



Bridging the GAP

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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

Introduction to Guilt, Anger and Pride

God has decreed the believer in Jesus Christ to be a partaker of many blessings: spiritual blessings, emotional blessings, physical blessings and material blessings. God delights in providing for His elect because of His gracious nature. These blessings are not only eternal in scope, they are meant to be enjoyed in this life. The Apostle Paul told Timothy that God richly supplies us all things to enjoy, and, although this may be difficult for many to believe, it is necessarily true. In fact, the believer in Christ must accept this premise by faith, Hebrews 11:6 (as he must accept all teachings of scripture), that God is a rewarder to those who diligently seek him.

Since the Justice of God has been satisfied by the propitious death of his Son, God is free to bless any member of the human race who has identified himself with Jesus Christ by placing his faith in Him. Once this has been done, God's grace can begin pouring out the many blessings He has to give, provided the believer operates on the principle of faith in his own life toward God. For grace is compatible only with faith and rejects all forms of human works, and grace is the only way in which God deals with men. Because the subject of faith is such an important issue in the Christian life, it will be dealt with thoroughly in another publication.

This study will emphasize the status of the believer's soul: What condition it is in? Does it have the capacity to accept, appreciate, and enjoy what God has for it? Or does it even want to be blessed? This may sound strange or even contradictory to some, but many believers refuse God's blessings. Because of some particular internal problem in the soul - some quirk of the soul - Many believers refuse to avail themselves of all the wonderful grace blessings and provisions that God has in store for them.

It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to focus on the three major agents that hold us back from going on to enjoy the wonderful grace life that God intended for us. That great gulf of **guilt, anger and pride** is the only thing separating us from the better life that God has in store for all believers, and this great gulf can be crossed by the bridge of faith and doctrine.

So my desire is to have a thorough study into the nature of guilt, anger and pride, revealing their manifestations, and then applying a biblical solution whereby we can overcome them.

The good life is there for all of us. Come; let us walk across the bridge together.

JMR Phillips Sr.
"Pastor Mike"

Guilt

There are many areas to overcome and set right in one's soul in the maturing process so the believer in Christ will be able to function wholly and enjoy life. God wants his children to be well balanced

and fully integrated and to do this means that each facet of the soul will have to be worked with and then brought into a harmonious working relationship.

The mind, the emotions, and the conscience all have to be brought around to the place of inner healing and adjustment to the norm and standard of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit as he subjects us to various trials, builds up our faith, teaches us, encourages us, and supplies us with the men and women who can minister to our many and complex needs.

Once the mind has been transformed to the divine viewpoint of life, through the teaching of Bible Doctrine, the emotions have been healed with the removal of their scars, and the conscience has been re-educated to the norm and standard of the grace and liberty we have in Jesus Christ, then the believer in Christ will be able to volitionally function in life as God intended him to do. He can go out in life ministering and functioning to his or her full potential, while experiencing the better life God has planned for him.

In this study we will want to consider the problems of guilt and the conscience. What is guilt? How does it function? What affects the conscience? How can guilt affect us? Where does guilt come from? How can the conscience be changed? How can biblical principles be applied? It is obvious that if one does not deal with the problem of guilt, he will never be able to enjoy a meaningful life with the desired accomplishments.

1. A Look at What Guilt is

To begin with, we need to see that guilt is one of the greater motivators in life. It can move men to give money, make decisions, help others out, do things they don't want to do, go places they don't want to go, and on and on. It can be, and often is one of the great manipulatory tools used by people. It has been used on us, and we have used it on others.

Pastors can use guilt manipulation to make their congregation [feel guilty because they don't] give more money, help out around the church, or teach Sunday School. Parents can use guilt to get their children to mind; and children can use guilt to keep from being spanked. People can make you feel guilty for doing what you want to do. They may imply that you are selfish or you don't care about the Lord, the church, and others. Often people with money are made to feel guilty because they have so much substance while millions of helpless children are starving each day.

Guilt is an insidious thing that can destroy lives, homes, souls, rob the individual of his happiness and peace, destroy incentives, and turn an individual's life into a sniveling nightmare. So, the sooner we understand and deal with it, the better off we will be. Prolonged guilt can affect, control, and ruin's life. It can control us to the point where we no longer volitionally function. It can affect our relationship with others, ourselves, and even God and ruin our lives through deterioration. In our study, it is necessary to know that there are two concepts connected with guilt - **real guilt, and a sense of guilt.**

Real guilt is when one is guilty of something; and the sense of guilt is when one feels guilty.

The former deals with objective facts; the latter deals with subjective emotions. Romans 2:15; 9:1, 20-23; 1 Corinthians 8:7; Hebrews 9:14,22.

Real guilt, or being guilty, is the state of one who has committed an offense, or failed in respect to one's duty or responsibility. It is when one is justly chargeable and responsible for a crime or sin and is liable and deserving of a punishment or penalty. Real guilt must be determined by objective facts. When one has been found responsible for committing an offense, then it can be rightly said he is guilty. First, the determination of real guilt must be arrived at by objective facts, not subjective emotions. The person must have actually committed an offense. Second, the guilt must be determined only by legally authorized persons. And third, some form of punishment generally accompanies it. This process involves judgment (an evaluation to determine guilt), the determination of guilt, the passing of the sentence which is his condemnation, and last, the carrying out of the sentence, which is his punishment. Judgment, determination of guilt, condemnation - proclaiming of the sentence, punishment - the carrying out of the sentence. This is real guilt, which is quite a bit different than "sensed" guilt.

Sensed guilt (feeling guilty) is marked self-reproach, often manifested in preoccupation with the moral correctness of one's own behavior, a sense of failing to measure up to a certain norm or standard, and the response of shame of the emotions to the pangs of the conscience. It is a subjective emotion that can be based upon either real or imagined guilt. One can "feel" guilty on the inside, regardless of whether he is guilty or not.

Sensed guilt presents a problem to a believer because his conscience and emotions do not always coincide with the reality of the situation. A person can be guilty of something, yet not feel guilty. He can also feel guilty, yet not actually be guilty. Or, he can be guilty of something, deal with it in the proper manner and still feel guilty over it for years to come. A person can also be made to feel guilty by other people, for no reason at all, and develop a complex from it for years to come, even into one's adult life.

Anything, therefore, that can affect us so dramatically must be understood and dealt with. In understanding the nature of guilt, we see that real guilt results from a bona fide source such as a court of law; while the sense of guilt develops from one's own soul.

2. The Source of Guilty Feelings

The reaction of guilt, that is, our sense of guilt, comes initially through the conscience where it, in turn, affects the emotions producing that sensation known as "feeling guilty", a sense of shame, or the sense of being blamed or at fault. Romans 8:1.

The Greek word for the conscience is *suneidesis*, a composite of two words: *sun* - with, and *oida* - to know, expressing a co-knowledge with one's self. The conscience is that facet of our soul which distinguishes between what it considers morally bad and what it considers morally good; then, commending or approving what it considers to be good and condemning or disapproving what it considers to be bad.

It is important to understand that in the eyes of the conscience, the issue is what it, the conscience, considers to be good or bad - not whether something is really good or bad in itself (fact). So in practice, the conscience could condemn something that is really good, if it considers it to be bad, or approve something that is bad, if it considers it to be good. The conscience, in its functioning, is not 100% reliable; rather, it can and does make errors in judgment.

The conscience is continually functioning as a miniature judge and jury, evaluating the action of the individual (or someone else). It determines guilt (judging), passes the sentence (condemning), and last, carries out the sentence (punishing). This last function plays an important role in our well being, health, production, and enjoyment of life.

The conscience is so structured that it will not only determine one's guilt and cause the individual to feel guilty, it also punishes the individual accordingly. The kinds of punishment can be many and varied: physiological (psychosomatic), emotional, behavioral, attitude problems, job problems, marriage and home related problems. It will not only deprive the individual of his joy in life but can also hinder him from going on to success by robbing him of his hope, enthusiasm, optimism and encouragement. Once the conscience has determined guiltiness, its main aim is to punish. It will punish the individual by any means it can; and it does! In punishing you, it will attempt to keep you from feeling good, being happy, having things, doing things, and enjoying things.

In fact, many a person's personal problems can be traced back to the erratic functioning of an overly sensitive or improperly instructed conscience. The conscience can be punishing you at the present time as the result of something it was influenced by many years in the past.

We have built into us the sense of what is right and wrong, with the sense of what is wrong should be punished, and what is right should be rewarded. This is the function of the conscience. It distinguishes between what it considers right from what it considers wrong, determines guilt or innocence, then rewards or punishes accordingly.

3. The Development of the Conscience

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."
John 8:9.

This passage gives us insight on how the conscience works and the things that shape it. The Scribes and Pharisees had caught a woman in the act of adultery and taken her to the Lord wanting him to judge her. But Christ didn't judge her; instead, he told them, *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* When they heard this statement, they became convicted in their conscience and left. They all knew that they, either mentally or overtly, were all guilty of adultery. Their consciences convicted them. The word for convict in Greek is *elencho*, which means to convict or rebuke with the idea of putting to shame. The conscience rebuked or condemned them. In a sense, the conscience acts like a adult scolding the child that has done something wrong but, instead of an adult scolding a child, the conscience is convicting the ego.

Basically, the conscience is the unwritten law of the soul, that place where we store our personal norms and standards - acts that we have judged to be morally and legally right or wrong. These acts are not necessarily right or wrong for the conscience to deem them so, it is **"how we look at them" that determines the reaction of the conscience**. In fact many, if not most, of the norms and standards that are stored in our conscience are there not as the result of us drawing our personal convictions; instead, they have been impressed upon us by other people. Family, friends, school chums, peer groups, churches, television, and society in general have all contributed to reactions of our conscience.

Probably the greatest influence on the conscience has been made on us in the early formative years by our families, who communicated to us, one way or another, the things they felt were right and wrong. This is basically a good thing because children need guidelines upon which to base their lives. Too often, however, there is error in judgment on the part of parents by not developing doctrinal norms and standards, and the children are apt to become impressed in harmful ways.

If we have been raised by strict, legalistic parents, the conscience will become developed strongly along the lines of their norms and standards. If parents scold and rebuke their children constantly over even the small matters, chances are the children will grow up feeling just about everything is wrong in life. If the parent, for example, consistently scolds the child for his actions or lack of actions, whether they are right or wrong, the child's conscience will be indelibly impressed that those things he was doing were wrong. His conscience could continue convicting him throughout life even over innocuous things because he has been made to believe they are bad or wrong.

It is in this manner that legalism, guilt complexes, and overly sensitive consciences are transmitted down from one generation to the next. After years of impressions through this type of conscience shaping, the child's conscience will simply reflect that of his parents or other people he has been exposed to.

The most harmful and frequent agent shaping the conscience of a child is probably the excessive use of scolding by the parents. Often parents resort to scolding children instead of spanking them, which wounds their consciences instead of their rear ends. While it takes a short while for the rear end to recover from a reasonable spanking, it may take many years, if ever, for a wounded, overly-sensitive conscience to recover. If a child is exposed to continual scoldings by the parents over everything, it can prick the child's conscience so deeply that they will inculcate into him seriously a sense of deep shame, guilt, and unworthiness as a person. This sense of guilt and unworthiness is usually carried into adult life. That in itself is bad enough, but remember that guilty feelings generally invoke punishment as well, so many people are afflicted throughout much of their lives with self-induced misery. All this as a result of the sense of shame and unworthiness ingrained into them by the incessant scoldings. Heb. 9:9,14; 10:2,22; 13:18; 1 Cor. 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27-29.

If an individual's conscience has had excessive input of impressions that he is no good, worthless, bad, or won't amount to anything either by parents, friends, society, or even religion, then the conscience will finally agree and carry out its functions of determining guiltiness, passing sentence, and punishing him. After all, the conscience can only work with the knowledge it has received. Even if the knowledge is faulty or incorrect, it will still come to its own conclusion of guilt.

The shaping of the conscience, as we have seen, is a process that goes on over the years of one's life. The conscience reacts to sin - or what it has been told is sin. If it has been led to believe that eating meat, going to movies, or any other thing is sinful, then to the conscience, that thing is sin, and it will condemn the believer. A good example of this is the case of the believers at Corinth with regard to eating of meat sacrificed to idols. For most of their lives, they were raised to believe that idols were real and living. (You might wonder how they could still feel that way after becoming Christians but, remember, many were new believers.) To please the Lord, they did not want to eat sacrificed meat. If they had eaten the meat, their consciences would have condemned them due to conclusions that this specific act was wrong. The Apostle Paul assured them it wasn't wrong, but nevertheless advised them to refrain if it bothered their consciences. 1 Corinthians 8.

On the other hand, there were other believers who were still having illicit sexual intercourse and fornication in the Temple with priests and priestesses. Even though this was definitely forbidden by the Lord, many of them continued for they did not see anything wrong with it, having been raised from youth to believe that it was the normal thing to do and considering, also, their consciences were not bothered.

From these two examples, we can see then how the conscience is prone to operate incorrectly. Whoever said let your conscience be your guide didn't have all the facts! Even though the Christian is not to abuse his conscience (for he must still live with himself), he is to let the Word of God be his guide.

4. Re-educating the Conscience

As we have seen from our study, the conscience has been shaped by many things in the past - some good and some bad - with the result that everyone's conscience malfunctions to one degree or another. Only Christ's conscience worked correctly. Fortunately, the believer in Christ who is under doctrinal teaching is not totally at the mercy of an erroneous or malfunctioning conscience. Rather, he can re-educate the conscience along the lines of doctrinal norms and standards, which will not only give him a greater degree of peace and flexibility in living the Christian life, it will also help him to stand more firmly against the order of the devil who delights in using our overly-sensitive consciences to depress us or make us guilt-ridden through his continual accusations and condemnations for our sins and failures.

In this process of re-educating the conscience, we need to see that the dictator of the soul is to be the new man (inner man, new nature, new creation, human spirit) who, through the filling of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of God's Word, will rise to supremacy and dominance over the soul. Even though the Christian has a conscience, emotions, intellect, etc., these facets of our being are to be brought into subjection to the new nature as one grows in the Word of God.

This is not to say that we are to bully the conscience or continually go against it, but rather to try to live with it as we bring it in subjection to the teaching of doctrine.

5. The Biblical Solution to Sin and Guilt

We need to always remember, when dealing with the problems of sin and guilt in the Christian life, that although there are many things in the conscience rightly condemns, there are also many times when it condemns unjustly.

