

# *Insights into Fullness of Life in Christ*

## *9.....Adversity and its Positive Associations Attitudes, Priorities, New Covenant and Law*

When I was writing and recording *The Hidden Blessings of Adversity* (unit 7) I became aware that we believers experience a considerable amount of adversity, some of it because we either do not know or do not carry out what the Lord expresses in His Word. When I recorded *An Antidote to Adversity* (unit 8) I became even more acutely aware of this. So I have decided to dedicate this unit to setting out three major ways in which we in the church seem to ere, possibly bringing on ourselves the chastening of the Lord, which we otherwise might not experience if we were obedient to His word in these deeper things. So this unit of study will encompass three aspects of the Christian life that do seem to be understood and not lived as the Lord would expect of us. These are:

- 1 Three particular wrong attitudes towards God Himself, other people, places and things and how we can easily defile ourselves – see what Jesus taught.
- 2 Two examples from scripture indicating how easy it is to get our priorities wrong.
- 3 An examination of where some parts of the church and some believers, unconsciously follow scripture legalistically, when the new covenant has deemed we do otherwise.

We will then, in summary, briefly examine how a correction of these three aspects will lead to a life of grace, truth and faith which will or should lead to the Lord having less reason to chasten us (although there will always be some) and we should be able to live in a lesser degree of adversity and to get on with doing His will day by day.

In one respect, this unit of study is quite different to all the previous studies. I will be drawing substantially on the work of two writers who have written with special skill in the areas to be studied. However, it will not be just an academic transference of intellectual material from these specialist writers into my writing as, over several years, their opinions, ideas and proclamations have been transmitted into my own life to a considerable degree, so that what they have taught has become my very own, the Spirit of God enlightening me on all the aspects of the work, although I am far from perfect in the application of it all in my own life. The study, as usual will be themed out of the Lord's leading of me, with the other writer's ideas interspersed to present all the relevant ideas. Each writer will be introduced as we proceed. One last point. As everyone who knows who is studying these units the focus is on living out the life of Jesus in faith and by the Spirit of God. This study, because it deals in some deep Biblical principles may seem to suggest legalism and away from the Spirit. A proper consideration of what is said will reveal that the focus in what the Spirit does through us is still paramount.

*Let's move into the study. As always, the Spirit of God is your teacher.*

No	Thematic Point	Developmental Point	Illustrations and linkages
I N T R O D U C T I O N	<b>Some important questions</b>	<p>Why do many Christians seem to struggle to live the life as it is expressed in the New Testament? It is an important question, especially in these days of dramatic changes in the world. More than ever before, believers need to be able to embrace and live by the fullness of Spirit and faith that is offered through the death and resurrection of Christ. This series of studies is devoted to the purpose of highlighting to believers around the world, providing some resources they can use to learn of God and live as He always intended we should live.</p> <p>However, as believers, we may not fully attend to some of the basics of spiritual life on God’s earth, because most of us recognize that we are all learning as we go on a journey of continuous sanctification. I certainly am! God still being our Saviour, Lord and Master has various ways of attending to our limited abilities and one of the ways He does this is through chastening. Earlier studies in units 7 and 8 have made suggestions as to how God works in those ways and how we might allow Him to do that work in us. So we are going to look at three aspects of the Christian life that underpin virtually all our attitudes and resulting behaviour. However these studies are useful in their own right, irrespective of their positive connections with adversity.</p>	<p>I believe that the more we can live according to God’s word through learning His ways, the more we will be able to serve Him by His means and not require as much chastening over a long time as a disciplinary measure, so we can more fruitfully do His will.</p> <p>The first one of these is about our relationships with God and with each other.</p>
1	<b>Introducing some aspects of our life that we have to watch</b>	<p><b><i>One of the major areas of problems I notice among believers is that we don’t seem know how to live with proper attitudes in our relationship to God and others. So I am going to examine just one of those areas, this having three components in the form of three negative tendencies to which we are all subject.</i></b></p> <p><i>Dr Sam and Mary-Glynn Peeples, at one stage of their life, were fairly lost in their relationship with the Lord and making their Christian life work. Over many years, they began to realize the problem began in Isaiah 53:6, the first part of which says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way;..." Over many years, within the context of married and family life, they worked out certain principles (out of scripture and the practicalities of life) that helped them considerably. In time, they began to teach these things to people and out of that, formalized the teaching into a course called Living Above Your Circumstances. It includes many salient, pertinent and useful features. I have been conscious of these principles (I would call them heart attitudes) now for some years and still find guidance from them just to helpful in opposition to personal and fleshly desires.</i></p>	<p><i>I am going to provide a brief summary of what they say. Notice how they emphasize how we tend to rely on other people and created things, rather than the Creator Himself – and how our manipulations of situations and people get us offside with them and with the Lord.</i></p> <p><i>First, I am going to summarize what they say, then explain in some detail the three main areas of life that we often get wrong. Reference details are given below, near the study end.</i></p>

