

IN THE FLESH



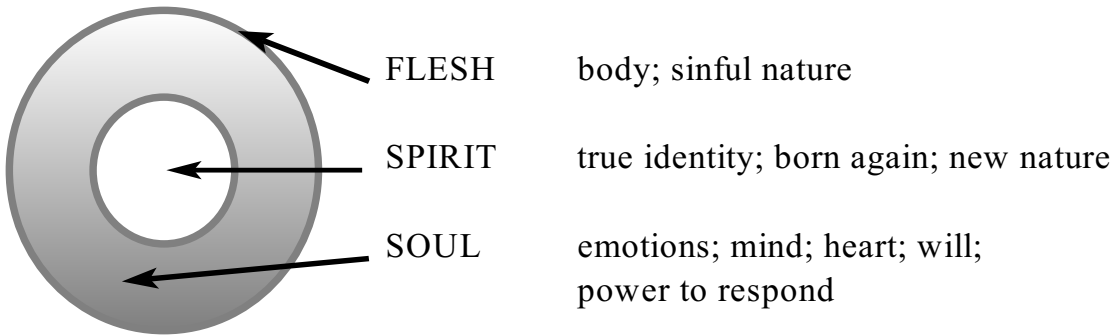
LEVITICUS 18:1-5	Obey the LAW to gain life
ROMANS 7:4-6	Released from the LAW through DEATH Obedient to the SPIRIT
ROMANS 8:5-8	Submission to the Flesh = Death Submission to the Spirit = Life
GALATIANS 5:13-26	Works of the Flesh / Fruit of the Spirit
ROMANS 8:1,2	the Law of sin & Death the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus
PHILIPPIANS 2:12,13	God enables you to do His will

ROMANS 7:14-20

The way it seems

HOLY SPIRIT ^{righteousness} ⇒ *spirit* (*soul*) flesh ← _{sin} unclean spirits

The way it is



Walking In The Spirit of God

Douglas Thomas

This study has at its core two searches. One is related to our *true* identities, and the other is related to the type of behavior that is expected of us by God and how it is achieved. The reason the two are connected is because what we are capable of is affected by who we are. As believers, two extra factors have been put in our equation: we are not who we used to be, and we are now empowered by the Holy Spirit! The Spirit said through Jesus that we would be born again: John 3:3&7 (through Peter, too: 1 Peter 1:23). He said through Paul that we are new creations - that the old was passed away, and all things have become new (1 Corinthians 5:17). Most shocking of all may be one thing He said through John in one of his epistles. "Whoever has been born of God **does not sin**, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God," (1 John 3:9 NKJV). Also, the Spirit declared through Moses, Paul, and Jesus that we should be perfect (Deuteronomy 18:13; Colossians 1:28; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Matthew 5:48;). If we believe that we have been changed by becoming believers, we should examine what the changes are, how they affect our identity, and how they can affect our behavior. Here, then, are some questions for which this study will hope to find answers:

- 1) What became different in my substance
when I came to believe on Jesus for Salvation?
- 2) What became different in my identity when I came to believe on Jesus?
- 3) How does my Father God expect me to behave now that I am a believer?
- 4) If the behavioral level is set high, how can I attain it,
since I seem to think and feel the same way I did before I began to believe?
- 5) What does my poor behavior do to my relationship with God?

I) What became different in my substance when I came to believe on Jesus for Salvation?

The basic answer to this question is that I changed from being dead to being alive! When God told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the reason He gave was because if they did, they would die. When they ate of the fruit, their flesh continued to live for a few hundred years, so it is not likely that they died physically as a result of eating the fruit, although that is possible. What is more likely is that they died spiritually. The Spirit said through Paul that death came on the entire human race through Adam's sin, and describes it as spiritual death (Romans 5:14-19). God came to humans and offered them life through the Law that he gave Israel through Moses. As you just read in Romans, death reigned from Adam to Moses. Then, in Leviticus 18:1-5, God offered life: just obey all of the Law! Oh, well, have you got any other ideas, Lord? The Spirit of God said through Paul that no one *ever* attained righteousness by obeying the Law. Jesus proved the opposite to be true, though. He could obey the Law because He was already righteous!

