him before the conception of the world, *for* us to be holy and unblemished in his sight in love. Having predetermined us to *the* sonship through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the delight of his will' (*MLV*); 'exactly as he selected us in him ere the foundation of the cosmos, to be holy and unblemished in his sight in

love: having predetermined us to sonship through Yah Shua Messiah to himself, according to the well-approval of his will' (*ECB*); 'even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without defect before him in love, having predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his desire'(*WEB*); and 'just as He chose us in Him before *the* foundation of *the* world for us to be holy and blameless before Him, in love having predestined us for divine adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will' (*BLB*) – studybible.info.

20) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 643.

21) When it comes to how questions are presented, Greek is like Spanish where the expected answer is often indicated such as, 'Are you going to town? – "yes"' or 'Are you going to town? – "no"'. In the N.T., questions presented with the adverb "μη" signify a negative response is expected. Questions set forth with the adverb "ου" signify a positive response is expected. In rare instances when "μη" and "ου" are both used in the presentation of a question, the expected response is positive (John 11:56; 18:11; Rom. 10:18 &19; 1 Cor. 9:4 & 5).

22) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 156.

23) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 22.

24) Some Translations rendering the term "πλουτος" in a manner which represents its singular form are Mace, Diaglott, Twentieth Century, WNT, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Riverside, BBE, AUV, ACV & JMNT – studybible.info.

25) Most contemporary Translations render "τελος" the 'end' of the Law. I've chosen to render it "completion" to reflect its basic meaning which clarifies the teaching of this context. Jesus obtained "righteousness" on our behalf, and we can receive it by simply "believing" in order to obtain the unblemished "righteousness" needed to be accepted by the Father. This thought contrasts with the idea this term means the 'termination' of the Law as rendered by WNT & Goodspeed. However, the following Versions lend support to my translation of "τελος": 'culmination' (ISV); 'fulfyllyng of the lawe' (Great); 'fulfillment' (WEB); 'consummation' (CLV); 'completion/shalom' (ECB); and 'final act' (JMNT), studybible.info. Also, the *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* provides the primary meaning for "τελος" as *'an end accomplished: the completion* or *fulfillment* of anything' (Oxford, October 1871, p. 697).

26) Many later manuscripts include the following phrase in this verse, "also, if *it's* out of works, it's no longer grace, since work is no longer work". The same principles used to exegete this verse in reference to the noun "grace" can be applied to this additional phrase in reference to the noun "work". When this is done, this extra phrase conveys the same theological meaning. The only difference is it defines the term "work" (εργον).

27) *Abridgment of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, October 1871, p. 379.

28) In Romans 11:31-32, most commonly used Versions including KJV, NASV, NIV, and ESV translate these subjunctive mode verbs with 'may' and/or 'might' even though they don't render similar subjunctive verbs of Romans 9:15 in a manner which conveys a *conditional sense*. Versions more accurately rendering both contexts are Thompson, Sawyer, Goodspeed, MNT, CLV, Williams, ACV, JMNT, NSB, BIB, and BLB – studybible.info.

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Appendix I

The safest way to address quandaries like, **Did Adam truly make a 'Free Will' decision even though God foreknew this sin would happen?**, is to compile all the available and pertinent facts.

So, initially God commanded Adam not to eat "fruit" from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"; for if he did, He stressed this choice would end in death (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:6). Note, this exchange happened before Eve was created, which is one reason Adam is always held responsible for the first "transgression" (παραπτωμα – Rom. 5:12-19).

Next, the "woman" came on the scene because God desired to make a "helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:20, 23). He took "one of his ribs", "fashioned" it "into a woman", and "brought her to the man" (vv. 21-22). The remarkable nature of this partner is alluded to by the description, "the woman is the glory (δοξα) of the man" (1 Cor. 11:7). This noun depicts *perception* or *representation* which means Eve was perfectly tailored for Adam in the same manner he was formed to represent God's infinite "glory".