<p><b>1.1</b></p>	<p><b>I am going to present this information in two stages.</b></p> <p><b>Firstly, a long summary, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and then a detailed discussion on each of the three areas.</b></p>	<p><b>It seems to me that even in some Christian circles we will notice the following behaviour.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be content in life we tend to want things to go our way.</li> <li>• To achieve this we try to control and manipulate to get things done our way.</li> <li>• When things don't go our way, our reactions are not always godly.</li> <li>• We tend to look to people, places, things and events (created things) to provide for our needs for love, joy, peace, comfort and our emotional stability – and this becomes a way of life.</li> <li>• When this doesn't work well, we seek new people and new places, things and events – and so the cycle continues.</li> <li>• When things don't work out as we would like, we tend to blame people and circumstances for any emotional instability.</li> <li>• We say, 'if only if that person would change, or that circumstance did not exist we would be OK'.</li> </ul> <p><b>God wants us to do it differently</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to know that God desires to be the source of our emotional stability, by providing the love, joy, peace and comfort. &gt;&gt;&gt;</li> <li>• God wants us to know that the world was created for us to enjoy but not to be our source of joy.</li> <li>• God wants us to know not to try and change what we cannot control and change.</li> <li>• He wants us to control and change only what we can control and change.</li> <li>• We need to stop blaming circumstances and people and start taking responsibility for our own lives.</li> <li>• He wants us to be reminded of a little referred to set of verses in scripture that says that it is not what happens to us that troubles us – it is our response that is upsetting. &gt;&gt;</li> </ul>	<p><b>So:</b></p> <p>Getting our own way should not our source of contentment or self-esteem</p> <p>We have to learn not to depend on people, places, things and events for our emotional stability.</p> <p>We have to learn to avoid blaming people and circumstances for our emotional stability.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; See and read Gal 5:22-23 We need all of these.</p> <p>See and read Matthew 15:15-20, Mark 7:18-23</p>
-------------------	--	---	---

<p><b>1.2</b></p>	<p><b>How do you rate on these things?</b></p>	<p><b><i>Honestly check yourself out</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do you ever want you own way so much that you manipulate a situation or another person in order to get your own way?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you ever look to created things or to other people instead of relying on God? Scripture warns against this form of continuous reliance.</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you ever notice that you are on an endless cycle of chasing new experiences or things or people, instead of giving God first priority and relying on Him?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you ever blame other people for what happens to you? Or do you try to change them so you will get what you want?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Did any of these apply to you?</i></b> <i>If any do apply to you then your spiritual life will be somewhat inhibited. Look for the later teachings on overcoming it with the help of God. Even now, if you are convicted, simple confession of known sin is appropriate along the lines of 1:John 1:9 and by asking the Lord to strengthen you by His Spirit in these areas of life, after repentant turning away from such..</i></p>
<p><b>1.3</b></p>	<p><b>Before we do that, what we have already been given by God in order to be able to live the right way?</b></p>	<p><i>For a start, as believers we have been provided with salvation, which is the regeneration of our whole beings. We are justified, sanctified etc. We are also provided with the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.</i></p> <p>Ideally, we should be able to respond in these ways already. However, if we are honest, we find we are not always able to do so. So <u>why don't we always respond as God intended?</u> This is something on which you could ponder for yourself.</p> <p>However, it is by the power of the Spirit and by the life of Jesus Christ within us, we need to be able to begin to learn to overcome these natural tendencies – ultimately by the power of the Spirit.</p> <p>To a considerable degree, the answer lies in three natural tendencies of human nature that we must understand and of which we must be conscious. We need to understand these tendencies well enough to learn to recognize them in our behaviour, especially when they affect our relationships with and responses to other people.</p>	<p>So let us examine these three necessary attitudes to control undesirable negatives.</p> <p>For these I am indebted to Dr Sam and Mary-Glynn Peeples, friends from Alabama USA. I began to study their teaching 10 years ago and to this day find them good reminders in avoiding some basic attitudinal errors. These are what we are going to study here in some detail.</p>