Now, then, for the more complicated answer: I am made up of a body, a soul, and a spirit, and what changed when I believed Jesus would save me from sin was my spirit. When God made Adam, He formed his body from dust, and breathed the breath of life into him and Adam became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). Breath, wind, and spirit are all referred to in both Hebrew and Greek with one word in each language. God, then, breathed Adam's spirit into his body. What that means for me, then, is that I am spirit, and I have been put in a body. The product of my spirit being in my body is my soul. My soul is made up of my emotions, my mind, and my will. If my spirit had been put in a female body, my soul would have turned out differently, because the events forming it would have differed. If my spirit had been put in a black skinned body, my experiences would be different than if it were in a white skinned body, so my emotions, my heart, my will, would have been formed differently. Not necessarily better or worse, but different, because my response-to-situation training would have been different, based on my experiences and on the presence around me of different influences.

I infer from what Jesus tried to teach some Sadducees one day that my spirit does not have a gender that is related to reproduction. The theologians came to Jesus to challenge His teaching about resurrection from death. They told him a tale about a woman who was married by a man and then 9 kinsmen-redeemers, as each died. When they asked Him whose wife she would be in the resurrection, Jesus replied that "...in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." Angels are not described as mating and reproducing baby angels. Roman Catholic mythology describes many baby angels, but Scriptures don't. This idea and the statement that resurrected humans do not marry imply pretty clearly to me that humans in bodies of flesh reproduce, but that humans who have been resurrected from death do not need to, and therefore do not have bodies that are "equipped" sexually. The related point in this study is that my sexual influence in my life comes from my flesh alone, not my spirit.

I make my decisions on how to respond to situations around me in my soul. I base my decisions on information and other influences from my flesh and from my spirit. The

information from my flesh is gathered by my senses and filtered by the fact that sin dwells in my flesh. Please read Romans 7:14-20. The information that I get from my spirit is influenced by God's Spirit and is strengthened by the righteousness that He has imparted to me in my spirit. When I decide how to respond to situations arising around me, my responding equipment is in my soul: my mind, my emotions, my will.

Many psychologists think wrongly that we are only two-part beings. One part is physical, the other is some combination of soul and spirit, something that is intangible or untouchable, but which undeniably exists. The fact that they cannot perceive the difference between soul and spirit accounts for the fact that they have only two avenues of assistance to persons in their care. They can counsel, and they can administer drugs. In either event, the techniques that they use to help us are all limited to the flesh as a vehicle for change, because even counseling can affect my soul only by using my eyes and/or ears, which are flesh.

When I perceive that I also have a spirit, I have had revealed to me another avenue of assistance. It is this avenue (my spirit) that God (Who is Spirit) uses most of the time to effect change in me. The first change is to allow my spirit to die, as it was doomed to do, since I was born in Adam's image. "Now, wait a minute," I can hear someone cry! "I thought God said He created us in His own image!" Actually, He only created Adam and Eve in His own image (Genesis 1:27). Adam He created from dust, and Eve He created from Adam's rib. Cain and Abel were born, not created. Look at the comment regarding Seth's birth in Genesis 5:3. He was born, and born in Adam's image in every way. I am a great, great, etc. grandson of Adam, born in his image in every way, including the spiritually dead state he was in by the time he begot Seth, because he had been thrown out of the garden of Eden by then. He was already doomed to spiritual death.

Very good news came to me when it was made known to me that I could go ahead and suffer the spiritual death that I was doomed to, and then in its place receive the spiritual life that Jesus died to give me. If I had died physically in the spiritually dead state that I was in, I would have stayed in my spiritually dead condition for eternity. Praise His holy Name, He gave the privilege to me of accepting my spiritual death and receiving His Spiritual Life! So, in being born again, I was born *in His image* this time! Adam was the first person *created* in God's image, but Jesus was the first person *born* in God's image (Matthew 1:18; Matthew 3:17; John 5:19)! Father desired that Jesus would be the firstborn among many children (Romans 8:29).

What changed in my substance, then, was my spirit. I was reborn spiritually. Obviously, my flesh did not change when I believed Jesus for salvation from sin. My soul did not change, because my thoughts worked the same sins the day after my salvation that they did on the day before. My spirit, however, that place where my body gains life and makes me a living soul, was completely replaced with a perfect spirit. I have been made perfect in my spirit, since I have been born this time in God's image. In fact, I have been born *of God*. Born of His substance, just as a human baby is born of its mother's body. Every molecule in the child was once a molecule in the mother. And, as the Spirit of God said through Paul in chapter 7 of the letter to the Church at Rome, when I died spiritually, I was released from the Law as my unattainable source of life so that I could gain life through the Spirit of the Living God (Romans 7:4-6).