Also, when Adam ate the fruit, we know he "wasn't deceived" (ηπατηθη – 1 Tim. 2:14). This verb means *'to trick'* or *'outwit'*.[4] Therefore, Adam was in no way deluded in this circumstance. In other words, **when he disobeyed, he knew exactly what he was doing**. In contrast, "the woman, having been thoroughly deceived, became and continued to be (perfect tense) in transgression" (παραβασει – 1 Tim. 2:14).

The participle "having been thoroughly deceived" (εξαπατηθεισα) is built from the same verb, "απαταω", prefixed by the preposition "εκ", which means *out*. So, Eve was *out-deceived*; she was "thoroughly"

or *entirely tricked*. Second Corinthians 11:3 corroborates this idea, "the serpent thoroughly deceived (εξηπατησεν) Eve in his craftiness", which is the second reason accountability for this sin solely rests on Adam.[5]

Then, after God asked Adam if he'd eaten the fruit, he tried to play the 'victim card', "The woman whom Thou *gavest to be* with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). Eve's response was more honest, "The serpent deceived me", which was in fact the truth (v. 13).

So now, let's return to the original question of whether Adam acted by his own volition. On the surface, it appears he freely made this choice; however, it's also clear God knew what would go down. Was eating the fruit a foregone conclusion since Eve, *the irresistible marvel God constructed for him*, handed it to him? Whatever the case, God knew without a doubt what the outcome would be. At this point, I've surrendered to the notion **With God, We're on a Need-To-Know Basis**. And regarding this critical event, He's revealed the limited information He wants us to know.

We know “death” entered “into the world, and likewise death passed through all men on the basis of which all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Continuing, this chapter portrays Adam as a “type” of Christ in that both men had an indelible effect on humanity. Adam’s “transgression” placed his descendants into “condemnation” before God (vv. 15-16). In contrast, Jesus’ single “act of righteousness” supplied what was necessary for “those receiving the free gift of righteousness” to “reign in life” (vv. 17-19).

Therefore, was Adam’s sin really an act of ‘Free Will’? Honestly, I don’t know. As the Father portrays Himself, it’s evident He’s very complex. And not everything He’s chosen to reveal about His Person or “purpose” makes sense to me, for some things are perplexing. Yet, I’m confident He set forth His attributes and plans in exactly the way He wanted.

Appendix II

It’s interesting to contemplate when Jesus walked on earth if He truly functioned with ‘Free Will’. We know

He never sinned and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. concluded **His human 'will' was always subject to His divine 'will'** (Luke 22:42; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 5:7-9; 7:26). This determination seems to be correct, but I still don't fully comprehend the interface between His 'wills'. Nor do I think other complexities of His Nature are easily grasped. For instance, the trinitarian concept of one God in three persons isn't completely logical to my limited way of thinking, yet I believe this explanation reflects what the Word teaches.

So, to grasp God's identity, I concede we must be dedicated to studying, believing, and conforming our mind to the Word, then be satisfied with the resultant thought (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:4, 8; 1 Tim. 6:20-21). Ultimately, I think God portrays Himself in a bewildering manner at times to keep us off balance and humble, so we'll be dependent on Him.

Appendix III

Before exegeting the relevant grammar of Acts 13:48, here's a more literal translation: "having heard, the

gentiles were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and they **believed**, as many as were existing (ησαν) as those who chose to begin and continue to be made arranged (τεταγμενοι) unto **eternal life**". The first significant point is the imperfect tense verb of being "ησαν" which indicates those responding with belief had *previously* and *on an ongoing basis been* "existing" or *had their being in the actuality* described by the following participle. For, the imperfect tense represents *continuous action in past time*.

This *Condition of Existence* is paired with the participial action of "τεταγμενοι", which is derived from the verb "ταssω", meaning *to arrange* or *put in order*.[6] Its perfect tense specifies these folks *began at a point in time* "to be arranged", *then continued in the state of being ordered or appointed ones* "unto eternal life" (Matt. 28:16; Luke 7:8; Acts 15:2; 22:10; Rom. 13:1; 1 Cor. 16:15). Combined with the movement and resultant state of this tense, the term's dual voice specifies *they acted upon themselves* or "chose" (middle) "to be made" (passive) or *caused by an outside force* to begin and remain in this ordained state.