<p><b>1.4</b></p>	<p><b>1. The first of three issues.</b></p> <p><b>It is to be aware of the desire to have things done your way - a destructive tendency.</b></p>	<p>The self-centredness of human nature is described very accurately in Isaiah.</p> <p><i>All we like sheep have gone astray; <b><u>we have turned everyone to his own way</u></b>; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6</i></p> <p>The first natural tendency is the root problem of man....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of wanting our own ways first and not wanting God’s way first.</li> <li>• or without considering properly the desires and needs of others.</li> </ul> <p>It started in the garden, then continued to permeate the O.T., being particularly highlighted at the time of the Judges. The last verse of Judges typifies this state. <i>"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."</i> Judges 21:25. Wanting our own way continues unabated, even sometimes in believers and in the church, but especially in the world. It is a gigantic barrier to really knowing God, because in effect, it is sin – and sin separates us from God – <i>See Psalm 66:18. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;</i></p> <p>Here is how it manifests itself in life – by our attitudes and actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having strong opinions about how things should be done is a normal and natural instinct.</li> <li>• To get our own way, we use tools such as <u>controlling and manipulation</u>. (subtle but destructive)</li> <li>• However, problems arise when <u>we HAVE to have things done our way to be content and gain self esteem</u>. Notice that point. If contentedness in life is our aim and we rely on controlling and manipulation to get it, we are in trouble.</li> <li>• Furthermore, <u>the actions we sometimes take to get things done our way, and the reactions when things don't go our way, can be damaging</u>. Notice that point – manipulative or controlling reactions to get our own way are damaging to us and to others on whom we afflict these things.</li> <li>• It is the wrong reactions that we have when we don’t get our own way that causes the problems - and <u>the wrong reactions are the sin</u>. Notice this - that wrong reactions to not getting our own way are sinful.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Why is it sinful to live in these ways?</b></p> <p><i>Is it because manipulation or controlling a brother is not loving (agaping) him. Is it you operating in selfishness? Is it you not building him up? (Yes!)</i></p> <p><b>What does our manipulation and control of others do to them?</b></p> <p><i>Does it hurt them? Does it frustrate them? Does it harm relationship, bring disunity? (Yes!)</i></p> <p><b>Examples</b> – <i>If my spouse will not agree with me over something and I demand my own way, this controlling is destructive. If we manoeuvre our brother in Christ to do something against his will, to make ourselves look good, then we destroy that unity between us. If a spouse wants a new outfit to feel good, against the wishes of the other spouse and then threatens relations, then that is damaging to relationship. If the spouse retaliates, that disrupts or destroys relationship.</i></p>
-------------------	--	--	--

<p><b>1.5</b></p>	<p><b>The second natural tendency.</b></p> <p><b>Realize we depend on people places, things and events for love, joy, peace, comfort and stability.</b></p> <p><i>(rather than directly on and primarily on God)</i></p>	<p>The second tendency to look to the creation instead of the Creator for the fruit and life of the Spirit. This is so common we may not even notice it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We instinctively look to people, places, things and events to provide love, joy, peace and comfort. This becomes a way of life.</li> <li>• But all people let us down, places get old, things wear out, and events become boring.</li> <li>• In desperation, we seek new people, different places, better things and more exciting events and the cycle continues.</li> <li>• But God desires to be the source of our contentedness by providing love, joy, peace and comfort etc</li> <li>• The world, people, places, things were created for us to enjoy but not to be our source of joy. They are gifts from Him.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples</b> – <i>if we rely <b>too much</b> on our brother, pastor or spouse for support in our lives, we are not looking to God for what we need in our lives – when we tire of one car, computer or friend and seek a new car, computer or friend, shows that we are not relying on the Creator for comfort, but are relying on created things – when we over-rely on holidays, money or material things for our comfort and joy, we are ignoring what the Creator can provide in real, love, joy, peace and comfort. (created things were made for us to enjoy, and are gifts from Him – but God should be our only real source of real joy)</i></p>	<p>The Galatians verse following mentions the provisions of the Creator.</p> <p><i>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Galatians 5:22, 23</i></p> <p>So, can you begin to see examples from your own life that may be separating you from God?</p>
<p><b>1.6</b></p>	<p><b>Some further explanation on this second natural tendency.</b></p>	<p><i>That we do this is not surprising because we are born not knowing the Creator. Initially, all our needs, virtually all of which are physical, are met by the creation. When a baby is hungry, it cries and the creation provides a bottle. Likewise, when a baby is wet, it cries and a dry diaper is provided by the creation.</i></p> <p><i>Later, we realize we have emotional needs. Since we have looked to the creation for our physical needs, it is only natural to look to the creation for our emotional needs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The need for love is sometimes met by other <b>people</b> – sometimes not</i></li> <li>• <i>The search for peace is most often sought through <b>places</b> or <b>circumstances</b>.</i></li> <li>• <i>We look to <b>things</b> to provide comfort.</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Indeed, until we invite Christ into our lives as our personal Lord and Saviour, the creation is the only available option for the love, joy, comfort and peace that we need. Even after our rebirth, we have to continually renew our minds to these things. <u>Because of the long standing practice of looking to the creation, it is a hard habit to break.</u></i></p>