In dealing with the problem of sin, guilt, and the conscience, we need to look first of all at where the unsaved man stands before God. He not only is guilty before God, in that he is not right before Him, his conscience convicts him of such. Romans 2:15. The unsaved man is following the same pattern of his father, Adam, in the Garden of Eden. Adam knew he had done something wrong when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and when the Lord came into the garden, Adam headed the other way. The feeling of guilt, (anger of the conscience) tends to cause us to run away from the Lord.

The conscience knows that something wrong has been done and cannot bring itself to stand before the holy and righteous God. Basically, we know that God is holy and, as such, abhors and

condemns sin. So when we do sin, or prior to our salvation in our state as sinners, our conscience is continually nagging us, condemning us, that we are not right with God.

Even under the old covenant that God had with Israel with all of its sacrifices for sins, there was still the problem of sin and its consequential guilt. Even the Levitical sacrifices did not perfect the conscience of the Jew. Hebrews 9:9. This problem of the guilt-stricken conscience led many of the Israelites to seek out their own brand of works in a futile attempt to solve their guilty consciences, Hebrews 9:14, a solution that many still resort to today. Being good, going to church or a synagogue, giving money, helping out in the community, etc. are all dead works that won't satisfy the conscience.

But, when a person believes in Jesus Christ as his own personal savior from sin, his heart is freed from the influence of a guilty conscience before God, because the conscience has been cleansed by the blood of Christ. When a person receives Christ as his savior, he knows that his soul is right before God, because he has been cleansed of his sins.

This is one of the remarkable things that happen when a person gets saved. The burden of a guilty conscience is lifted, and he knows now that he is right with God.

This could only come about because of the work of Jesus Christ on his behalf for when Christ left Heaven and came to earth to be a man, he lived his life as a perfect, righteous man (which God required of all mankind). At the end of his life, he went to a cross where God punished him for all of our sins and trespasses, It was there on the cross that God dealt with the problem of sin once and for all. Through the shed blood of his own Son, God satisfied his righteous nature.

But God raised Jesus up from the dead and seated him at his right hand as the author of salvation to everyone who will believe in Him. If they do believe in Him, God will not only forgive and cleanse them of their sins, he will also cleanse their consciences from guilt. (In case any unbeliever says that God doesn't exist, remember that his conscience will contradict what he says either by accusing him or by defending himself). Romans 2:15. But the unbeliever does have this promise from God, that if he believes in Jesus Christ as his own personal savior, God will forgive him and cleanse his conscience from guilt.

But what about the plight of the Christian? For it is obvious that Christians do sin and occasionally have problems with guilt, even though God doesn't want them to. This is where the intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ comes in as our High Priest, and where the promises of God play an important factor in helping the Christian deal with sin, guilt and his conscience.

First of all, we need to approach this problem from the stance of real guilt. Real guilt must be established through a bona fide, authorized manner. If guilt is determined, then a sentence of condemnation may be passed, and the resultant punishment. Now in the case of believers in Christ, there are only two individuals in Heaven and on earth qualified to judge them, God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ - not the world, not the angels, not the devil, not even the church, just God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Remember, for real guilt to be in existence, there must be a legal sentence of condemnation first! Hear what the scripture says . . . *"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? (That is a legal accusation). God, the one who justifies?"* Romans 8:33.

This passage is telling us that before guilt can be determined and condemnation levied upon a man or woman, there must be a legal accusation. But God will never bring this legal accusation against his children, because He is the one who justifies them (declares righteous). *"Who is the one who condemns? (That is, passes the sentence upon us.) Christ Jesus, he who died, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, yes who also intercedes for us". Romans 8:34.*

Christ will not condemn us either because he is seated at his Father's right hand interceding for us, acting as our defense attorney against the accusations of the devil. Revelations 12:10.

You see, in this problem of sin, guilt and condemnation, there must be legal accusation and condemnation by authorized parties if the Christian is to have real guilt before God. And seeing that there is *"no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"*, Romans 8:1, and that the only two authorized individuals refuse to charge us with guilt, the believer in Christ is not guilty before God and can never be.

Applying these principles to our own lives, and making our steadfast stand upon them, ought to bring to the believer a great degree of peace in his soul and help free him from the wiles of the devil in his attempt to accuse and condemn us.

But the Christian has another problem, and that is the one of sensed guilt, where he "feels" guilty or ashamed over something he has done. And it is over this matter that Satan defeats many Christians. For one reason or another, they fall into sin, they know they are not to sin, but they do it anyway. And now Satan goes to work on the conscience, accusing them, blaming them, condemning them, getting them to "feel" guilty, until they are utterly miserable and defeated.

That is when the Christian must exercise his priesthood and stand firmly on the promises of God, even to the putting of his conscience in place if it disagrees with God's Word by continually reminding it of certain truths. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9.

If and when the believer does sin, he must take advantage of God's grace provision in his own priesthood by agreeing with God that what he had done was wrong. And then to take his faith and stand in the fact that God has forgiven and cleansed him of his sins.

Now usually believers get the first part down fairly well, they confess their sins. But so often, their conscience still bothers them over their sins, even though God has forgiven them. In this case we see that the conscience is functioning erratically and is totally in the wrong, for it is still passing its own verdict and has not bowed to the verdict of the Supreme Court of Heaven: "Forgiven". Now how does one handle his conscience in a case like this? How does he bring it into line with the divine viewpoint?

If we loved people's souls, we wouldn't do things that make them feel guilty. 1 Corinthians 8. The answer is found in the principle of faith as taught in Romans 14:23, *"But he who doubts is condemned (by his own conscience) if he eats, because his eating is not from faith, and whatever is not from faith is sin."*

When faith is exercised over any matter concerning the Word of God in relation to the believer's conscience, the conscience very peacefully submits itself to the human spirit, and the believer is at peace with himself and happy as well (v.22).

In applying this to himself, the believer who has sinned and confessed his sin must take by faith that God has totally forgiven him, cleansed him, and forever forgotten what it was that he had done wrong. He may have to do this several times, but eventually the conscience will bow to the Word of God in quiet submission as the believer accepts the Word of God in the matter by faith.

Perhaps you have sinned and made a total mess out of your life and everyone else's. If you have, you are not the first one to do it. For the Bible is a history book of God's people who did it too. God doesn't condone these things, but they are nevertheless a reality of human behavior. So what do you do? Turn to God and say, "Yes Father, I have done this sin or that sin, but I know that you do not condemn me for it, and I accept your forgiveness and cleansing and know that you still love me as much as you always have. Therefore, I do not condemn myself either, but love myself as you still do and accept myself with all my faults and failings".

6. The Need for Approval

If the Christian is going to have any happiness in life, if he is going to be enabled to accomplish the things in life that he wants to do and find fulfillment in what he does, if he is going to have enjoyment of life and the things that God gives him, then he must approve of who he is and what he does.

If there is approval, there will be a sense of self-worth, self-confidence, happiness and enjoyment of life. If there isn't, if all he receives from himself and others close to him is condemnation and disapproval, then there will be no happiness, no enjoyment, nothing accomplished with no desire to do so, and nothing but misery, frustration, introspection, lack of confidence, and a lack of desire to go out and try new things, with the inevitable result that one's life becomes one of merely existing instead of living.

The need for approval is stated in Romans 14:22. It says, "*Happy is the man who does not condemn himself in what he approves*", showing us that happiness comes about when there is no condemnation in one's life. This is because human nature is so constructed that it needs approval to be happy and enjoy life.

Basically, there are only two individuals we need to look to for approval in our lives, the Lord and ourselves. But all too often we look to others for our approval. We want very much for our families and close friends to approve of us and of what we would like to do or be. This is quite natural, seeing that from our childhood we were trained to look to these individuals for our sources of approval that we so desperately needed.

In fact, it is from these people that we derived our own concept of ourselves and our own self-worth. If they approved of us, we felt good about ourselves; but if they disapproved, we felt badly about ourselves. And so strong was the desire to have them approve of us, accept us, and love us, that we would just about do anything to get it. We conformed to group peer-pressure, wore certain clothes, talked a certain way, and did whatever the group wanted. Or, in the case of the parents, we

would do whatever was told to us, or even implied, even to the point of changing our personalities, just to get their love and approval.

And all too often, parental approval never came as the result of being who you were, their child, but as the result of observing a certain behavior code. We had to act a certain way or be a certain way to gain acceptance, love and the much-needed approval, which left the child with many problems to deal with in his adult life.

When a person becomes a believer in Christ and begins to mature, he needs to develop his own sense of approval out of his relationship to the Lord and what the Lord says in the Bible. He needs to realize that his love, acceptance and approval by God does not come as the result of him being a "good little boy or girl", or that he has a certain type of personality or behavior (conservative, subdued, refined or whatever), or that he works a lot, studies a lot, gives a lot, or performs one or more of thousands of other things. Instead, he needs to realize that God has fully accepted him, loves him, and approves of him because he has placed his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior. His identification with Christ is the basis of his approval.

As the believer matures, he will be looking more and more to the Lord, for his approval, and developing his own norms and standards based upon what the Bible teaches and not upon what society, his family, or friends tell him he should or shouldn't do. And in so doing, he will change from trying to please everyone to only trying to please the Lord.

This will give the believer great strength and flexibility in life regarding what he does. For as he studies the Word, he will find out that there are many things that he can do in life that are not sinful in God's eyes, and he can do them all in clear conscience before God and himself. Romans 14.

In Romans 14:22 it states, "*Happy is the man who does not condemn himself*". This condemnation is the function of the conscience judging and condemning the believer over his behavior. Put into the present participle, it shows it to be an ongoing pattern of one's life, constantly condemning himself over what he allows or approves. So we can see immediately that the believer in Christ is going to have to stop condemning himself over what he approves or allows in his life, keeping in mind that God doesn't condemn him. Romans 8:1.

The word "*dokimazo*" (approve) is to test or try something with a view toward approval. It came from the idea of putting ore in a crucible over a fire to melt down the gold within - showing that one anticipated the gold. In our case it means to test something to see if it has any intrinsic good in it, that it isn't bad or sinful.

What is in view here is putting to the test the many things that we would like to do or have that the Bible doesn't have any specific instructions on. There are many things that the Bible prohibits the believer from doing such as drunkenness, drugs, immorality, and others, but there are thousands of things that we can do under the doctrine of Christian liberty that there is no specific prohibition against. So when the believer is in doubt on these things, he is to examine them in the light of scripture and, if they are okay, then go ahead. This is the idea of "to test" or "to approve" in *dokimazo*.

But after examining something and approving it, the key to keeping the conscience from feeling guilty and condemning itself is faith. The believer must apply his faith and believe what the Bible

says. It all comes down to an issue between the new man and the conscience. If one doubts, his conscience kicks in with guilt and condemnation. If one believes, the new man takes over with peace and happiness.

And not only must the believer apply faith in the area of Christian liberty, but also in all the doctrines related to his relationship to God and Christ. He must believe that God has forgiven his sins and cleansed him, that he has a future inheritance with Christ, that God is for him and not against him, that God loves him, is faithful to him and will never abandon or forsake him, and that God does not condemn him but has declared him righteous. He must change his whole outlook on life and himself from one that has been inculcated into him by other people over to one that is built upon what God thinks about him. And this is where his faith comes in. As he studies the Word of God, he will discover all of God's wonderful attitudes of grace, mercy, love and acceptance of him and, in so doing, re-educate and shape his conscience.

Anger

1. Origin of the Problem

In the beginning of the human race God created man in his own image when he said, *"Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness . . . and God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* Genesis 1:26,27. In this act of creation, mankind was brought into existence as living beings, who not only were intellectual creatures, but who also had emotions and volition as well. (The author recognizes the separate creative acts for the man and the woman but looks at it in the whole for the purpose of showing that both creatures are identical in their soul formats).

Now when God created man, he built into him the emotions that he possessed only on a model scale. Even though it is difficult for us to readily see that God does have emotions and feelings, we do see them manifested in Jesus Christ, the second member of the Godhead. Christ was revealed in the Gospels as being kind, gentle, merciful, and compassionate. We saw him cry in grief over the loss of his dear friend, Lazarus; we saw his grief over the hardness of heart of the Jews who rejected his salvation. We also saw his anger at the religious leaders of his day and his hatred of their legalism, and we saw his love for his own disciples. The testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the wilderness generation of Israel was that he loathed them, and that he was angry with them. Psalms 95:10; Hebrews 3:10; Matthew 21:12; Exodus 20:5.

Some may feel that we cannot ascribe human emotions to God. But where did we men and women get these varying emotions, if not from God originally. The problem is that at one time the emotions of the human race functioned perfectly in the persons of Adam and Eve, but because of their transgression of God's commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a curse was placed upon them and at that moment they received an old sin nature and were spiritually separated from God. Genesis 3. When this happened, every facet of their human natures was thrown into disarray. They became fearful, frightened, deceptive, self-justifying, and liars. And as the yeast permeates the entire loaf of bread, so the influx of sin permeated their entire nature so that man became a fallen being with a totally depraved nature. Now, instead of functioning smoothly, perfectly and beautifully as God had originally intended, his emotions, intellect and volition as well as his physical being, were thrown into disharmony. Instead of worshiping and fellowshiping with his Creator, he is all wrapped up in self-love, self-pity, and self-justification,

self-condemnation, and self-gratification. He is self-seeking, self-serving, hateful, hating, bitter, vindictive, implacable, unmerciful, envious, covetous, jealous, resentful, angry, worrying, fearful, proud, boastful, and arrogant.

But God, in his great love for fallen man, reconciled us back to himself in the person of Jesus Christ, his own dear Son, who gave his life for us on the cross paying the penalty for our sins, who died, was raised from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God, being the source of salvation for all those who place their faith in him. But even though the Christian has deliverance from the coming wrath of God, he still has to live in the corrupted body with all the inherited problems until he receives a new and glorified body. But he does not have to be held down and ruled by these personal problems, for God has made a way of deliverance through the indwelling Holy Spirit, a new nature and Bible Doctrine.

2. Is Anger Wrong?

This is a good question, especially in these times when people equate anger, violent activity and harshness as something negative and to be avoided. There is a real and justifiable anger that is right and should be exercised, and there is the wrong type of anger.

A misunderstanding about wrath and anger, their causes, effects and uses, has led our nation and its leaders into instability in virtually all sectors of society. It was not wrong to be angry at the Japanese when they bombed Pearl Harbor and to violently bomb their cities and kill their armies. It is not wrong to be mad at nations or people who threaten to destroy you, your wives and children, your private property and way of life and to seek the necessary means to protect these things. It is not wrong to be angry at rapists, murderers, kidnappers and the other criminal elements of society and to deprive them of their life or liberty through the due process of law.