2) What became different in my identity when I came to believe on Jesus?

Since my soul is the product of my spirit being in my body, and since my spirit is the part of me that was redeemed first (soul and body following after), then my spirit is the basis of my eternal life in Jesus. As the Spirit said through Paul, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new," (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV). In the letter to the Hebrews, the Holy Spirit said through the writer, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," (Hebrews 4:12 NKJV). God's Word is able to cut into our souls. In the word picture drawn in this verse, He is describing sources and paths from sources. Just as the marrow in bones gives life to our flesh by creating and sending blood through the joints, our spirit gives life to our soul (Genesis 2:7). The spiritual part of me is what is going to proceed to heaven, clothed in a new, spiritual body. The body I now have will be redeemed, and converted to a spiritual body. My true identity, then, is who I am *spiritually*. It moves about in a body.

The reality of the Kingdom of God is the spiritual world. What happens in the spiritual world casts a shadow in the natural world. Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have to be born again to **see** the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). The most real part of what God has created is not even *visible* to unbelievers. The physical world is superimposed on the spiritual world. This world will pass away, but the Kingdom of Heaven is an *eternal* Kingdom (1 John 2:16,17; Daniel 2:44; 2 Corinthians 5:1). The eternal part of us is our spirit, and therefore as believers, our eternal life has already begun. Our identity has been replaced because we have now been born of God, not just of earthly parents (Hebrews 12:9; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

Our souls are presently in the process of being redeemed, and we will one day have redeemed bodies - spiritual bodies - but our spirits *have been replaced*. We do not always perceive ourselves to be new creatures, and others will testify in agreement regarding their perceptions of us, but that is because we still have the same bodies and something left of the same old minds. As we mature in Christ, we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1,2). Our souls are being renewed little by little, as we allow His mighty power to pull down strongholds of unbelief and misbelief (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). When we allow Him to replace our old minds with the mind of Christ, we are allowing Him to perfect our souls (1 Corinthians 2:13-16). This is step number two of our redemption. Do not be deceived to believe that you have not been changed drastically by believing the Lord for your salvation. We are now capable of things that we were not capable of in our "dead" state.

3) How does my Father God expect me to behave now that I am a believer?

Back to the shocker - "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God," (1 John 3:9 NKJV). That is pretty strong talk! It was condemnation to me back when I was deceived to believe that we are two-part creatures. There was nothing of me to fulfil the Scriptures that spoke of me as having been redeemed. There was still pie in the sky in the sweet by and by, but I needed steak on the plate before it got late! All of the "holiness movement" people I was fellowshiping with seemed to think that my mind would be perfected and my behavior would be perfected when I got "really saved." Well, if perfect behavior was the sign of really being saved, I didn't know anybody who qualified.

None of the Scriptures that spoke of believers having been perfected made any sense. I got saved when one morning the Spirit of God revealed to me that I could not know the next step beyond death unless someone made it known to me. Someone would have to be merciful and reach back over the wall that was in front of me and pull me the right direction if I was to get in the right direction. I could not even be aware of the invisible, but undeniable, world that existed right under my nose, unless I received help from that world. I was made so absolutely aware of my inability that I was completely undone.

Not knowing the Spirit of God from the devil, I asked the power that was obviously stirring me to recognize my dilemma if He was both the Power that nature and creation had been revealing to me and the God of the Church of Jesus. An answer came to me that filled my heart and gave me an instant and perfect peace to replace the terrible and perfectly disturbed condition I had been moved to. It was, "**I AM.**" I did not know that to be the Name that He had revealed to Moses at the burning bush, or I would probably have proceeded to die and face Him.

This confrontation occurred immediately before a Methodist celebration of the Lord's Supper, which included the ritual prayers of confession of sin and acceptance of Jesus as payment for sin and a request to be empowered by His Spirit to live a life that pleased Him. I share this so I may more clearly share my motivation to ask what God thought regarding whether or not I was "really saved." My first experience with Him was not regarding sin, but *life*. The Spirit revealed to me that there was no hope of getting out of this world alive unless Someone from beyond my position on the railroad track of life came back and provided me with a revelation of what was ahead and how to prepare for it.