So, the question arises, how's it possible for people before they hear the gospel to be "existing" in a constant state where *they gladly choose* (middle voice) *to be controlled by an outside force* (passive) "to be arranged" for "eternal life"?

The only way to explain and express the interaction between these Greek terms is to recognize the folks who "believed" were "vessels of mercy" created for God's glory in eternity past (Rom. 9:11-23; Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 1:9). Then, in time, the Spirit irresistibly woos them to trust in Christ. Thus, every Translation I know of appropriately renders this two-word phrase with the impact of the passive voice and leaves out the middle voice sense altogether. You can observe this same **imperfect verb of being – perfect middle/passive participle construction** in Acts 9:33 & Gal. 4:3.

Appendix IV

The phrase "εστε σεσῳσμενοι" consists of a present tense verb of being and a perfect middle/passive participle. A literal translation of these terms is, "you

exist as ones having chosen to begin and continue to be made saved". This construction is similar to the one in Acts 13:48 discussed in Appendix III (ησαν τεταγμενοι); however, the present tense of this verb of being emphasizes *these convert's present state* as compared with the imperfect verb of being "ησαν" in the Acts passage which focuses on *their past state*. Otherwise, both participles occur in the same grammatical form.

The root of the participle in Ephesians 2:8 comes from the verb "σωζω" which means *to save* or *rescue*. Its perfect tense indicates this salvation *began at a certain point* and *continues*. Its middle voice means the subject "you" *acted upon itself* or *made the decision* "to be made" or *caused by an outside force* (passive voice) to become "saved". Like any passage, these grammatical relationships must be interpreted in light of their context.

First, the concept put forth by this phrase combined with "faith", all of "this" (τουτο) is said to be "the free gift of God". Second, verses 4-5, which contain this same phrase (εστε σεσωσμενοι), describe how our

saved condition ensued because God made us "alive with Christ". And this event happened while we were morally "dead" – willingly practicing "sins", "transgressions", and "disobedience" (vv. 1-3).

Third, this development follows the related foundational teaching of Ephesians 1:4 and 13 which show those who God "chose" were the ones who "heard . . . the gospel" and "believed". Therefore, just like the similar construct in Acts 13:48, I understand this one conveys the idea we "exist" in a state where, as God's elect, we *previously* and *gladly chose* (middle voice) *to be caused by the outside force* (passive) of the Spirit to believe the gospel in order to "be saved".

Fourth, every Version I know of renders this participle either neutrally or with a passive sense, but never with the middle voice sense of human choice. And I think these renditions are correct. You can check similar **present verb of being – perfect middle/passive participle constructions** in Second Corinthians 4:3 & Colossians 2:10.

Finally, here are three Versions that render “εστε σεσῳσμενοι” in a way which better represents its grammar: ‘ye are having been saved’ (YLT); ‘you are having been saved’ (Diaglott); and **‘you are** (you continuously exist being) **folks having been delivered** (rescued; kept safe; saved; made whole; restored to your original state and condition) **so as to now be enjoying salvation’** (JMNT).

Appendix V

In Ephesians, the first occurrence of this **accusative** (direct object) **neuter demonstrative pronoun** is, “And because of this (τουτο), I . . . don’t cease giving thanks on behalf of you” (1:15-16). Paul affirms he’s praying for them because of “this” – “after having heard”[7] about their “faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints”, *realities forming his conception of them as converts* who desire to live the Christian life. Thus, he prayed for their understanding and growth.

Ephesians 2:8 contains the second incidence of "τουτο", but in the **nominative case** (subject), which conveys the concept discussed in this article.