If society wishes to be healthy and stable, the people must demand of its leaders that they reward those who do good in life and punish those who do evil; this is justice. But instead, criminals are pampered and set free, while their victims are left to suffer the rest of their lives. Murderers and rapists are walking the streets as free men, often continuing their depravities, while their victims are in the grave or emotionally damaged for life. The hardworking middle class are being increasingly burdened by a monstrous bureaucracy, ever-increasing governmental regulations, and a government-caused inflation as they seek to support loved ones and family, in addition to those non-productive members of society who won't work, and the super rich who avoid paying taxes. It is not wrong to be angry at these men in charge who are selling our nation down the drain, who do not seek every means possible to ensure our national defense and give our men in the military the very finest in arms and defense. It is not wrong to be angry at false teachers who are leading men and women into a Christ less eternity. This was demonstrated by Christ in his rebuke of the Pharisees.

The ancients believed, as the Stoics did, that anger was passion not to be suppressed but was one of the passions given to man that filled the sails of his soul; and when moderated and guided by reason and right, it was a right affection that motivated men (as in our retaliation over Pearl Harbor); and that the Bible not only permitted it, but on occasion, demanded it. We see from the Bible and history that God has wiped out entire civilizations of people in his great wrath and in the future, hundreds of millions of men and women are going to die under the wrath of God, from which wrath Jesus Christ will deliver us. 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

The Christian is even commanded to *"be angered and stop sinning"*. Ephesians 4:26. But all too often the anger we encounter is the wrong kind. We get angry for the wrong reasons, (something which God never does); or, our anger proceeds out of the old sin nature, as the result of losing one's temper; is directed at the wrong individuals; or it is pushed down inside of us where it seethes like a boiling cauldron. So the Christian needs to have a understanding of the right types of anger as well as the unrighteous kind of anger. "Be angry, yet in this anger of yours, let no sinful element to intermingle", (a righteous anger with no contaminating influence of sin).

An interesting case of justified anger and unjustified anger occurred at the same moment in time when David and his men were taking the ark of God from the house of Abinadab to the threshing floor of Nacon. Whereupon Uzzah took hold of the ark and was struck down by Jehovah for impugning righteousness, and David's anger was as a result of losing a friend. 2 Sam. 6:1-8. God's anger ensued when his holiness was violated, and retribution to the responsible parties followed as when he afflicted the Philistines with hemorrhoids when they had his ark in their cities, 1 Sam. 5:1-6, 9; and when he killed over 50,000 Bethshemeshites for violating his holiness. 1 Sam. 6:19-21.

We see that Nehemiah became very angry, justifiably so, when he returned to Israel to engineer the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, along with the men and women, who were helping him, were putting themselves in debt, their children into slavery, and paying high interest rates to the ones who had money but wouldn't lift a finger to help. Then Nehemiah did a most marvelous thing with his anger. He directed it to those people who had it coming. He didn't bury it inside himself or get mad at the congregation but, rather, confronted the guilty parties. This is a righteous form of anger and a correct form of channeling it. Nehemiah 5:1-13.

Another case of justifiable and unjustifiable anger occurred when God was going to destroy the entire city of Ninevah because of the wickedness within, which of course suited Jonah just fine because he hated the Ninevites. But he became angry when God didn't destroy them after they had received Christ as their Savior. Jonah's anger was based upon selfish motives. Jonah 1:2;3;4:4-9.

We see Jesus Christ in the New Testament being angry toward Satan, Matthew 4:10; 16:23, against the self-righteous Pharisees, Matthew 12:34, and against the self-righteous, legalistic, hard-hearted Pharisees who were accusing him for healing a man on the Sabbath, Mark 3:5. Even Paul became very angry when he saw the idols in Athens. Acts 17:16.

We see then there are right and wrong manifestations of anger. Bible Doctrine and Christian growth will give us discernment between the two. In either case, it is not something to be held onto or suppressed into the soul but, rather, anger is to be short-lived. *"Be angry, and sin not."* *"Let not the sun go down on your anger."* Ephesians 4:26.

3. Categories of Anger

Basically, in this study I don't intend to develop the nature of justifiable anger; I am simply attempting to document its existence. What we are mostly concerned with in this writing is the inherent anger in man due to his old sin nature, being at one time a child of wrath. Eph. 2:3. Even though a Christian has been born-again and possesses a new nature, still living in his body is the seat of the old nature. And because of this, he will be plagued with the old nature's depravities and anger will be one of his chief problems until he ascends to be with the Christ. Galatians 5:19-21.

So to be more thoroughly able to grasp the problem of anger and deal with it, we will first of all define and analyze the six categories or, rather, manifestations of anger that occur in our lives according to Ephesians 4:31. We can then identify them and take appropriate remedial action.

Bitterness ~ pikria

The word *pikria* comes from what is sharp, pointed, or bitter. This relates to an experience of something unpleasant, distasteful, undesired, or painful, either physically or spiritually.

If anyone has ever eaten an unprocessed olive from the tree, a green persimmon, or has had to take Castor oil, he knows very well what bitterness is. In the sphere of the soul, a similar parallel takes place. Events and experiences relating to you affect your soul. Bitterness is the negative, pointed reaction one has over having to undergo something unpleasant and unwanted. It is often our reaction to being disappointed, being let down, not getting our way in some matter, or of being disciplined by God. The intensity of the bitterness is dependent upon the individual's sensitivity and reaction to the experience. It can go from a mild displeasure all the way to a total abhorrence of what one is experiencing, as with Job.

Bitterness or resentment is found frequently in the family unit between husband and wife, parents and children and in sibling rivalry. A husband often becomes embittered at his wife, especially when she does not submit to his leadership in the home. Colossians 3:18-19. Men should keep in check the occupational hazards of marriage. Many is the wife who expects too much from her husband, nagging constantly at him for his shortcomings, which in turn opens avenues for bitterness toward her by the husband. Bitterness by the wife toward her husband is frequently due to subsurface resentment. Some resent being under a man's authority; others resent their husbands because the husbands have not provided the things in life they have desired (nice home, car, good furniture, color television, and financial security). Others are resentful that their husbands have never shaped into the spiritual leaders, fathers, and/or husbands they wanted. Children can become embittered when they are made to do things they don't want to do (clean their rooms, do the dishes, and help around the house); again, resentment against authority. We also see them bitter toward their brothers and sisters, usually because of the jealousy. Learning how to handle these problems will be covered later on.

We see that bitterness is our initial reaction over having to do something we don't want to do or go through something that we don't want to go through; a negative, pointed reaction against something that we find unpleasant, distasteful or displeasing. It is a natural reaction of the human nature but is neither good, right or beneficial to our well being. It is a condition that can arise at any time; therefore, to be on the alert, oversight is needed, Hebrews 12:15, otherwise it can be lodged in the subconscious over a period of years. It is very similar to having a sharp-pointed thorn or splinter under the flesh where it begins to fester and infect the surrounding tissue. Bitterness is the beginning of the defilement of the soul with wrath and anger and, if not corrected, will saturate and infect one's entire soul. Bitterness is a common occurrence in many elderly people who feel that life has passed them by, that no one cares for them anymore, or that they have never accomplished any of their dreams and feel they have nothing except death to look forward to.

Wrath ~ thumos

The next level is *thumos* (wrath). Bitterness works inside of a person producing an inner indignation, an inward agitation of the feelings, a boiling, turbulent commotion of the soul where one begins to seethe on the inside. One may appear to be normal on the outside, while the inside is fuming mad. This type of anger can build up and explode into a loss of temper later on, or can settle down into a vindictive type of anger laden with retaliation.

With this type of inner hostility, the anger at someone or something is bottled up on the inside. It is a little dishonest when you don't let the person you are mad at know how you really feel toward him, and deceitful because you even deny to yourself how you really feel toward someone such as a father, mother, husband or wife. You cannot understand how you can love and be angry with someone simultaneously.

Wrath is a very harmful, negative emotion that will eat you up on the inside, destroy your fellowship with God and other believers, and hinder your ability to enjoy life. It can be difficult to deal with because of the propensity of the one having *thumos* to deny that he has it. It is difficult to see this dynamic in yourself, especially in cases involving relationships where there has been long-term, beneath the surface anger. But once wrath is brought to the surface to be recognized, identified and confessed to God, then the therapeutic process of inner healing will take place as one exercises forgiveness and a release of the wrath.

Wrath is a product of the old sin nature and is indigenous to all humanity, for we were at one time children of wrath, hateful and hating one another. But now the believer in Christ does not have to be ruled by his nature of wrath but can let the peace of Christ rule through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13; Colossians 3:14-17.

Anger ~ orge

The next level or manifestation of inner hostility is *orge* (anger). This is where the seething or inner fuming becomes more pronounced, settled in one's soul, and tends to be vindictive in nature. It occurs when an individual becomes angry at someone, wants to "get even" with him and attempts to hurt him with thoughts rather than with words or fists.

Some individuals are more vocal and physical with their anger, and others tend to restrict their anger throughout life. The effect is just as damaging, especially to the one having and holding on to the anger. Often this type of anger is not only difficult to detect in oneself, it is difficult to identify toward whom the anger is actually directed.

Anger is one's natural reaction toward others who have inflicted hurt by offense or rejection. Individuals may have maligned you or spread vicious gossip about you. You in turn may have had hostile thoughts toward them in your attempt to hurt them back. Perhaps you were cheated out of money that was owed you, and you became angry in retaliation. Perhaps you were deserted by your husband or wife for someone else, and in your great hurt, you became angry and tore them apart with your thoughts.

Anger is a dynamic that can be very destructive to the one having it and is to be forsaken. The Lord says to cease anger and forsake wrath. It leads to only evil-doing. The Christian must remember that it is virtually impossible to go through life and avoid being hurt or offended by people. We live on a sin-cursed earth surrounded by people with old sin natures, and people are going to say and do

things that will hurt us. We need to be on the alert for negative reactions - bitterness, wrath, and anger. If we find ourselves caught up in anger, then we need to exercise forgiveness to the offending parties and go to God in confession of the sin. Thus we will receive forgiveness from Him, and release our wrathful attitude toward them and the grudge against them.

Clamor ~ krauge

The next level of hostility or its manifestation is *krauge*. This is where the anger builds up to such a point that an argument breaks out between two people. The reason for the argument is immaterial, because when someone is angry he is not logical in his thinking. Typical examples are the quarreling, bickering, and spats that go on around the home between husband and wife, or between parents and children.

The progression goes something like this: Hubby comes home from the job after being chewed out by the boss. He has reacted bitterly about this and is a little hot under the collar. He walks in the door, kicks off his shoes, and goes to the bedroom where the wife cheerily says something to him like, "Honey, how do you like the way I arranged the living room?" In reply, he snaps back, "It stinks. Why didn't you leave it the way it was?" She reacts in bitterness and starts to get angry at the old grouch because he doesn't appreciate her and never takes an interest in the house - an old-fashioned quarrel is in action. He begins to lecture her on the merits of leaving the furniture alone, and she nags at him for his insensitivity and thoughtlessness. The real culprits in this example are the wrath and anger that developed on the job, which were not dealt with.

Even though in *krauge* there is shouting, arguing and bickering, it doesn't have the destructiveness and deep seated bitterness that wrath and anger have. It ruins the tranquility of the home for awhile, but is rectified when hubby and wife kiss and make up. It also doesn't carry the element of personal attack as does the next level of hostility, *blasphemeo* (slander).

If you have ever seen children arguing in the street over the rules in a football game or the like, you have seen a good example of *krauge*.

Slander ~ *blasphemeo*

The next level and manifestation of hostility is *blasphemeo*. This has the likeness of abusive, injurious speech. It is the strongest form of personal mockery. This is an attempt to run someone down with words, to personally take him apart by speech. There will be name calling, swearing, attacks on one's ancestry, and the bringing out of weaknesses and faults.

Blasphemeo is the supreme attempt to hurt, inflict pain or destroy another person, but instead of using fists or a visible instrument, the weapon used is words. It can become so vicious that people's souls are literally crushed under the onslaught. Anger becomes so pronounced that instead of beating the opponent's body, his soul is beat with words - hard, cruel, cutting words.

The pattern is the same: resentment over some incident, getting angry, a quarrel breaks out; but instead of forgiving one another, the argument becomes more and more vocal and violent. There is screaming at one another, each being livid with rage, past sins and failures are again brought out into the fray, and the words are specially designed to hurt each other. She is sensitive about her weight and graying hair, so he reminds her how fat and dumpy she is getting. He is sensitive about

losing his manly physique and losing his drive, so she reminds him that he is not the man he used to be. And after one nerve is touched, they proceed to another; they bring up old boyfriends and girlfriends with accusation and suspicions.

This manifestation of anger simply crushes each other's souls and leaves them exhausted and empty. They have been at each other's throats with words so destructive and hurting that it will take some time to mend the wounds. If they had made peace with each other when it was still a minor quarrel, the harmony and tranquility would be restored quickly to the home, but this type of outbreak will require more time to overcome.

Blasphemeo is the next level down from the stage involving fistfights, throwing things at one another, or murder. It is the attempt of a person under the control of the flesh nature to annihilate another person's soul with words. One of the main purposes of showing the progression or pattern of the development of anger is that Christian's will be able to recognize it in its early stages and can take the appropriate means of dealing with it that God makes possible through his grace.

All Malice ~ kakia

This category of anger is related to all evil. As the vicious spiral of bitterness and anger goes higher and higher, it worsens to the point where one completely loses his temper and resorts not to words, or destructive thinking, but rather to physical violence. Here we find beatings, barroom brawls, fights on the football field, murders, wife-beatings, child-beatings, and other forms of evil.

But anger manifested in this stage does not limit itself to physical violence. Many spouses have committed adultery with another person because they have been angry with their mates. This is their way of getting even and hurting the other person. Children who are mad and bitter at their parents will break the law, run around with the wrong crowd, and do things around the home to hurt their parents. A common tactic is to withhold love from their parents. For various reasons, they feel their parents have let them down, and this is their manner of punishing them.

The variety of ways that anger manifests itself are many, and sometimes they are difficult to pin down, but the Lord in his grace is faithful in revealing these things to us. Job 36:8-16. God wants us to stop grieving the Holy Spirit by these forms of anger and, instead, start becoming kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving just as God in Christ has forgiven us. Ephesians 4:30-32.

4. Manifestations of Anger

As mentioned before, there is a right kind of anger, the type that God expresses, and a wrong kind of anger, which is the expression so common in sinful man originating from the flesh nature. This anger is irrational, uncontrollable, and often very destructive.