		<p><i>So, honestly consider your role as a person in the various aspects of your life.</i></p> <p><i>(For example, a mother may suddenly realize that her peace is dependent on her child's obedience. She has become a slave to her child. When the child disobeys, the mother's peace is lost. She believes the child must decide to obey for her peace to be restored) Now, this mother needs to agree with God that she has depended on her child's behaviour for her peace and now she must turn to God to supply it. By changing her attitude, this mother has become a thermostat (regulator of the situation) and is no longer a thermometer! (a reactor to the situation)</i></p>	<p><i>It is necessary to ask God to identify creation dependencies because there has to be a conscious effort made to turn to the Creator for <b><u>the fruit of the Spirit</u></b> – and for <b><u>the life of the Spirit.</u></b></i></p>
<p><b>1.7</b></p>	<p><b>The third natural tendency.</b></p> <p>Realise that we blame people and circumstances for our discontentedness –rather than take responsibility for our own lives and mistakes.</p>	<p><b><i>This point is profound ----- so consider carefully.</i></b></p> <p>This <b>third natural tendency</b> is our refusal to accept personal responsibility <b>for our own</b> reactions and behavior. <u>The implication is that if we are unhappy with a person or a circumstance and we respond out of our mouth against the person or circumstance then (Jesus taught) we are defiling ourselves,</u> by virtue of the defiling things coming out of hearts, minds and mouths. If this is the first time you have read or heard this, then know that, in my opinion, it takes quite a bit of understanding. From a human understanding, what Jesus is saying seems to be logically ridiculous. However, it is one of the most profound statements of truth in all His teachings. This is what he taught.</p> <p><b>Jesus taught....</b> <i>For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All <b><u>these evil things come from within and defile the man.</u></b> Mark 7: 21-23. <u>This covers both thoughts and words.</u></i></p>	<p><i>What Jesus is teaching here is that angry speech defiles US – by virtue of what came out of our mouth (from our heart).</i></p> <p><i>That is what has defiled us. The context of this teaching of Jesus is important, in the whole understanding of this</i></p>
<p><b>1.8</b></p>	<p><b>Background to this tendency from Jesus point of view</b></p>	<p><b>The context of Jesus teaching on this issue</b></p> <p><i>In Mark 7, Jesus had been commenting on the relationship of the traditions of the law in relation to outward cleansing of the body. (The teachers of the law who had criticized the disciples for not ceremonially washed their hands before eating. The law teachers were inferring that not washing was an indicator of a deeper problem)</i></p> <p><i>Then, scripture says in verse 14, "Jesus spoke to all the people, asking them to hearken (pay attention) and understand what he was saying."</i></p>	