It seemed *arbitrary* to me at the time, that I was lead in the prayers of the communion service to confess my sinfulness and the Sacrifice that covered it. As I studied His Word from that time on, He started to show me His desires that I leave the life of sin that I had been in. No one "shared the Gospel" with me when I converted to Jesus as Savior. It was the Spirit of God Himself Who called me to salvation. So, it seemed quite natural to me that it should be Him that straightened out my misunderstanding regarding the "Highway of Holiness."

I sought Him earnestly and expected Him to fulfil His responsibility of continuing to guide me if He wanted me to continue to follow. I knew that the whole idea of my life in Him was *His* idea, because He got my attention to start with. I knew that He said through Paul

to the Church at Philippi that it was Him working in them that enabled them to desire to do good, and to be able to do good (Philippians 2:12,13). So, I asked Him how I could still have so much sin in my life if I was “really saved.” If I was not saved, was *anybody*? I felt that He led me to believe that I was made up of three parts, and that one had been made perfect already, that one was in the process of being made perfect, and that when the time was right, the third would be made perfect all at once - spirit, soul, and then body. I expected Him to answer me and I was not disappointed! Suddenly, all of the Scriptures that said that I *had been made perfect* had a fulfillment in my spirit. All of the Scriptures that said I was *being made perfect* had a fulfillment, and all of those that said that I *would be made perfect* had a fulfillment.

Now, back to the point - I am capable of perfect behavior if I allow my perfected spirit to listen to the Spirit of the Lord and guide my decision making process every time I have to make a decision. Perhaps I did not emphasize the right parts of that sentence. Maybe it should look like this: I am capable of *perfect behavior* **if** I allow my perfected spirit to *listen to the Spirit of the Lord* and *let Him guide my decision making process* every time I have to make a decision. If I don't listen to my spirit, where God's righteousness dwells, I might make the mistake of listening by means of my senses to my flesh, where sin dwells (Romans 7:16-25), and my behavior will be much removed from perfect.

I could not believe that He could expect great things of me until I could believe that it was at least remotely possible that great things *could* come from me! While I only had my behavior to base my understanding on, the level of obedience I felt He could look for in me was rather small. Once I could see that the transformation in my spirit was capable of equipping me to obey Him, I sought Him for the process of training myself for obedience and improving the frequency of the times I obeyed rather than sinned.

My spirit will not sin. It is born of God, made perfect in His image (1 John 3:9). My flesh is a place where sin dwells (Romans 7:17-20). Paul calls it a “body of death” and cries out, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). Twice in Romans 7:15-25 he is upset about his behavior and the sin in his life and exclaims, “yet it is no longer I who do it, but sin dwelling in me,” (verses 17 and 20). He recognizes that the true Paul, his born-again spirit, is not guilty of sin in his life, but his flesh is leading him into sin. He is, of course, responsible for the sin, since it is in his body, but the guilt is in his flesh. In chapter 8, verse 1, he declares that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. There was condemnation for it, but it was executed on Jesus' flesh, not ours.

Though sin still dwells in our flesh, we are capable of doing better. But, how?

**4) If the behavioral level is set high,
how can I attain it,
since I seem to think and feel the same way I did
before I began to believe?**

Once, when He had me around a rather despicable person for quite some time, God was using the person's presence to teach me how to love people. I had a tremendous desire to punch the fellow, but the Lord was teaching me how to have the character of Jesus, so I kept repenting of my desire and asking for love to be put in my heart for him. To my amazement, over and over my heart would be filled with love for the man, to the point of hoping that he would not suffer for the torment he was putting me through, that he would be blessed, that his family would be blessed, and then he would attack me again and I would want to knock him out again.

Beginning to believe that since I was not gaining much ground regarding automatically responding in love, and that even though I repeatedly experienced enormous love for him, I repeatedly found hatred in my heart first, I decided that I was deceiving myself when I believed that I was loving Him. Again, I confronted the One Who was responsible for making me capable of love or any other good thing. I asked, "Lord, why is it so hard for me to love this guy?!" I felt very certain that He answered, "It is not hard for you to love him. It is *impossible!* The only way it is even going to even appear that you love him is if you will stop hating him long enough to allow Me to love him through you! I love him. If you let me, I will show my to him through you."