In considering the causes of a righteous anger, we need to look at the relationship of God to his Old Testament people, Israel. Israel's relationship to Jehovah was that of a wife to her husband, a wife who was guilty of adultery because of her continuous idolatry. Because of his great love for Israel, God became jealous and, consequently, he poured forth his wrath upon her. Some feel that wrath and love are incompatible, but we see from this example that they go hand in hand; that one of the causes of righteous anger is a love that is despised. Psa.78: 58; 78:5; Ezek.16:16; 23:32. One must remember that the Christian's relationship to God is not to a creed or a religion, but to a living

individual who is holy, who has a personal interest in us, who loves us and has personal feelings toward us. If the believer in Christ does not reciprocate love toward God but, instead, goes whoring off after idols, we provoke his jealousy, and it is expressed in anger. God actually sets himself up in battle array against the reversionistic believer. *"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."* James 4:4.

Another cause for the arousal of God's wrath is the contemptuous despoliation of his righteous character. We saw an example of God's anger aroused when Uzzah treated the Ark with contempt. 2 Samuel 6:6-7. We see God's anger directed to all those who are outside of Christ, having never adjusted to his righteousness positionally by coming to Christ in faith. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* John 3:36. God's anger burned at the wilderness generation because they refused to believe God and walk in his faithfulness and grace. Hebrews 3:10-17. This lesson is applicable toward all Christians today refusing to walk by faith in God's promises spurning his grace and mercy. This action is called reversionism or backsliding, and if the action is not corrected in the believer's life, he will continue until he is taken out of this life under the sin unto death. James 4:4-10; 1 John 5:16; Revelations 3:19-20.

There is a right manifestation of anger over the reversionism we see in our nation, and toward that group of Internationalists, who attempt to destroy the biblical principles by which we govern ourselves in the land. It is right to be angry at hostile nations that seek to destroy our way of life, but this anger would be best put to use by directing it in constructive channels, electing men that adhere to biblical principles, adequately preparing our military defenses for being second to none, teaching Bible Doctrine and exposing every facet of evil on the national and international scene, actively resisting the satanic forces of evil in every way possible, and taking into our souls the mind of Christ and the Word of God.

The most common form of anger experienced by the Christian is the expression of his flesh nature, so we need to consider the various manifestations of the anger arising in us, a way of detecting the presence of anger in our lives, which can be difficult at times due to the subtleness and various forms in which anger manifests itself.

Bitterness, wrath, and anger often spring up in our lives as a result of "not getting our way" in some matter or another. We didn't get to do what we wanted to do, we didn't get something we wanted, or things haven't worked out for us in life as we expected them to, so we become bitter and angry. Generally this happens to people when life presents problems such as loss of job, pressure, poor health, car repair, etc.. It seems there is pressure everywhere with friction and suffering. Sometimes it starts out with a mild irritability, but if there is no end in sight, it can lead to bitterness, etc.. This was the situation in Philippi with the friction that existed between Euodia and Synteché, so Paul commanded them to live in harmony. Philippians 1:29-30; 4:2; 2:14.

Because the more inward forms of anger are hard to detect, we can spot their presence by having insight into their forms of manifestation. The more readily identified forms of anger in quarrels, shoutings, cursings, name-calling, and physical violence are obvious. Deep-seated resentment such as bitterness, wrath, and vindictive anger will be manifested in the following three basic areas:

Self Pity

When individuals do not get their way in life over something he or she really wanted, they often become angry. Instead of feeling angry at the moment, we start to feel sorry for ourselves because we can't do or have what we want. We see this in children when they are not allowed to have something they really wanted and start up the old "nobody loves me" routine. Or perhaps the housewife gets on a self-pity kick when she can't have that new piece of furniture for the living room; or, the husband cannot have that new gun for Christmas, so he feels frustrated and defeated replying, "What's the use, God doesn't want me to have anything". The housewife might tend more to feeling sorry for herself because she is married to an old miser, and on and on. So when we find ourselves feeling sorry for ourselves, we might do well to consider that underneath all of that self-pity is inner hostility over not getting our own way in something.

Complaining

Complaining is another way of expressing our displeasure and irritability over a situation but, instead of taking the responsibility to correct the situation, we project the blame to other parties. The housewife blames her husband or the fact that she has children as the reason she doesn't have the things she wanted in life: "If I wasn't tied down to the duties of a mother and a housewife, I could be out in the job market with all the other liberated women having my own career and earning good money". The husband might tend to blame the wife and children as well for holding him back in his career. It is easy to blame the government, our jobs, friends, physical handicaps, and lack of money or education for being the way we are, but it is nothing more than a "copping-out" on our responsibility in the situation. All we are doing is expressing our anger in the form of complaining.

Depression and Self Condemnation

After we have complained about everyone and everything in life and perhaps expressed anger at them for our shortcomings, we finally turn all of that anger inwardly at ourselves. We start to condemn ourselves for being the way we are saying, "If you were the sort of Christian you ought to be, you wouldn't be like this". We actually scold ourselves for being the imperfect beings that we are. And the more we become angry with ourselves, the more depressed we become until we can wish that we were dead. All of this is self-defeating because we are not doing something constructive to change the situation. Becoming angry with ourselves never changed anything. We need to recognize before God our responsibility to change. The first thing to do is confess our anger to God and then forsake it. *"Cease anger and forsake wrath; they only lead to evildoing"*.

Not all depression is the result of inner hostility. Some depression comes about as a result of neurological impairment, perhaps from an accident or some such other thing; some depression comes from the periodic cycles of the menstrual period or from lack of sleep and proper nutrition. Many "spiritual" problems could be alleviated by getting to bed at a decent hour, good exercise, the right vitamin intake, and watching one's diet. Elijah was in a situation where he was spiritually and physically exhausted and, being in a depressed state, he sat down under a juniper tree and asked the Lord to take his life. But the Lord knew exactly what was needed. He sent an angel with food. What Elijah needed at that time in his life was sleep and food, and this the Lord provided. 1 Kings 19:1-8. Sometimes we Christians lose sight of the fact that even though we are spiritually born again, our new nature still lives in these bodies of clay, and the spirit, soul and body can effect each

other. For example, a man can be physically run down in his life due to lack of nourishment, proper rest or exercise and, as a result, can become emotionally depressed in his soul. This in turn can lead him to start believing that God has deserted him or start feeling guilty because he feels so poorly.

The depression we are considering, however, is that which comes about as the result of inner hostility. Sometimes a husband gets depressed over his work simply because deep down he doesn't really want to work. He is resentful over having to spend day after day of his life trying to make a living to support the family. It is not that he doesn't love his family, but he really wanted to live in the woods like Daniel Boone, going from one territory to another to see what lies over the next hill, or some other such dream. The thing, of course, that will deliver all of us from the vicious trap of anger is emotional maturity, which will progress as we grow in grace and his Word.

The pattern in the development of anger goes something like this: First there is a desire for something, and when that desire is denied, we react with the seed of bitterness in the soul, from where it begins to develop into wrath and inner fuming or seething. And then, if not dealt with, it becomes a vindictive anger wanting to get even, first by quarrels and arguments, followed by bad-mouthing, cursing, name-calling, and finally it can turn to physical violence. Wisdom for the believer is learning to recognize the pattern and manifestations of anger and dealing with them as soon as possible.

5. Correcting the Problem with Bible Doctrine

When dealing with the problem of deep-seated resentment, the solution is often more complex and involved. When tracing back to the root of the problem, often it is found to be a result of being hurt. Something may have happened in the past and you reacted to the situation with bitterness, which was never dealt with or overcome. Instead of dealing with the problem, it was buried deep down in the subconscious where it was consequently forgotten but, as we all know, it did not go away. It stays buried, forgotten, out of sight, out of mind - until some incident triggers all those old seemingly forgotten memories, and the memory computer of the soul brings it up to the conscious mind or brings up the symptoms to torment the individual. Our minds are temperamental critters to say the least. The mind, in its attempt to protect itself from something unpleasant and perhaps unbearable, will suppress or deny the painful memory shoving it back down into the subconscious. But, it still continues to affect the Christian's life in a detrimental manner with the various previously mentioned manifestations. When life is going well - good job, healthy family, plenty of activities to avoid facing inner problems - these old hang-ups tend to stay buried beneath the surface. But when adversity starts to hit - husband loses job, wife becomes ill, home or car lost - the garbage that has been buried in the soul starts to float to the surface. This is when the difficulty begins as the believer has to deal with the problems (rather than running away from them as he did previously) to sublimate them out of the conscious.

And so, even though one may not have been able to do anything about the original circumstances that may have caused resentment or hostility, regardless of the cause, it is nevertheless necessary to recognize and accept personal responsibility in dealing with anger honestly to bring about peace in the matter. One of the harder facts in life for people to accept is that we are responsible for our own lives, thoughts, and attitudes. But often, instead of standing up and accepting the responsibility, an individual will place the blame somewhere else. There are those who say, "The reason why I'm like I am is because I never had a fair shake in life" (as if life is supposed to be fair); or, "If my husband was the man he should be, I wouldn't be like this"; or, "I'm just a victim of society (or my

environment)". What is happening here is that these individuals are projecting the blame onto someone or something else instead of accepting the responsibility for their own negative feelings.

God wants to forgive and cleanse the believer who feels this way - wrapped up in bitterness, wrath, anger, self-pity, etc. - but can't as long as the individual continues to deny his feelings. Denial is just the opposite of admitting one's guilt. 1 John 1:9, "*For if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" We must literally agree with God that we are feeling the way we actually do feel.

The first step in realizing our responsibility to change is to take an aggressive, positive step in dealing with the problem. That entails recognizing that we do indeed have a problem with anger, and inner hostility, and then taking that problem to God in prayer and confession. Next, the believer needs to sit down with the Lord's help and figure exactly what steps need to be taken to have the victory. We have the responsibility to change; God is not going to reach down into our heads and pull the anger out. He has given us commands to cease anger, forsake wrath, forgive one another, and let not the sun go down on our anger. Sometimes the solutions are simple, and sometimes they are more complicated, especially for those feelings of hostility that have been suppressed over a period of time.

The thing that really helps us is maturity. As the believer matures, he learns he is responsible for taking necessary steps in dealing with his own life, thoughts, and actions. Over a period of time, he is better able to deal with them. He knows that he may not have been able to control the circumstances in his life that led him to the way he is and that there is no excuse for him to stay that way. He recognizes that even though wrath and anger are wrong, he is not shocked when he has that particular problem because he understands the depravity of his fallen nature and will take the necessary steps in appropriating the grace of God to rectify the problem. He knows it is his responsibility to deal with his inner hostility and that God will help him, but will not do it for him. In dealing with the problems of the soul, usually the adolescent believer will blame God for the way he is and for not changing him. But, as the believer matures in Bible Doctrine, he sees that it is not God's responsibility to deal with his anger, but rather his own. This responsibility is to appropriate the grace provisions that God provides and learn to deal with his inner hostility in a mature, responsible manner.

6. Dealing with Anger

In handling the hostilities of the believer, we see that the Holy Spirit comes into primary importance. The Father has given us the Holy Spirit whose only desire is to help us and glorify Christ in our lives. He knows that we still have natures of sin, as the rest of the world does, that give us challenges from time to time. But we are not limited in handling these problems as the unbeliever is.

One of the commandments is to stop grieving the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30. We grieve the Holy Spirit in us by refusing to cooperate with Him by holding onto our bitterness, wrath and anger. We frustrate his efforts as he seeks to bring peace and harmony into our lives. In context, the Spirit's work is working with us in ridding us of our inner hostilities. "*Let bitterness.....be removed from us.*" v.31. God has not left us alone to struggle along with our problems but, recognizing the way we are, has given us the Holy Spirit to help us.

One significant way that God helps us is through the pulpit ministry of the local church using a Pastor-Teacher. The Pastor-Teacher communicates the Word of God under the filling of the Holy Spirit; he brings to the surface certain problems that people have unbeknownst to them. In this manner, the Holy Spirit points out particular areas for individual needs. This is not to condemn them, because there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. It is an attempt to help them deal with the problems they face, such as the manifestations of inner hostilities.

As Christians, we need to recognize and accept the way we are but, at the same time, realize that we do not have to let our lives be influenced, controlled, and ruined because of our past failures and fallen natures. This is the choice that we all must make. In Adam we all fell - true; but in Christ, we now live; today in the present we are in Christ. Some may say, "My circumstances have made me what I am today". And, this may be true, for we may never have had any control over our circumstances in time past, but we do have the choice of whether our circumstances exert control over us in the future; and, this is where the dynamics of the Christian life comes in. We have been given the Holy Spirit and new nature. We do not have to be controlled by the flesh nature and our past. To be sure, it will be a battle, but the victory can be ours.

Several factors enter into prominence when dealing with the believer and his sins; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the local church and Bible Doctrine. The Blood of Christ cleanses us, the Father forgives us, and the cleansing ministry of the Spirit removes the inner hostilities from us. 1 John 1:9; Ephesians 4:31. When the believer is caught up in anger, the Holy Spirit works with him to reveal his problem, so that he can take it to the Father in confession thereby receiving forgiveness. If he is ignorant of it or denies it, there can be no forgiveness or cleansing. And, the Spirit does this through the Word of God, for it is the Word that can point out to us where we have erred. It is up to us what we do with the knowledge. Psalms 73:1-24; 94:17-19. One gains insight through the teaching ministry of the local church and from personal study in the Bible. This study will give the believer insight into the pattern and nature of anger and, if it applies to him, he will have insight on what to do.

As mentioned before, the Christian needs to take positive steps in dealing with his anger. Once we have realized that we have sinned against God, it is our responsibility to go to Him in confession. If two brothers in the Lord have been at odds with one another, they need to forgive each other. Even if one of the parties makes no attempt at reconciliation, the other is to simply grace him out. One might say, "All I have to do is confess it to the Lord to have my sins forgiven", which is true. God does forgive our sins when we confess them but, what this believer fails to comprehend is that if he is holding a grudge against another man, he is perpetually out of fellowship with the Lord. He needs to exercise forgiveness toward the one that has offended him, releasing the negative mental attitude. Matt. 5:23,24. If two Christians have had their fellowship with each other knowingly broken through some word or deed, then an attempt for reconciliation must be made. One does not need to go into all the sordid details in telling him how you feel and how sorry you are. Rather, all that is needed is to let the other person know that you are not angry with him anymore. This can be expressed in many ways, sometimes just a smile and a friendly hello are all that is needed.

Forgiveness is crucial in getting rid off bitterness, wrath and anger. When you forgive someone, you are the one who profits from the act of letting go of the bad mental attitudes. You may have been angry with someone who did something to you years ago, and he is not aware of your feelings. Your bitterness may not affect him at all (he may even live in another town), but the bitterness you may still have is affecting you and ruining the life that you are living in the present.