	<p><i>Then He makes a statement which He repeats three times: there is <b>nothing</b> from without a man, that entering into him, can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. Later, to the disciples, Jesus made it clear about the source of what bothers us. He said "from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride and foolishness."</i></p> <p><i>To paraphrase this, we would say <b>it is not what only happens to us that will bother us; but our response to it that will bother us – and defile us.</b> So if we blame others for our circumstances or discontentedness, then this, what is coming out of our heart and through our mouth is what is defiling us. We are defiled when we repay evil for evil.</i></p> <p><i>This may be a difficult concept to grasp. However, it is even more difficult to consistently screen our attitude and thinking. The lack of screening, not only of understanding, robs people of much of the abundant life. Examine your thinking. Who or what have you blamed for your sinful reactions or for your sinful behaviour?</i></p> <p><i>An everyday example of this kind of situation is traffic. (According to recent studies, traffic has become the number one cause of stress in America. People who must travel to and from their jobs on freeways have come to dread each day. "This traffic makes me so mad!")</i></p>	<p><i>Christians, believing what Jesus says, have the option of confessing their anger and asking the Lord to change their response to the traffic. This will result in being able to patiently, peacefully drive through heavy traffic to work. There may be a need to find a better route to work, but not for the sake of finding peace.</i></p> <p><i>The good news is that God has provided the choice. Sadly, many Christians hopelessly and prayerfully wait for the traffic to change (or other circumstances to change) to get comfortable or to be peaceful. Hopelessness comes from waiting for something to change over which you have no control, in this case, traffic!</i></p>
<p><b>1.9</b></p>	<p>This is how it works in practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We instinctively believe if only this person and/or that circumstance would change, we would be free of our discontentedness.</li> <li>• But trying to control what we can't change is a dead end.</li> <li>• Progress comes when we change what we can and by faith, leave to God what we can't.</li> <li>• We can stop blaming and start taking responsibility for our thoughts, attitudes and behaviour. <i>(this involves confession and repentance)</i></li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bible teaches that it's not what happens to us that troubles us - or is sin in itself, it is our response that is upsetting - and that is the sin. ( Consider Matt 5:22)</li> </ul> <p><b>Example</b> – <i>We think of a particular person who annoys us no end. He or she just continues to offend, sometimes in ways which can be called sinful. If only they would change, we would be happy! So one day when it all gets too much we blow up and express anger to them.</i></p> <p><b>Reflection.</b> What are the consequences of trying to change what we cannot?</p> <p><b>Reflection</b> Worse still (better really), what if God reveals our error to us?</p>	<p><i>So what can we do?</i></p> <p><i>First, remember, we can't change the other person.</i></p> <p><i>Second, confess your sin (before them) and God, otherwise the defilement will stay. (See Luke 6:27 and Matthew 5:44-45 and 1 John 1:9) We must keep a clean slate with God. (Read these)</i></p>
1.10	<p><b>Summary of negative tendencies to avoid.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting our way should not be the source of contentment and self esteem. Getting our way by wrong means, also results in our sinning.</li> <li>Don't depend on people, places, things and events for our love, joy, peace, comfort and stability.</li> <li>Avoid blaming people and circumstances for our problems, difficulties and instability.</li> </ul> <p>In examining our responses to daily living.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In life, these natural tendencies are all connected.</i></li> <li><i>They cannot be separated.</i></li> <li><i>They all involve an aberration of the rule one and rule two sequence.</i></li> </ul> <p>We have separated these tendencies for discussion, to see why we don't do it God's way. Perhaps it appears that this approach to understanding problems is too simple. But please consider this fact: It is encouraging to realize that these three reasons cover most of life's situations.</p> <p>Many athletic coaches believe the best offence is a good defence. We believe it is important to be aware of man's natural tendencies in order to identify and deal with them. It is very positive to eliminate the negative. It is easy to fall into the trap of concentrating efforts in positive areas without dealing with the negatives. Somehow we feel if we double our efforts in the positive area, it will neutralize negative areas.</p> <p>Remember the warning of Prov. 28:13, <i>"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose, confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."</i></p>	<p>A great deal of hope comes from this simple approach. Confidence in managing stress springs from the realization that it is possible to master a few things well.</p> <p>These natural tendencies are mentioned, not as legalism's to follow, because the Spirit of God will control our behaviour if we allow Him. However, we need to be aware of these tendencies.</p> <p>That is the end of the three parts of the first issue. What now follows is another aspect of incorrect living – living with vital aspects of life in the wrong order.</p>