He started to teach me about the fruit of His Spirit next. Please read Romans 8:1-11 and Galatians 5:13-26. In the Romans passage, it is clear that we can live with our minds focused on what the Spirit gives us, or die with our minds focused on what our flesh gives us. The righteous requirements of the law are fully met in us who walk after the Spirit instead of the flesh. This means that we are made obedient through the obedience of Jesus. We can obey if we will follow His Spirit's leading.

In the Galatians passage, he describes the works of the flesh, which will influence our activities if we listen to our flesh. Before you feel that it must be talking about someone else, because it is so hideous, remember how Jesus teaches in Matthew 5 about the inclination toward adultery in our hearts qualifies us to be full-fledged adulterers from Father's perspective, and that the inclination toward hatred in our hearts qualifies us as murderers. So, the inclination in my heart toward any of the works of the flesh shows their presence in my flesh.

But, the fruit of His Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fullness of faith, gentleness, and self-control. These are not found in humanity unless they are a fruit of the Spirit of Jesus. You may be thinking of some unbeliever who exhibited patience or love or gentleness or kindness around you and saying to yourself that they could not have been manifesting a fruit of His Spirit, because His Spirit is not going to be at work in an unbeliever. I maintain that if you saw the fruit, they were the fruit of His Spirit, even if manifested in an unbeliever. If the Holy Spirit did not work in the hearts of people before

they became believers, no one would ever become a believer! Faith, (or *faithfulness*, in some translations) is a fruit of His Spirit. Without faith, I cannot believe unto salvation! Without Him giving me faith, I could have no faith in Him.

The picture in Philippians 2:12 & 13 is of Him manifesting His character and desires in me, and the power to accomplish it is described in Romans 8. If I want to allow the Christ to appear within me, I need to repent of the work of my flesh that would hinder the presence of the fruit of His Spirit, and give Him freedom to work in me and through me to manifest His presence and character. The more often I allow Him to accomplish it, the more easily I make the decision to allow Him to do it the next time!

Something that He taught me in order to help me grasp the concept of His fruit was that my “responding tools” needed repair, because they were part of my soul, which was being repaired. He showed me that the problems that I had in life were *never* the *situations* that I faced, but that they were *always* the improper *responses* to the situations I found in life. If a situation arose in which I responded with the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-21), I would have a *problem!* I could, however, respond to the same situation with the fruit of His Spirit, and I would *not* have a problem!

An example would be if two people walked up to me and I told them that I had a dozen eggs that I was going to throw against a barn. One of the people liked eggs, so he got upset. The other person didn't like eggs, so he would not be upset. If the guy who liked eggs responded to the situation with his flesh, he would have a problem. If, even though he was upset, responded to the situation with peace, patience, self-control, etc., by the power and presence of the Spirit of the Living God, he would not have a problem!

Every time I face a situation, then, I need to seek the Lord's desires, and the abilities that He wants to give to me to respond to the situation with His power and character. If I am continually responding to situations with the character of Jesus, people will feel like they have been around Him when they have been around me, because they *will* have been around Him, as He manifested Himself in my submission to Him. My behavior will have been Christ-like!

5) What does my poor behavior do to my relationship with God?

Since our God loved us so much when we were dead and engulfed in sin that He sent Jesus to die for us in order to give us new lives, we could expect that He would be very interested in protecting and developing His massive investment in us. We do not want to lean on our own understanding or human reasoning on such an important subject, though. Let's look in the Book. Surely He has addressed the matter.

First, we want to know what God's desire of us is, and then, we want to know how to get there from where we are if we are not already living up to it. He said through Peter, (1 Peter 1:13-21 NKJV) "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.' And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Another time His desire is revealed regarding our relationship with Him and how it is affected by our disobedience is when He says through John (1 John 2:3-6 NKJV), "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." The people whom Jesus told "Depart from me, I never knew you," (Luke 13:27) thought because they were doing works for Him that they had an acceptable relationship with Him, but He wanted more.