What do you need to do? Forgive him completely and totally. You may have to do this over and over but, little by little, and as time goes by, you will be freed from the destructiveness of those negative mental attitudes.

Ephesians 4:32 tells us to be kind to one another. In the construction of the Greek, they are to start an action that they haven't been doing, and they are commanded to do it: *"Start becoming kind to one another."* In contrast to shoutings, screamings, name-calling, anger, hatred, and beatings, start becoming, forgiving each other. The word in the Greek is charizomai. It means to bestow a favor on someone unconditionally, without expecting anything in return or that any conditions be met. It is to deal with someone graciously over everything, not just in the forgiveness of sins alone. In the present active participle, it is to be a continuing principle of the believer's life; he is to be a forgiving person; and, in the active voice, he is the one that is to do it. Some types of forgiveness are dependent upon the individual doing something to make restitution such as getting right with you or perhaps payment of money that is owed; but with charizomai, you simply forgive, regardless of whether the other party is still angry at you or still owes you money. For example, let us say someone has been angry at you and begins to spread malicious lies about you or, even worse, he spreads things that are true about you that are harmful and, over a period of time, sees that he has been wrong and approaches you asking for forgiveness. You can forgive him on this basis, and the fellowship between the two of you would be restored. But, let's say he doesn't get right with you; he didn't try, nor did he even want to. What do you do in this situation? According to the above-mentioned passage, you are to forgive him anyway. He doesn't deserve it and hasn't earned it, but you deal with him in grace as you have been dealt with by God. It is obvious he lacks the proper character at this time by clinging to his negative mental attitudes. In grace you are dealing with him according to your own character and grace, not his. This is to be the mental attitude characteristic of the grace-oriented believer. He has been graciously dealt with by God in salvation and virtually every day of his life since then and, in turn, he deals graciously with other people.

This type of thinking has patience, compassion, and tolerance of the weakness in others. It accepts people on the grounds that they are in Christ and not whether they conform to some denominational taboos or legalisms. Grace allows the other believer freedom to grow and make mistakes - to live their lives as unto the Lord. It is not condemnatory, nor critical, of other believers whose norms and standards are different. Grace is being free (not lascivious) and allows others to live in freedom. Grace is beautiful, delightful, and wonderful to those who accept it, and it is despised by those who don't. It is the only way that God can and will deal with mankind. It is His favor apart from any merit or works of our own. Romans 9:15; Ephesians 2:8-10. One cannot receive anything from God nor know anything about God apart from the principle of grace. Orientation to grace is to grow in the Christian life and, in fact, life is worthless without God's grace. Psalms 63:3.

We see from all this that one of the key ingredients in overcoming bitterness, wrath, and anger is the daily utilization of the principle of forgiveness. This is basically the "letting go" of one or more of the harmful attitudes. **Resentment** is simply a "hanging on" to the harmful attitudes. *"And start becoming kind to one another, tenderhearted, gracing each other out, just as God in Christ also has graced you out."* Ephesians 4:32.

7. The Role of Vengeance

We are told in the Word to never be taking our own vengeance, and this has led many believers to incorrectly conclude that the principle of vengeance is wrong. God simply doesn't want us to be

taking vengeance. Actually, vengeance is not wrong. The basic reasoning for vengeance is that it proceeds out of justice. We would like to have vengeance because of a feeling of indignation or personal injury. To be sure, God executes vengeance, but it proceeds out of his justice and is free of any intermingling of self-gratification or vindictiveness. Vindictiveness has the connotation of getting even or paying someone back, simply because one is angry at another person. Vengeance is exacting a penalty on someone due to a legitimate cause. Vengeance and vindictiveness are not the same. The principle of vengeance is not wrong or sinful, because it proceeds out from justice, what is right and fair. Romans 12:19; 13:4; Proverbs 24,25. The Christian is to let God handle the activity of vengeance. 1 Thessalonians 4:6. If a Christian has been defrauded, cheated, or wrongfully treated, he has a legitimate case for vengeance; although he is not to take the vengeance into his own hands. 1 Corinthians 6:1-7. Vengeance is legal, legitimate; it is justice in action - repaying the wrongdoer with the punishment due him for his wrongdoing.

The Christian is to leave room for the wrath and anger of God. During the tribulation, God will avenge the deaths of all those who died for Christ. Revelations 6:10; 19:2. God's anger is kindled toward the wrongdoers out of his righteousness and justice, and his retribution is carried out in vengeance. The idea of a vengeful God is not popular in society today. Most people like to think of Him as a maudlin sentimentalist who goes along with everything we do. It is said if God is a God of love, how then can He ever become angry and seek vengeance? What people fail to see is that God cannot deny himself - who is He and what is He; the very foundation of God's throne is righteousness and justice. However, before God brings judgment on a people or a nation, He sends forth His grace manifested in Bible Doctrine. If an individual rejects His doctrine, he is rejecting the vehicle of His grace and has nothing to look forward to but His judgment and wrath.

God has a vehicle for carrying out His vengeance in the divine institutions through the governing bodies of the police and military. God's anger is directed at all wrongdoers in society, and He has ordained the police force as ministers of God to bring lawbreakers to trial and, under the system of justice, their guilt might be determined and the appropriate sentence executed. He has ordained the military to execute vengeance on all foreign nations who violate the principle and sanctity of the national entity to protect us from criminal nations. These institutions are also a provision of God's grace for His children, that they might be able to live in tranquility in their client nations and have the freedom to study the Word of God. We have seen that the principle of vengeance is right, biblical, and legal. Rather than take vengeance into his own hands, the Christian is to let the divinely appointed institutions of the police and military handle it for him. These men are the ministers of God, avengers who bring wrath upon the one who does evil. Rom. 13:4. This should be a lesson to us all lest we become one of those who do evil and find them knocking at our doors.

If a problem develops in the local church between two believers, then the resolving of the problem should be handled by the elders in the church. 1 Corinthians 6:1-5. Christians should not have to resort to the use of public courts to resolve their differences. Some may say that believers are not qualified to handle legal disputes. I don't believe this is true in every case. There are believers who are not qualified to discern the simplest of issues in life, but if a Christian has been involved with Bible Doctrine for some time, he certainly has the divine viewpoint to discern in these matters. For, after all, Christ has handed over to us the matter of judging angels and much weightier matters in the second coming. If we are to be able to discern those issues, we certainly should be able to judge in matters pertaining to this life. This is not to say that we lack the need for attorneys, the law, and courtroom procedures because these are the grace provisions of God to protect our legal rights while living here in the devil's world. In the divine institutions, God has given us 1) physicians to

take care of our bodies, 2) psychiatrists to aid in our emotional development, 3) the military to protect our national sovereignty, 4) the police to protect us from the criminal (and handguns), 5) and laws to protect our property and rights. In the matter of two believers who are at odds with one another, their differences could and should be arbitrated in the church. In cases where justice was not done or could not be done for the believer, then God himself will handle the vengeance for His child. In any case, all handling of vengeance is to be placed into the hands of the Father who judges absolutely fair. The super-grace believer, or the one who is maturing, can relax in confidence knowing that God will protect him and execute vengeance on all those who rise up against him to do evil. Isa.54:17. God says, "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*" The idea of repaying means to give back as an equivalent, to recompense. It expresses the idea of a complete return. Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.

Many feel that God was a God of vengeance in the Old Testament but now, in the New Testament, He is just a God of love. It must be emphasized here that God was both a God of love and a God of vengeance in the Old and New Testament, and God does not change. The Old Testament principle of God being the one who repays vengeance continues to be true. Rom. 12:19,20 are quotations of Old Testament passages of Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 25:21,22. So we see that God still exercises vengeance in the Church Age. His desire for us, though, is to live at peace with our fellowmen if at all possible. Romans 12:18. And if vengeance is needed, let Him be the one that carries it out.

In Romans 12:20, He gives us a very effective way of handling someone giving us problems. The enemy here is an enemy of a believer, and it says, "*If your enemy is hungry, (maybe he is, maybe he isn't) feed him.*", you are commanded to do so. This reference is not to an enemy of the law, a criminal. The police and courts are there to handle him. Nor is the reference to an enemy of the nation; that is the military's responsibility. Reference is to an enemy of a believer. It says we are to feed him, with the third class condition of 'if' - maybe he is hungry and maybe he is not; it means to feed him regardless of whether he is in need of food or not. The meaning of "to feed him" here is very interesting. There are five words used to express the idea of feeding someone: 1) *bosko* - to provide food as a herdsman would, 2) *poimano* - to feed as a pastor or shepherd would, 3) *trepho* - to cause to grow up or to rear a child, 4) *chortazo* - to fill or satisfy with food, and then the word in question is 5) *psomizo* - to dole out morsels of food. Feed your enemy morsels of food bit by bit; for in so doing, you will heap coals of fire upon his head. The believer is in essence repaying good for evil, but to the one receiving it, it will be like heaping coals of fire upon his head. Literally, "*live coals upon the head*" was a proverbial expression for experiencing anything troublesome, something that causes anyone great pain and torment.

What we have here is a situation where a reversionistic believer maligns, slanders or in some other means tries to bring harm to the grace-oriented believer. When this happens, the grace believer is to keep on doing the right thing to produce divine good. Psalms 37:3,7,8,9,27. In so doing, he will cause the antagonistic believer to have mental agitation and misery. This is the vindication that the maturing believer has. They are envious of what the righteous believer has and hate what he stands for (grace), so they seek to destroy him. Psalms 37:12,15. David was the classic case of a righteous believer who was hounded and persecuted by a reversionistic believer, King Saul, and others. These men were driven by their bitterness, jealousy, anger, pride, hatred, and many other forms of mental attitude sins. When the righteous one retaliates with the good and not the evil, it intensifies the mental attitude sins of the wicked: rage, hate, fury, etc.. You might wonder if this is right. It is, for it accomplishes two things: First of all, this is fair because under the blessing and cursing aspect of our covenant relationship with God, the evildoer (reversionistic believer) has all of these things

coming to him. For all of those who walk in God's ways - blessings! For those who don't - cursings! The choice is theirs and ours. James 4:8-10; 5:1. Secondly, there is a beneficial side to driving the reversionistic right up the wall (bearing in mind that the mental attitude sins that he is experiencing are his own doing). An experience like this will hopefully bring this person to the point where he will see his own miserable condition and come to the place of repentance and have a change of heart toward God.

In all this, the continual activity of the grace believer is to be divine good, even while under fire from those who would try to do him evil. He is not to render evil for evil but, rather, good for evil. Divine good here is to be gracious to the reversionist even though he has tried to hurt you, your life, or ministry. This is the most effective form of dealing with reversionists or anyone else that seeks to cause you harm. In the case of the reversionist, he will be reaping an intensification of what he is on the inside, misery compounded. In this way, the reversionist will reap what he himself sows, while the grace believer will reap what God sows. Someone may say, "The grace believer shouldn't do the right thing if it makes a reversionist miserable", which simply isn't true. Is the grace believer to be condemned because he does good? Never! God has called us to walk in the divine good. If someone else reacts in an adverse manner to our good deeds, that is their problem. Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:20,21. The fault lies with the evildoer and not with the righteous one. If an evildoer is miserable in his own soul, he has only himself to blame.

We are to overcome evil with good and to do no wrong to a neighbor. When the believer is attacked, maligned, and slandered, instead of attacking his opponents in the same manner, he is to do divine good to them. He then is fulfilling this idea of repaying good for evil by expressing divine good in turn. By being gracious to the one who offends you, you remain in fellowship with the Lord by not taking the problem into your own hands, and your gracious action will heap coals of fire upon the offender's head. This is not taking vengeance on him, for vengeance would call for a suited punishment to fit the crime. Being gracious to one who offends you is not punishment, although because of the mental attitude sins of the maligner, he compounds his own misery.

For example, perhaps some believer has been spreading lies about you and your family. The natural reaction to this is to, 1) get mad at him, or 2) get even with him by spreading harmful things about him. This is being vindictive, trying to get even with someone. Quite often we fall into this trap and get out of fellowship with the Lord and, if it is continued, we will likely get under the Lord's discipline. What we need to do is to watch ourselves in this vicious circle, express how we feel toward God, even our bad mental attitudes toward the one who has offended us and turn the vengeance part over to the Lord. God then will repay the one bad-mouthing you under the principle of divine discipline. In this manner, God can handle the situation. "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay*" says the Lord.

Perhaps you have harbored bitterness in your heart for years for a wrong done you in the past. The bitterness has settled into a vindictive type of anger where you want to punish those who have hurt you. So, you become sullen, moody, irritable, and short with those around you or become outright hateful and full of self-pity among many other harmful attitudes. The bitterness in your heart could be just the thing that is holding you back from enjoying life to the fullest today. The thing you must do is forgive those who have wronged you, releasing all bitterness, anger, and hatred you have felt for the offender, with the realization that God has forgiven you and wants you to forgive those who have wronged you and that He is the avenger of all wrongdoing toward you.

Pride

As we are beginning to realize in our study, the three major areas the believer in Christ has to overcome to be able to go over and enjoy the life that God has for him are the problems of guilt, anger and pride. All of them are equally destructive in the believer's life, but pride seems to be about the most insidious and subtle to detect. It is insidious in its propensity to drive the believer away from the help that God has for him thus reaping havoc in his own soul. And it is ever so subtle, for who can detect pride in his own soul. We always see it in others but never in ourselves.

Even though it is hard to detect pride in ourselves, we can learn to identify its various manifestations in our lives, and from there seek to apply biblical solutions to it with God's help.

The problem of pride is as old as the devil himself who, being lifted up with his own beauty and wisdom, sought to depose God from his throne and plunged the entire world into one great battle zone. Ezekiel 28:17.

Pride in the lives of men and women has destroyed churches, nations, families, caused men to go to prison, brought financial ruin upon many, and instigated mental attitude sins and misery upon countless millions. In fact, pride is so much a problem in people's lives, it literally is the single most common culprit behind all of our personal problems. In one way or another, pride is either the direct cause or a contributing factor to our personal problems.

But thanks be to God's faithfulness to us, he deals with our pride to rid us from it, and this study is designed to help us overcome our pride.

1. Boasters, Braggarts and Bigmouths

The first area for study is the boaster or braggart. The word in the Greek for the **braggart** is *alazon*, and *alazonia* is what he does, brag. It speaks of one who makes more of himself than the reality of the situation justifies. It is one who claims to have more than he does, or the ability to do more than he can. It is one who promises what he cannot perform. Simply stated, the braggart is one who makes claims about himself that are greatly exaggerated.