It's third appearance is **accusative** (direct object) in form, "Therefore, I say this (τουτο) and testify in the Lord for you to no longer walk just as the gentiles walk in the futility of their mind" (Eph. 4:17). Immediately following Paul's appeal, we observe "this" which he speaks and testifies about is *how the gentiles live plus the formula believers can use to change this inherited lifestyle* through being "renewed by the spirit (or "Spirit") of your mind" as we "put off . . . the old man" and "put on the new man" (vv. 18-24).

The fourth time, an **accusative** (direct object) pronoun emerges in 5:5, "For, you are ones who know this (τουτο) that every fornicator or unclean person or coveter, which is (present tense) idolatry, doesn't have (present tense) inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." This dire statement is made just after the brethren are commanded to "become imitators of God", which includes *understanding those who carry on profligate lifestyles* (present tenses) *not*

consistent with Christian morality aren't believers nor headed toward future glory.

Next is Ephesians 5:17, "Because of this (τουτο – **accusative**), don't become mindless ones, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*." This order is based on *the adjacent illustrative explanation* just given which reminds Body members not to participate in the lifestyle of "darkness" from which they've come, but to "beware how accurately you walk . . . while redeeming the time because the days are evil" (5:6-21).

Sixth, the **nominative** form occurs in Ephesians 5:32, "this (τουτο) mystery is great, also I am speaking in reference to Christ and in reference to the church". In this instance, the pronoun agrees in case, gender and number with the noun "mystery" (μυστηριον – the subject). However, even when demonstrative pronouns directly refer to a specific noun, they aren't like personal or reflexive pronouns which *take the literary place of* the noun referred to. Therefore here, "τουτο" represents the *concept of the "mystery" relationship between Christ and His Church* which is devel-

oped throughout the Book (1:4-6, 15-23; 2:4-10, 14-21; 3:6, 12, 14-19; 4:4-6, 13-16, 20-21, 32; 5:1-2).

Moreover, as this noun is used in other sections, the once hidden but now revealed "mystery" truth enables us to *perceive our spiritual connection with Jesus* (1:7-10; 3:1-13; 6:19-20).

The seventh occurrence is, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this (τουτο – **nominative** subject) is right" (Eph. 6:1). *This dynamic* is one of the easiest to conceptualize. For, this occurrence *refers to every aspect of communication between "children" and their "parents"*.

Ephesians 6:8 contains an eighth instance which refers to the outlook Christian slaves are to maintain, "while knowing, if he might practice anything good, this (τουτο) each one will cause himself to receive back (middle voice)[1] from the Lord, whether slave or free." Just like in 5:32, this **accusative** neuter pronoun agrees in form with the accusative noun "good" (αγαθον - direct object), so "τουτο" modifies it. In this context, "good" refers to *positive works slaves do during this life* in addition to *how they'll be reward-*

ed for these acts at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For, Jesus will reward all believers' "good" works and burn up the evil ones which slaves or freemen produce after the point of salvation (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12-17; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10-13; Col. 3:22 – 4:1).

The ninth occurrence is, "Because of this (τουτο – **accusative**), take up the full armor of God in order that you might be enabled to stand against in the evil day, and after having chosen to be caused to produce all things, to stand" (Eph. 6:13).[1] Again, the *concept portrayed* by this demonstrative pronoun is easily seen in verses 10-12. It consists of the need to "put on the full armor of God" to fend off nonstop spiritual attacks from evil celestial principalities and powers.

Finally, Ephesians 6:22 states Paul dispatched Tychicus, "who I sent to you unto this thing (τουτο – **accusative**) itself (or *this very purpose*) in order that you might know the things surrounding us and he might encourage your hearts." The section uses this pronoun to define *these believers' understanding and encouragement which will result from knowing the entire goings-on of Paul and his associates*.

Those interested can check out the many other appearances of the nominative or accusative usages of the demonstrative pronoun “τουτο” which appear in the N.T. to confirm the basic meaning presented in this article.

END

Forthcoming Article: Re: ***Leadership in The Church***