The Spirit warns us through Paul in his letter to the Church at Galatia not to try to base our relationship on works. Please read the whole of chapter 3. Our relationship with God as a Father is founded on what Jesus has done for us. It is built by what Jesus is doing in us, by His Spirit. It is inhabited by the way we renew our love with Him. As He said through John, (1 John 2:1,2 NKJV) "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

The payment for all sin was made on the cross. Some of the payment will never be applied to anyone's debt, though! If I never confess to God that I agree with Him that I have sinned, and fail to ask Him to accept the payment for my sin that was made by Jesus on the cross, I will spend eternity paying for my own sin, and never paying off my debt. If I agree with Him by confession that I have sinned, and ask Him for forgiveness based on the

sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, I have begun a new life in Him. Since sin still dwells in my flesh, it is possible (should I say *likely*?) that some of that sin will again surface in my life. If it does, what should I do?

I understand that the first thing some football coaches teach their players is that due to the nature of the game they are playing, they are *going to fall down*. Since it is inevitable, then the plan to make is to think of some way to take advantage of it! Fall forward, toward the goal! The next thing to consider is that if they find themselves down on the ground, and the game is not over, they must get back up! I suggest that we learn something from this strategy. As Paul said to the Church at Rome, his spirit obeyed the law of God, but his flesh obeyed the law of sin and death (Romans 7). Since his flesh was still holding sin, he still stumbled into acts of sin. He continually returned to his Lord after falling, though! If God requires us to forgive as often as we are asked, (Matthew 18:21-35) can we not expect Him to do even more for us when we ask? If He truly forgets our sins after He cleanses us from them (Isaiah 43:25) then even if we commit the same sin twice, when we return the second time to confess and ask forgiveness, we do not have to say, "I did it again," or He would say, "You did what again?"

Repentance means "to change your mind." It does not mean that my behavior changes, but if I have truly had a change of mind, it should result in changed behavior. John, when chastising religious leaders who were appearing at his baptism area, demanded of them that they should be bearing fruit that was appropriate for people who had repented (Matthew 3:8). He drew a line between repentance and changes in behavior, then.

When we are able to allow Him to work Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) and fear of Him in our hearts (Proverbs 23:17; Proverbs 19:23; Acts 9:31) so that repentance can come, we can come boldly into the throne room to find grace and mercy in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We can come because what Jesus has done and is doing make us acceptable in His sight. Someone said, "God loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us in that condition!" So, my goal is to walk in perfect holiness before a holy God. Until I have a perfected mind, however, I will make mistakes and be deceived. When I do, I need to run to my Father and ask for forgiveness and deliverance and freedom from sin.

My behavior is related to the Kingdom of God. My identity is related to the Family of God. I do not change my identity by changing my behavior. Good behavior doesn't change it any more than bad behavior does. Obedience is a Kingdom issue with regard to its advantages and costs.

Resolve

Once, I was “in the flesh,” (Romans 7:5,6). That means that my spirit was dead, and the life I had was unable to become free from the power of sin. When I was born again, I became “in Christ,” (Romans 6:11; Romans 8:1,2; Romans 16:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Now, I have been set free from the *penalty* of sin, and have been given the potential to be set free from the *power* of sin, if I will walk in it. My soul is responsible for making decisions by properly using my emotions, my understanding, and my will. If my mind is set on the things of the Spirit, I will walk in righteousness. If my mind is set on the things of the flesh, I will walk in sin. Walking after the flesh is being “carnally minded,” which means, “flesh minded.” Walking after the Spirit is called being “spiritually minded.” The Spirit said through Paul that “to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,” (Romans 8:5-10).

When I face situations in life, I am going to make a decision with my soul regarding how to respond to the situation. If I submit my soul to my spirit, where God’s righteousness (rightness, or correctness) dwells, I will respond to the situation with the fruit of His Spirit, manifesting Jesus (revealing Him, or making Him known or seen). If I respond to the situation by submitting to my senses and my flesh, where sin dwells, the works of my flesh will manifest sin.

If I commit the fruit of His Spirit to memory, I have made them more available to myself when I am in some situation trying to decide how to respond. If I have certain sins that frequently become my responses to difficult situations, I need to discern the fruit that would most appropriately replace the sin, and seek the power of God to pull down the stronghold of mis-belief or unbelief that is giving the sin a place from which to work (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). I need to find the lies that I am believing and replace them with Scriptural truth, so that I respond to situations equipped by the Spirit of our mighty God! He will be glorified, I will be empowered, and the people around me will be blessed!