The word came from the idea of "wandering about", used to describe the vagabond conjurers, exorcists, and medical and religious quacks. These people went around in biblical times making boastful and empty promises of cures and other feats they claimed they could perform. But as usual, their boastful claims were not in keeping with the reality of the situation - e.g. the old "snake-oil" salesman.

The concept of boasting of course afflicts every segment of society today. Religious quacks go from town to town boasting about their ability to heal men and women, or raise the dead. Others brag about their "spiritual" experiences, having gone to heaven, having Jesus Christ visit them, talking to angels, etc.. In other areas, fishermen brag about the fish they caught, the pseudo-lover brags about his ability with women, politicians brag about their ability to lead. Virtually everybody brags about something in their life to some degree - which is no more than pride manifesting itself in a certain area, by not allowing anyone to "get one up on us".

The essence of the boaster is that he overpasses the limits of truth, claiming a knowledge, power, a virtue or ability he does not possess, which reveals a picture of arrogance. This person is lifted up with pride on the inside but makes his braggartly claims known to all. What he doesn't know is that people with understanding not only know that what he is saying is not true, but also that he has a personal problem with pride. They know something about him that he is unaware of.

Alazonia (bragging) describes the arrogant activity of the inhabitants of the cosmos system; mouths swaggering throughout the earth in their boastings, making themselves equal with God, controlling their destinies in life and beyond the grave (or so they think in their pride). 1 John 2:16; Psalms 73:1-12. Bragging is one of the characteristic traits of those who have rejected Bible Doctrine and God's grace. Romans 1:28-30.

Bear in mind that the braggart's problem is pride, only it manifests itself in the personality through bragging. In someone else, pride might be manifested altogether differently. Regardless of how one's pride is manifested, it accomplishes its evil work in all men's souls just the same through evil desires and loss of tranquility. Pride causes a man to plan and live his life apart from the guidance of God, who sovereignly holds his future in his hands. James 4:13-16; Habakkuk 2:4,5.

And one can be a boaster without having that braggartly manner usually associated with it. We have all seen the drunk in a bar making great boastful claims about himself. This type of conduct is readily seen as bragging. One that is usually missed is the speech and demeanor of a smooth, polished, and charismatic individual. When he starts to make exaggerated claims about himself and his abilities, we usually don't think of him as being a braggart, but in reality he is.

Many of our national leaders fall into this category promising things they cannot deliver, and making claims they cannot back up. They make boastful statements devoid of truth, wisdom, and reality, such as cradle to grave security, prosperity, stabilized economics, world peace, and freedom from wars. Statements such as these and others have their roots in pride and bragging and are anti-Christ in nature. It was the devil in the very beginning that claimed he was going to take over God's throne and rule the universe. Only Jesus Christ himself can bring about the global conditions of world peace, prosperity, and freedom from wars. All others claiming the ability to affect, or claiming they were instrumental in effecting these things are being governed by the spirit of the anti-Christ. These are the boastful claims the anti-Christ will make when he appears on the scene.

Boastfulness, bragging, surpassing the limits of truth and reality, and wagging of the tongue are activities of the proud and braggarts. However, the condition can be overcome when one becomes a believer in Christ and grows in grace and the Word of God, under the filling of the Holy Spirit.

2. Smoke Blowers

The second area where pride is manifested is when one becomes conceited, puffed-up, and high-minded, because he has been placed in a position of authority and responsibility, having neither the growth, nor the qualifications to handle it.

The word used in Greek is *tuphoo*, which means to raise in smoke, to puff up with pride, or to wrap up in smoke. It originally came from the idea of a lamp's wick, which had ceased to burn clearly, and now smokes. Then it developed into the figurative use of religion, without the Spirit's power.

Without a proper source of fuel, the lamp is sure to go out, leaving a smoking wick instead of a bright light.

Bringing this concept into the realm of people, it refers generally to being placed in the pulpit too soon to handle it. They have no doctrinal context to teach the people, nor an understanding of, nor reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit. They soon lapse into putting out clouds of smoke, thereby confusing the issues with poor or incorrect doctrine rather than clarifying them.

One of the pitfalls to avoid in the Christian life, especially for a new believer, is accepting the place of authority and leadership over a local church, when one has neither the capacity or growth to handle it. Yet men constantly seek to pastor churches due to their own desires, or encouragement from others in their group, and many do not have the training, knowledge, growth or understanding of grace to qualify. 1 Timothy 3:6.

The only safeguard for a believer is to make certain that God is the one placing a man in the pulpit. And if he does, you can be assured that the man can handle the job. He not only will have the necessary working knowledge to pastor and teach, he will also have been humbled by God prior to the ministry to deal with his pride.

The problem with putting unqualified men in the ministry is that they tend to be impressed by themselves. They tend to conclude that they must really know something or be somebody and will be exalted as "authorities" on the scriptures and Christian matters. Subsequently, when pride takes hold, it is very difficult to approach them with sound doctrine and new truth.

One of the more difficult things to accept as ministers is that neither we, nor the schools that trained us, have a corner on the market of truth. We must be willing to accept newly discovered truth as we continue on our Christian mission, even if it means admitting that we have previously been wrong. This is difficult to do at times because of pride. Pride keeps us from admitting when we are wrong and keeps us from submitting to the doctrinal teachings of another man. The latter is another reason for stressing the importance of being properly trained and properly humbled before entering into the ministry of Christ.

This manifestation of pride will be predominant in the last days of the church age, as Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:4. The problem occurs when individuals are promoted too quickly, or they are placed in positions beyond their capacity to handle properly, or by gaining a position without the necessary qualifications. Simply stated, these people are in positions over their heads. Whether they obtained their position by appointment, or they were elected, or they hustled, the problem is the same. They simply lack the knowledge, wisdom, experience, skill, growth and capacity.

The wise thing to do in a situation such as described above would be to admit incompetence and step down. However, pride does not allow this. Somewhere along the line they started believing the things people said about them, became conceited, and stayed on to blow smoke.

The grammatical construction in 2 Timothy 3:4 shows the problem of pride did not occur overnight; rather, it was a gradual process that went on over a period of time, until it reached a state of completion with continuing results. Pride and conceit become a way of life. Once an individual attains this level, it becomes extremely difficult to reach him with any new truth, correction or

instruction. Due to pride, these individuals think they now know everything and will not accept advice, counsel, instruction or divine viewpoint from anyone.

When we think of conceit, we usually associate it with being vain or stuck on oneself. However, biblically speaking, the reference is to those who have little or no doctrinal content, those who are operating under the control of their flesh nature, and those operating in pulpits, or other areas of responsibility, without the substance in their souls to do the job properly.

If a man is going to be a minister of God (or anything in life), it is vitally important that he is qualified to do the job. Only God knows if a man is ready to minister the Word, and he will be ready if God has worked with him. The Lord will be sure he gets the proper academic training, that he will have had the many various categories of testing and the circumstances to actually apply what he has learned to practical experience, that he will be a man of grace and faith, that he will have an understanding heart, having had to suffer many things personally, and that his pride will have been dealt with. This is probably the most difficult thing to go through and the point where many fledgling communicators peel off. For here is where God humbles the pastor to be under the authority of some already established pastor-teacher who, in time, will grind his pride down into the dust. 1 Peter 5:5-7. Being placed in a humiliating situation, combined with the strong authority of another pastor, will bring out one's pride where it must be dealt with. Afterwards, God will promote him to his own area of ministry, whether it be pastor, evangelist, teacher, missionary, doctor, lawyer, etc.. Many men, though, not wanting to submit themselves to this humbling experience, proceed on their own, retaining their pride, and start their own ministry.

3. The Big Head

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he instructed them that knowledge (gnosis) puffs up (1Corinthians 8:1) and is definitely to be avoided in the Christian life. That is, the improper use of knowledge causes *phusioo*, a big head. It was originally the word for a bellows and meant to inflate, to blow up, to puff up with air - and came to mean proud, conceited, arrogant, or to have a big head, a phenomenon all of us are familiar with in life. We have all seen the individual who, because of his great knowledge and intellect, develops a big head. When knowledge is left as knowledge in one's mind and is not carried through to its desired conclusion, it brings about a condition of pride.

Now Paul is writing the Corinthians telling them that knowledge puffs a person up. But we have to see what is meant by knowledge, for there is nothing wrong with knowledge itself, seeing that is the necessary first step of our growth in grace and erection of the edification complex of the soul (ECS). But if knowledge is not carried through to its conclusion, there is no growth in grace, and the believer will develop a big head, a case of pride.

To understand the above, we must see that there are several stages involved in the mechanics of growth, and knowledge is just one of them. All of them must be present if one is going to go on to maturity. It is vitally important that the Christian see that the Word of God is not to be just an intellectual pursuit or academic exercise but, rather, the living, vital center of his life which he learns, believes, studies, loves, meditates upon, and uses in his life.

The first step of growth is the taking of Bible Doctrine into one's soul under the teaching ministry of a pastor-teacher. The doctrine he disseminates is simply factual knowledge, *gnosis* in Greek.

When the believer takes this knowledge into the mind, it has the potential to benefit him, depending what he does with it.

Next in the process comes the understanding of what has been taught. The believer must be able to understand what he is listening to. This requires that he be filled with the Holy Spirit, who will give him insight into the Word. It also helps greatly for the Pastor to be able to explain the Word with words and illustrations that aid in understanding.

Next is the application of one's faith to the teaching of Bible Doctrine. Believing the message is the "key", for even if one does not fully understand what he has been taught, he can still believe it and benefit from it. Throughout the Bible, one can see reference such as, "*the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith*" - Hebrews 4:2; and Isaiah saying, "*Lord, who has believed our message?*" - Romans 10:16; or the Apostle Paul, Galatians 3:2b, "*Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?*". Faith is a crucial ingredient in the biblical process of growth and the avoidance of pride. It does not require that a man be a deep thinker or have a great intellect or read many books. Faith is the great leveler of all men to one common lead. In fact, it is not necessary for a man to be able to read; he can be totally illiterate and still learn Bible Doctrine and grow as long as he can hear and believe.

After knowledge (*gnosis*) has been received, understood, and believed, it becomes a part of the believer's spirit where it then is ready to be used in his life. It is the next step that many believers fail to take, the application of the Word of God to daily living and to their personal problems that causes them to restrain their growth process.

The application of the Word of God and its usage in our lives are crucial to us in maintaining our growth, avoiding reversionism, keeping away from pride and arrogance, having spiritual production, and enjoying our fellowship with the Lord and the blessing he has for us. "*Blessed our those who hear the Word of God and observe it.*" Luke 11:28.

"My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it." Luke 8:21. "*If you know these things (and you do), you are blessed if you do them.*", (*maybe you will, maybe you won't*). John 13:17. "*If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.*" 1 John 1:7. "*But prove yourselves to be doers of the Word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.*" James 1:22.

The advice above has a corresponding analogy in the physical realm with food and growth. We start off with food being the equivalent of Bible Doctrine. When it is taken into the mouth, it is the same as Doctrine heard and entering the mind. The food then being chewed is parallel to meditating upon and understanding the Word of God. The next step is swallowing the food, which is analogous to believing the Word.

This ends the first phase, which is our human responsibility in the matter. The second phase basically is an automatic function of the body and the soul in spiritual matters.

Once the food has been swallowed, it goes through the normal digestive system where it is further broken down in the stomach, passed through the intestinal track where the nutrients in the food are assimilated in the body, and distributed by the circulatory system which gives the body life. After the body breaks down the food and converts it into what is needed, it processes the waste material.

This is somewhat similar to what goes on in our souls with the help of the Holy Spirit, who takes what we have studied, gives us insight, reveals to us what we need for our souls at the time, stores the rest of the Doctrine in our human spirit for the time when we may need it, and enables us to see what is false and reject it. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, will always reject what is false, reveal truth, and will show us the difference if we allow Him. This is his teaching ministry. The reason so many Christians fall into error, or refuse to see the truth is because they either are not filled by the Holy Spirit, or are operating under strong personal prejudice, or they are unwilling to accept new truth, with pride usually being the behind-the-scene culprit.

The final phase in all this is activity, whether it be in the physical or spiritual realm. Food is not an end in itself, but simply a necessary tool to enable us to work, play, create, produce, etc.. To be physically healthy, one must have a proper diet combined with physical activity. Junk food, lack of exercise, laziness, and obesity have never profited anyone. The body was not designed for these things.

Many Christians spend their days stuffing themselves with candy, sugar, salt, refined foods, and soft food while they sit around watching television. And as the years go by, they become fat and flabby with all types of physical disorders and mental lethargy wondering what happened. God has made it very clear that if one wants to have a healthy body, he must give it plenty of rest, vigorous exercise, and a nutritionally sound diet. The same is true for the soul.

If one wants to have a healthy soul free of scar-tissue and mental diseases, he must have a proper diet of sound doctrinal teaching, plenty of through the mechanics of faith and prayer, and an abundance of spiritual activity to keep everything tuned up. One's spiritual production is his priesthood before the Lord, which basically involves applying the Word of God to tests and daily living. Too many Christians have substituted excessive programs, hustling, testimonial times, singing, choir practices, and church social activities for the nutritionally sound diet of the teaching of God's Word, leaving a generation of malnourished hyper-active Christians. The basic formula for a healthy Christian life includes the instruction of Bible Doctrine, an active prayer life, living by faith, and application of the Word of God to one's daily living.

One can not take any of these ingredients out of the chain. All are crucial to successful Christian living. One cannot leave off his intake of the Word or its application in his life; nor can he cease functioning in his priesthood. He must practice all areas to continue growing in the Lord.

The problem with the group in Corinth was that some of them had become puffed up with knowledge (*gnosis*). Somewhere along the line the process of the Word going through them had broken down. They had been fed the Word by Paul and had understood it, so they either were not believing what he was teaching, they were operating in the flesh and not the filling of the Holy Spirit, or they were refusing to use the Word in their daily living - with the result that they became spiritually puffed-up with a case of pride. 1 Corinthians 8:1.

They would not submit themselves to the authority of God's Word over them, as ministered by the Apostle Paul. He had instructed them on how God wanted them to live their lives, but their pride kept them from submitting themselves to the doctrinal ministry of the man God had placed over them. The result was that they would not do what they were told to do and consequently developed the big head. This continues to happen today. Christians are told by their pastors to submit themselves to the Word of God, that is, to put Bible Doctrine first in their lives by learning it and

using it, to submit themselves to the authority of their Pastor-Teacher, but they refuse with the resulting big head. The pitiful thing is that they don't know it.

If one is not a pastor, then God has a pastor somewhere for him - one that he can learn from and grow in grace under. If this believer is submitting himself to his doctrinal ministry, learning, growing, and using the Word in his life, he is a grace-oriented believer, whom the scripture would classify as being humble. His humility is demonstrated by his submitting to authority and the teaching of God's Word. But if he neither submits himself to the doctrinal teaching of God's Word under his pastor, nor uses it in his life, nor operates under the filling of the Holy Spirit, then this believer is not only arrogant, but will develop a big head in the matter. Remember that pride is pride in a believer, it simply manifests itself in different ways, in different areas, and under varying conditions in his life.

It is important for us to re-emphasize at this point the importance of keeping the chain of growth intact to avoid pride and maintain our walk before the Lord: hearing the Word of God, understanding the Word of God, believing the Word of God, being filled with the Holy Spirit, application of the Word of God to life, and living the Word by faith.

Also realize that Satan will attempt by any means he can think of to break this chain, whether it be by keeping the believer out of Church or away from his Bible, by breaking his concentration on the Word, getting him side-tracked on his own works instead of simple faith, trying to keep him operating under his old sin nature instead of the power of the Holy Spirit, or by attempting to solve his own problems using his own strength and abilities instead of relying upon Jesus Christ.

To avoid this, the Christian must periodically evaluate his life. He needs to ask himself: "Am I living by faith, walking in the filling of the Spirit, learning and growing under the teaching of the Word, studying and understanding the Word and using it in my life? Or am I just going through the motions as a nice church member?" "Am I really living by faith in the Word, or just acting religious in front of the others?"

4. High-minded Harry

Another manifestation of pride is in the concept of being high-minded, or thinking of oneself higher than he should. Romans 12:3. The word used in Greek is *hyperphroneo*, which is a composite of two words, *hyper* - above and beyond, and *phren* - the mind. It refers to the activity of one's mind, the way he views himself or others in life, or his attitude or thinking on a given subject. *Phronesis*, from the word *phren*, is the right use and application of the mind - having the right mental attitude toward life, seeing things in the true perspective and one's relationship to them. *Phronesis* is balanced, rational, objective thinking based on fact. It sees things the way they truly are; it grasps reality.

The thinking of *phronesis* in its true and absolute state is possessed by God. Ephesians 1:3. It can be developed and had to a degree in the mind of the mature believer (Luke 1:17), which comes about as the result of substituting one's own thought processes with the thinking of Bible Doctrine in the soul. Romans 12:1,2.

The Bible classifies the one who lacks this quality as a fool (Luke 11:40, 12:20; Rom. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:36; 2 Cor. 12:6; Eph. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:15), lacking the mental ability to understand spiritual or

natural phenomenon and even ordinary common-sense. The problem can be rectified in a person's life by the intake of God's Word if he will submit himself to it.

So *phronesis* is the ability to view life, and one's relationship to life, as it truly is. But *hyperphroneo* changes it around somewhat. When a person thinks along the lines of *hyperphroneo*, he is thinking of himself as being higher than he truly is. His viewpoint is higher than the reality of the situation. It is a fabricated self-image. It is a person's opinion of himself inflated beyond his true status. This form of pride does not recognize the way one truly is, but instead, it pictures in the mind an entirely different image of self, higher or loftier than one actually is.

This type of pride is subtle and difficult to detect in one's self. One reason is because it is gradually developed in the life of the individual over a period of years. A second reason is because it is the way the individual actually views himself. He cannot envision that he might be having a problem with pride in his own life and that he could be viewing himself higher than he actually is, because he does not see the overall view of himself.

This problem was manifested originally in the Cherub, Lucifer, who began to view himself higher than he actually was because of his great beauty and splendor. When God originally created Lucifer, he made him the most beautiful, wisest, glorious, and the most powerful of all the angels. He was the Messiah's Cherub who guarded the way to the Throne of God holding the highest position of all the angels. But somewhere along the line Lucifer began to think of himself higher than he actually was and his heart became lifted up with pride.

One of the problems with pride is that it never remains as just a mental attitude, but will manifest itself in many overt manners. With the thinking of *hyperphroneo*, where one sees himself higher than he truly is, the individual will do whatever he needs to do to maintain that inflated opinion he has of himself. He will criticize others, gossip and malign, put others down, try to control circumstances and people, and resort to any devious means to remain in the higher slot where he views himself.

This same pattern was manifested originally in Lucifer. When Lucifer viewed himself higher than he actually was in his prideful thinking, there was only one person higher than him, God himself. So to maintain and manifest the prideful thinking he had developed, he formulated a plan in his mind. He would depose God from his throne and raise his throne above the throne of El! In his heart he said, "*I will ascend to Heaven (third heaven); I will raise my throne above the stars (angels) of God; I will make myself like the Most High.*", [Isaiah 13,14](#). This was quite a mouthful. Lucifer's pride led him to formulate a plan in his own heart to materialize the fabricated image he had of himself, and started him on a course of action that led to a rebellion of one-third of the angels in Heaven against God and plunged the human race into sin, chaos and destruction - all because of Lucifer's pride.

This pattern goes on everyday in the lives of millions of people. Their hearts are lifted up inside themselves and they have an inflated self-opinion. They rob, lie, cheat, steal, murder, criticize, and use other people just to get at the position in life where they want to be to match their fabricated self-image.

Lucifer, along with everyone else, forgot the primary doctrine of the Universe - which Jehovah God is the Creator of all, and we are all His creatures. We must constantly remind ourselves of who He

is and who we are in relationship to Him. When one of His creatures forgets his place in the divine order and starts to think higher of himself than his true station in life, he is deluded; he is divorced from reality, and he has a problem with pride. But God, in keeping with His nature, deals with pride in His creatures.

This type of pride is usually developed over a long period of time, often as a product of our youth - an activity so subtle one is unaware of it. Often, when an individual is confronted by feelings of inferiority, lack of self-worth or rejection, whether from themselves, family, or friends, they will gradually develop an image of what they would like to be or feel they are. Generally as a means of compensation an individual, say with a poor physique, will see himself as being very, very smart - smarter than he truly is. With this kind of pride, the individual will often resist instruction, for after all, someone so very intelligent doesn't need to learn anything new. On the other hand, perhaps the individual is slow academically and to compensate, he sees himself as a rugged, self-made individualist who doesn't need anyone's help.

All of us have pride to some degree in our lives, and it would remain there except for God's help in ridding us of it. The insidious thing about pride is that it resists the grace of God. For pride is opposed to any help. In Christian circles, pride is predominant in the legalistic or works-oriented believer. Pride says, "Look what we're doing!" While the grace-oriented believer says, "Look what God is doing for me!"

Now even though pride (*hyperphroneo*) is in one's mind and cannot be seen, it can be detected. This is usually done through the dogmatic, authoritative communication of Bible Doctrine by God's communicators. As the believer is put under the forceful teaching of the Word by a Pastor-Teacher, pressure will inevitably be put on his pride. If we're having a problem with pride in our lives, sooner or later it will come to the surface under the Word. And when it does, the believer will either let go of his pride and receive his humbling under the Word or he will hang on to it and manifest hostility or resistance toward the communicator or his message. This is one of the more common reasons why people leave their local church. They sit under a man's message quite comfortably for a long time until he hits on an area of their pride. They don't want to have their fabricated self-image torn down and see themselves as they truly are. So they react against the Word, usually by finding fault, criticizing, or pointing out the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the communicator. And eager to justify themselves, they try to gain a following and spread the Pastor's inconsistencies. After all, the problem couldn't be their own. They are not the ones full of pride and arrogance. The fault is the Pastor. Sound silly? Well, it makes sense to someone who doesn't want his bubble popped. Remember that God exposes and deals with pride through the communication of Bible Doctrine. Doctrine hammers down the lofty towers of pride. 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; Job 33:17,18.

5. A Little Higher

The next word we have to describe pride is *hupselophroneo*, which is a composite of two words: *hupselos* - high, and *phroneo* - to think or be minded. If *hyperphroneo* is to think of oneself higher or above what he truly is, then *hupselophroneo* is to think of himself even higher than that. It is almost the epitome of pride - not quite the maximum, but getting close to it. Originally, it was used to depict that which was very high or tall, such as the high wall of Jerusalem or a mountain.

Now the thinking of *phronesis* is rational, factual and objective. It sees things and one's relationship as they truly are. But the prideful thinking of *hupselophroneo* has gone way beyond reason, truth and reality.

We see this in society with men who think they are God's gift to women. These "lover-boys" go around dressed with the macho look expecting women to just crawl all over them. Women, also, are not exempt from this. Many of them try to look the part of a sex-pot thinking themselves irresistible to any man.

This problem of pride is mentioned in Romans 11:20 where Paul tells the Christians from a Gentile background to stop being conceited or arrogant because of God's removal of the Jews as his people, and their new status as God's people. Christians can and often do get the wrong impression about their place in the plan of God. They become arrogant and ego-centered, thinking that everything revolves around them and the Church Age. They fail to realize that their part in the Church Age was a function of God's justice and eternal plan, and we are just one phase in that plan. There wasn't anything special about us that would warrant us being God's people. Rather, it was all of God's unmerited, unearned, and undeserved grace. This type of thinking reveals a superiority complex. To rectify the thinking that the Gentiles were better than the Jews, Paul commanded them to stop being conceited. Notice in the passage he gives them the doctrines to correct the pride, which is important for us. Bible Doctrine rids us of our prideful thinking; it brings us down to earth; it enables us to see and grasp reality.

Hupselphroneo is having a false sense of importance either because of one's position in life, one's success, achievements or finances. People that advance upward in position, money, or recognition tend to develop a mental attitude of how important they are and that they are really something, which of course is nothing but pride. This is especially true for those who have made it to the top by their own efforts. But under the concept of grace, there is no room for this type of thinking. For in grace, God does something for us as a gift, and because he does it for us, there can be no room for bragging, or feelings of self-importance. Before God does things for his children, such as giving them a promotion or giving them material blessings, He puts them through a humbling process in which he deals with their pride. After the humbling process is finished, God can give the gifts he has in store for them without the effects of pride or self-importance.

King Nebuchadnezzar had this very problem in his life. Daniel 4. Over a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar increased greatly in wealth, power and dominion. Living a life of ease, comfort and great prosperity, he became impressed with himself and what he had accomplished. Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the most important thing in life, that God alone was God, and that he was but a creature of His; and to remind him of this, the Lord humbled him by taking his reason away. King Nebuchadnezzar lost his sanity and lived like an animal for seven years. But after the seven years had passed, Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and kingdom were restored to him by the Lord and he looked to Heaven and praised God. Daniel 4:34,37. Nebuchadnezzar had been delivered from pride.

Pride is a terrible thing. When one is caught up in one of its manifestations, it can destroy the individual and others; for pride leads to a host of mental attitude sins: envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, greed, coveting, and on and on. Pride not only resists the grace of God, which is the only way God works with people, it is also antagonistic to the Grace of God. Not only will pride destroy the individual who has it, pride can ruin the lives of other individuals around him.

Thank God He doesn't leave us with our pride complexes, but rather, in the function of His justice, He humbles us. [Isaiah 2:11](#); [5:15](#); [10:33](#); [Job 33:8-18](#). Through pressure, through testings, through humiliating circumstances and through setbacks, the Lord humbles his people. He brings us down a notch or two, He re-orientes our thinking, brings around to reality, and since the thinking of pride is divorced from reality, He helps us to realize our relationship to the divine order: that He alone is God, and we are but His creatures.

6. The Heights

Another manifestation of pride is *hupsitos*, the **heights**. *Hupsitos* is where the individual has just about reached the pinnacle of pride and arrogance. Their mental attitude concerning themselves, their importance, and their position in life and the scheme of things has gone just about as far up the mountain of pride that one can climb to.

Virtually everybody on earth has a problem with *huperphroneo*, and *hupselophroneo*, where they see themselves as being higher than they really are, and beyond that. But *hupsitos* is where they see themselves as being on the very top of humanity. They really think that they are so vastly superior to all other human beings on earth, that they are in a very special group of superior enlightened beings, that it is their destiny and responsibility to rule over and control all those poor, huddled masses at the base of the mountain.

These types are the "world-rulers", the internationalists, those who make up international finance, who govern over nations, over vast empires, which control the United Nations. And they come from all walks of life: education, the scientific community, religion, economics, global finances, the military, politics, entertainment, etc.. Their egos have been lifted so high, that they are virtually unapproachable with the truth. They really are at the heights of the pride mountain; right up there with Satan. And it will be these people with their lackeys, who will usher in the rule of the anti-Christ on earth.

7. In the Limelight

Another manifestation of pride is found in the word *huperephania*, a composite of two words: *huper* - above or over, and *phainomai* - to appear. It is to appear, to be visible, or to show oneself above others. The original reference is to manifest oneself above others, to be outstanding, or to distinguish oneself. This is done by the individual himself as the result of the outworking of his pride. The person who has this problem considers himself to be better than others and sets out to appear to be above the others in some fashion or another. This is usually accomplished through the means of some natural ability he or she possesses, e.g., good looks, charming personality, intelligence, musical talent, etc..

Paul instructed Timothy that in the last days of the Church Age, this manifestation of pride will be commonplace among with those who are lovers of self, lovers of money, braggarts, and a host of many other things. [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#).

Huperephania, showing oneself to be above the others, is not limited to those who are rich or prominent, nor does it follow that all those who are rich and prominent have this problem. Instead,

it is used to describe anyone who has a natural strength, talent or ability in a given area, considers himself above the others, and uses that strength, ability or talent to appear above his fellow man.

Religiosity is a common manifestation of this. Some people are more prone to lead an aesthetic life, having a natural strength in the area of morality, even in minor things. These types consider themselves to be above others in spiritual matters and often take the limelight. Often they will be found in places of spiritual leadership, manifesting themselves above the rest of their fellow-believers simply because of their natural moral strengths. The Pharisees were experts at this. They didn't drink, smoke, go to the movies, or dance; some even wore blinders to keep from looking at pretty girls that passed by. But the pride of *huperephania* was revealed in their religious acts. They loved to mingle with the people in the market places and on the street corners, wearing their religious garb, acting very pious and holy, uttering prayers to God, giving their money, all in full public view so that all might see how "spiritual" they were.

And it still goes on today with individuals who like to show how religious they are in spiritual matters by wearing religious garb and looking, talking, and acting very pious. Some of the people who do this are believers in Christ, but many of them are not. However, this is definitely not what God wants from his people. His attitude is very clear in this matter for in [James 4:6](#) it states that "*He is opposed to the proud*". That is, he sets himself up in battle array against those believers who manifest themselves above their fellow-believers.

Pride always resists the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God and manifests itself in that type of person. Instead of recognizing the fact that the individual is to join the ranks of other believers in the local church and grow in grace under the teaching of the Word, they parade around to show off their natural talent or ability. These people are saying in effect, "I'm really something; look what I can do!" Rather than, "I'm really nothing and am totally dependent upon the teaching of Bible Doctrine to sustain me and enable me to be productive!"

When considering the problem of pride in believer's lives, whether it is *alazonia* - bragging, or *tuphoo* - conceited, or *phusioo* - being puffed-up with knowledge, *huperphroneo* - esteeming oneself higher than his true status, *hupselophroneo* - being very high-minded, or *huperephania* - manifesting oneself above his fellow-believers, the chief characteristic of pride is that it resists the grace of God. Proud people do not usually gravitate toward grace churches, for they are more impressed with who they are and what they can do than they are with who God is and what He can do for them. And this resistance to God's grace is also manifested in their resistance to doctrinal instruction in the Word. The humble believer is teachable, but the arrogant won't submit himself to teaching. This is especially true if that involves submitting to a Pastor-Teacher who happens to be a man. Pride keeps him from submitting to another man's authority over him, even if ordained by God.

In grace, God wants to help his people to benefit them and to bless them in their souls. To do this, God has to change their souls with doctrinal teaching, for doctrine is the channel through which grace flows. But if the believer rejects the doctrine of God, he is also rejecting the grace of God. And the culprit behind it all is his monstrous pride. Pride rejects grace! The arrogant believer is so lifted up in his own importance, so impressed with his works, he cannot see that God is not impressed with any body's works but His own, nor is he impressed by what man can do for him, but only in what He can do for man. And "what he can do for man" transforms the hearts and minds of His children, if they will humble themselves under His Word.

8. Saving our Sanity

With regard to correcting the problem of pride in our lives, as in the case of *huperphroneo* (thinking higher of ourselves than our true status), we have the instruction in Romans 12:3 "to think soberly". The word used in Greek is *sophroneo* which is a compound of two words: *sozo* - to save, and *phren* - the mind. To save or deliver the mind, to be in one's right mind, as in the case of the man who had the demons cast out of him, Mark 5:15, "to be of a sound mind".

When we think of one who is not in his right mind, we picture someone who has lost touch with reality, one who has lost his senses, one who no longer thinks rationally, or one who is living in a dream world. Often we have seen people like this and had great sympathy for them, wishing that somehow they might be helped through medicine, therapy, proper nutrition, love and understanding. When they are cured of their mental illness, we say they have been "brought back to sanity or reason".

What many people do not realize is that a problem of pride will do exactly the same thing. The individual begins to lose touch with reality. He no longer thinks rationally because his perspective of where he stands in relation to life is greatly out of focus. He sees himself as being higher or more important than he truly is. If he continues in that vein, his mind will become gradually destroyed by a host of mental and emotional sins that accompany pride: envy, jealousy, bitterness, vindictiveness, anger, and using others to accomplish goals. Pride will destroy one's thinking and totally corrupt one's being. Mark 7:20-23.

This is what is happening at this very moment to the fallen angel, Lucifer. In the beginning, he became lifted up with pride because of his great beauty and wisdom, thinking more highly of himself than his true status, until his total being was corrupted. Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28. Where at one time Lucifer dwelt at peace, tranquility and harmony with his Creator, his soul now is full of rage, hatred, bitterness, and every perversity. Revelations 12:12,17.

Lucifer, in his pride, saw himself higher than his true status. The only thing higher than the highest created being is God himself. In his pride and envy of God's position, Lucifer set out to depose God from His throne in order to bring into reality his fabricated self-image. God stood in the way of Lucifer's fulfilling his evil ambition, so God had to be removed. This is all due to the illusion Lucifer had about himself because of his pride. To accomplish all this, Lucifer persuaded one-third of the angels to follow after him and plunged the world into a bloodbath - all because of his pride.

When one starts to think more highly of himself than he actually is, the beginning of the devilment of his soul sets in. If allowed to continue, the soul will become ruined by all the sins that accompany the pride complex: implacability, rejection of grace, anger, envy, jealousy, and vindictiveness.

Pride is the reason why people won't come to Jesus Christ for salvation (pride rejects grace). It is also the reason why believers won't submit to the authority of God, the Church, the Word or the Pastor-Teacher (pride rejects grace). Because of pride, people leave churches, wives refuse to submit to husbands, and people refuse to be taught the Word of God. In new believers, pride often leads to legalism.

When one of God's children is caught up in the thinking of pride, God works with him to return him to reality: that is, to deliver his mind and to help him think rationally and soberly. Job 33:17,18. He must bring us "down to earth" in our thinking, so we won't destroy ourselves and hurt others around us. The way He does this is by humbling us through trials, testings, humiliating circumstances, and reversals in life. Combining these pressures with the instruction of the Word, he turns us from pride and thus delivers our mind, sanity and reason. This is not only a function of His justice but, also, of His great love for us.

There can be only one God, and the rest of us are his creatures. And when certain men tend to forget that and elevate themselves in their thinking above their true status, God will humble them and bring them down to reality. We saw that this was Lucifer's problem. As the Messianic Cherub who guarded the throne of God, he became impressed with himself and up-lifted in his thinking. And to prop up his fabricated self-image, the inflated image he had of himself, he sought and still does seek, to depose God from his throne. But God in His justice states, "*Nevertheless you will be brought down to the pit.*" Isaiah 14:15. As a function of justice, God humbles the arrogant, even with us! But with us, his love is ever present, forming us into the image of his Son who was always humble.

9. The Answer to Pride

The scriptures tell us to have the mental attitude of humility or humbleness. Paul served the Lord with great humility, Acts 20:19. He told the Ephesians to be completely humble and gentle, Ephesians 4:2. He told the Philippians not to be doing anything out of conceit or selfish ambition, but with humility to consider others better than themselves. Philippians 2:3. The Colossians were warned about having a false humility (a show of religiosity), Cololossians 2:18,23. And Peter warns the people that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, therefore, to have a mental attitude of humility toward one another. 1 Peter 5:5.

Humility comes from the Greek word *tapeinophrosune* - lowliness of mind. The word was not used by the early Greek writers because they did not consider it a desirable attribute, but for Christians it is. It is not having an inferiority complex or thinking of yourself as something vile or worthless, nor is it the absence of pretension or modesty. Neither does it have the appearance of religiosity or self-abasement. These shows of religiousness and false humility are nothing more than a cloak for one's pride.

What humility is, therefore, is being in subjection to God's Will, God's Word, and His commandments for us. It is the total submission of the person to the Word of God and the teachings of Bible Doctrine. When one is teachable, it shows that he is not arrogant before the Lord; but when he refuses to be taught, he demonstrates his pride. This is the basic distinction between grace-believers and works-oriented believers. God channels His grace to us through Bible Doctrine, so that when we receive His Word, we are receiving His grace. But if a person has a problem of pride, it is revealed by rejection of God's teaching.

Lowliness of mind grasps the true idea of *sophronos*, (thinking soberly, sensibly, rationally, and sanely), for it comprehends our true position in life with mankind, fellow Christians and God and lives within that framework. It is the acknowledgment of, and acceptance of, our total person as being creatures of God and as being sons of God, as being righteous in nature, yet still possessing a sin nature. As creatures of God, it means we are totally dependent upon Him for all of our needs:

spiritual, emotional, physical and financial. We look to Him in faith for these provisions. As sons, we know that none of us are better or more important than others.

When God disciplines, instructs, counsels, and tests us, His purpose is to bring us to maturity so that we will be able one day to reign as kings on the earth. Recognizing our righteous nature, we realize that we must have Bible Doctrine to feed it for growth. Human solutions will not help it. Concerning our sinful natures, we recognize that we will always have a problem of struggling with sin until the day we die. God doesn't want us to sin, but if we do, we have a Defense Attorney before the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. We accept God's forgiveness and cleansing when we confess our sins to Him; and in regard to ourselves, we forgive ourselves, love ourselves, and accept ourselves even when we sin, because Christ does and so does the Father. In grace and in humility, there can be no room for self-condemnation, self-rejection, self-hatred or self-punishment.

Tapeinophrosune is the opposite of all that is found in the pride complex. The epitome of *tapeinophrosune* was found in Jesus Christ who was meek and lowly of heart. Matthew 11:29. He demonstrated it in His life on earth by being totally dependent upon the Father's provision and totally submissive to God's will for His life.

On the other hand, the epitome of pride is found in Satan, who is the most self-willed, selfish, self-seeking, and self-glorifying of all God's creatures. Satan not only did not stay in the position in which he was created and appointed to, he sought to depose his Creator from His throne - a typical manifestation of pride. Satan's actions are a contrast to those of Jesus Christ, who not only had the right to claim deity and all the glory that goes with it, but who left it all behind in Heaven coming to earth as a servant of God, submitting His will to the Father's will, and being obedient unto death. Philippians 2:5-8. This is the classic definition of humility. Humility is not just finding out the will of God for your life through intake of Bible Doctrine, it is also the application of it to your life. Humility is the accomplishment of God's will for you.

So *tapeinophrosune* is the opposite of selfishness, self-willed ambition, self-glory, and religiosity.

Pride is so difficult to see in our own lives. We can see it in others but fail to recognize it in our own lives. This is because of a variety of reasons. **First** of all, pride is so much a part of our lives. It is difficult to see the forest for the trees. **Second**, we have not had many good examples of true humility in the church today. What has been passed off as humility is nothing more than the false humility of religiosity. This is nothing more than using a religious facade to cover one's pride and refusing to submit to doctrinal teaching and authority. **Third**, there is a failure to grasp where we stand in relation to God as His creatures. Lastly, we are often unable to recognize the manifestations of pride. But this study on pride and the study on anger are designed to help the believer recognize the manifestation of these two sins so that he may be able to see them in his own life and do something about them.

Of the above mentioned four reasons, one area that I would like to elaborate upon is the "false humility" found in churches today - not in the unbelievers within in the churches or in false religions, but among born-again Christians. This false humility gives the impression that they are really humble and walk with the Lord, but in truth, many do not. On the outside, they appear to be humble. They say the right words and are active in church-related affairs, often playing the role of

someone who is very "spiritual". But, they will not submit themselves to a Pastor-Teacher or to the teaching of Bible Doctrine. Colossians 2:20-23.

A humble believer is one who is teachable, one who will put himself under the teaching ministry of some Pastor and learn from his ministry. To do that, he has to overcome his pride and any resistance that he might have toward authority and toward learning new truth. This can be especially difficult if it conflicts with what someone else taught him. This is true humility, where one submits himself to God, to God's Word, to the Spirit of God, the will of God, and the men of God that He stations in authority. Unfortunately, for the most part, the average Christian is more impressed by his own works and religious activities, than he is with God's grace and God's Word.

True humility of mind comes about as the result of putting on the new man. To do this takes submission to God through the filling of the Holy Spirit and a continuing renewal of the inner man through the teaching of Bible Doctrine. This not only renews him but, also, transforms his thinking from the thinking of the Cosmos (world system) to that of Jesus Christ. God has pre-destined that we would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This transformation, through humility, cannot be effected without gaining a new nature, because the old nature was characterized by arrogance, rejection of doctrine, religiosity and, in short, false humility.

The arrogant Christians are those who refuse to submit to God's Word, and magnify themselves above their fellow believers. Many of them are characterized by tales of healing, tongue, seeing angels, seeing God, body experiences, visions, dreams, and prophecies. These "super-Christians" not only appear to be spiritual giants by their amazing feats, talents, or abilities, but they confirm their so-called spirituality by using swelling words of eloquence in their conversation and prayers, until they manifest an aura of piety. Others will appear to be sweet and nice, gushy and sincere: the epitome of Christian virtues, or so some would think. Yet on the inside, their minds are in rebellion against God, substituting the study of God's Word for any one of a thousand so-called religious activities. They are more impressed with what they are doing for God than what God has done for them in Christ. These individuals are not humble, even if they give that impression; they are arrogant, definitely manifesting pride. The reason many believers tend toward these works and toward works-oriented churches, instead of seeking a grace ministry, is that their pride resists grace.

Whether it is a great intellect, strength of character, superior will, or the ability to succeed in a particular vocation, individuals who have these superior talents and abilities often have a difficult time recognizing their need for grace. They don't really feel they need God's help because they can handle their lives by themselves, which isn't realistic thinking. Many unbelievers refuse to come to Christ for salvation because of their pride.

Living the Christian life is a total grace concept. Although everyone enters into the Christian life by God's grace, many depart from that principle and live by works after they become Christians. But true-grace living recognizes our inability to please God, let alone even make it through life with just human strengths and is, therefore, dependent upon all of God's grace provisions, which are appropriated by faith.

The thinking of humility was expressed by the Apostle Paul when he said, "I will glory in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell upon me." 2 Corinthians 12:10. Paul did not boast of his own human strengths and abilities but, rather, of his weaknesses. For in his

weaknesses, he was constantly speaking of his inability to perform, and was totally dependent upon God for help. This is a far cry from so many Christians in the church today who glory in their own strengths, abilities and talents, which they use for spiritual bullying of the grace believer.

True humility says, "I need God". It recognizes the inability to meet the challenge that lies before it without God's help. It appropriates the provision of grace for everything in life. For sin, it receives forgiveness and cleansing, through simple confession of sin. For facing life, it believes in God's provision finished from eternity past. Hebrews 4:3. Faced with a crisis, it looks to the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 12:9,10. In looking for a ministry for service to God, it takes the grace road of the spirit and doctrine to maturity, where it then ministers in its spiritual gift - again, a grace function. In seeking the capacity to live, love and enjoy life, humility goes after the renewal of the inner man and the removal of the emotional scars from the soul. Such mental and emotional stability is the result of Christ being formed in us through the Word. Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 4:22-24.

10. In Conclusion

The three basic things, among others, that hinder the believer from going on in the grace of God are his guilt, anger and pride. It is my sincere desire and hope that through this study, the believers in Christ will learn to understand the various manifestations and recognize them in their own lives, so that they can deal with them and go on in God's grace, enjoying all that he has in store for them.

If you are not a believer in Christ, you can be one today by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He came to earth as a man, lived the perfect life that God required of men, died on the cross for your sins, was buried, and raised again the third day. By placing your trust in Him as your Lord and Savior, you will have forgiveness of sins and the guarantee of living forever with Him in perfect peace and happiness with a new body. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."* Acts 16:31.