<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Sometimes we try to live our lives in the <u>wrong order</u> of things.</b></p> <p><b>What is what I am calling Rule One and Rule Two?</b></p>	<p>What I am saying here is that we tend to do things in the wrong order (sequence) to what Jesus taught. The two examples I am going to use are firstly, from the Lord’s prayer and secondly from the two great commandments that Jesus taught. Here they are in chart format.</p>											
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="459 231 1019 311">Scripture</th> <th data-bbox="1019 231 1579 311">Rule One</th> <th data-bbox="1579 231 2150 311">Rule Two</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="459 311 1019 422"> <p>The Lord’s prayer. Matt 6:9-15</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1019 311 1579 422"> <p>Affirmation of relationship with God. Verses 9 &amp; 10</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1579 311 2150 422"> <p>All other things to do with life. Verses 11-15.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="459 422 1019 534"> <p>Lord’s commandments Matt 22:35-40</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1019 422 1579 534"> <p>Love the Lord your God with all your heart etc</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1579 422 2150 534"> <p>Love your neighbour as yourself.</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Scripture	Rule One	Rule Two	<p>The Lord’s prayer. Matt 6:9-15</p>	<p>Affirmation of relationship with God. Verses 9 &amp; 10</p>	<p>All other things to do with life. Verses 11-15.</p>	<p>Lord’s commandments Matt 22:35-40</p>	<p>Love the Lord your God with all your heart etc</p>	<p>Love your neighbour as yourself.</p>		
Scripture	Rule One	Rule Two											
<p>The Lord’s prayer. Matt 6:9-15</p>	<p>Affirmation of relationship with God. Verses 9 &amp; 10</p>	<p>All other things to do with life. Verses 11-15.</p>											
<p>Lord’s commandments Matt 22:35-40</p>	<p>Love the Lord your God with all your heart etc</p>	<p>Love your neighbour as yourself.</p>											
		<p>For ease of discussion I have dubbed these stages of thought Rule One and Rule Two. (This does not make them legalisms by virtue of calling them rules – just a convenience for discussion and memory) We are not living out of law but out of Spirit.</p> <p>This concept refers to the sequence given by Jesus in His teaching about the Great Commandments.</p> <p>The first commandment He said is about God and the second is about other people. The order of things is important. First, we must consider God by loving Him, with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind.</p> <p>After having done that, applying the first commandment, we can then love our neighbour as ourselves. So, first in order is God, then our neighbour and earthly things. Godly relational things first, and then all other matters.</p> <p>The Lord’s prayer supports this principle. Rule one is the first part of the Lord’s Prayer where we are told to hallow God’s name, ask for His Kingdom to come and for His will to be done. What we are calling Rule 2 then follows. We then pray for earthly things concerning others and ourselves.</p>											
<p><b>2.1</b></p>	<p><b>Living the Christian life God’s way</b></p>	<p>You can see from the chart that Jesus said that in prayer, we need to affirm relationship with God before we deal with all other matters. Then, in explaining the two great commandments of His, we have to relate in love to Him first before we get onto other matters such as our neighbours.</p> <p>You may be able to see that if we do not have a lifestyle where this occurs fairly naturally, then it is hard to see how we can abide and commune with God’s Spirit, living in the fullness God intended.</p>	<p>e.g. if we just barge into prayers of petition, with all things to do with oneself then we are out of order with what He prescribed. Here is what Dr Larry Crabb said on this issue.</p>										

<p><b>2.2</b></p>	<p><b>When we pray we can tend to prioritize and sequence things incorrectly.</b></p>	<p>Dr. Larry Crabb drew attention to right ways of relating to God in Chapter 7 of The Papa Prayer where he discusses the structure of the Lord’s prayer. He says the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Start with the very first words: “Our Father.” They start us thinking about relationship. “Papa, we’re coming to you.”(p 45)</li> </ul> <p><i>My paraphrase. The emphasis that Jesus gave about the first and most important commandment and how this relates to the two parts of the Lord’s prayer, Larry Crabb calls these first and second things. He then talks about the relative importance of these first and second things.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “All we need is bread from heaven, the bread of life. We want those other blessings, but they’re all second things. We don’t need them to satisfy the deepest desire of God’s heart and ours, or to achieve our mission. All that is true. We don’t always think that way but when we do, we see that second things have become first things in our affections. (p 46) Our prayer life has been petitioning God to give us those second things. That realization should lead to purging. <i>(He uses the word purging for the confession of sin and or an acceptance of our brokenness before God when we realize we can do nothing without Him)</i> We pray, “Papa, I’ve not valued You as I should.....I’ve wanted your resources at my disposal more than I have wanted you.”(p 47)</li> <li>• The Lord’s Prayer shows us how to pray in a way that honours God and the purpose of prayer. It moves us towards better abiding in Christ, toward becoming more aware of His life within us..... First and second things begin to sort themselves out, and we pray differently. We want different things. We want what God wants. We realize that what we want is a close relationship with our Papa. (p 48) Christ’s relationship with His Father was the driving passion behind every request He made. Relationship precedes petition.....getting God is worth infinitely more that getting the things we want from God. (p 49) He says, “I sense deeper brokenness when I realize how strongly I don’t want God’s Kingdom to come if it interferes with the arrival of my kingdom.” (p 50)</li> </ul> <p><i>After reading The Papa Prayer and noticing the importance of the sequence of prayer and other matters, I was prompted to add the following. Some of it is no doubt a paraphrase of some of Dr Larry Crabb’s thoughts. &gt;&gt;&gt;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The first two verses are establishing or continuing in relationship with God the Father. These come first, prior to the rest. They are acknowledging who God is. It is seeking a closer relationship with Him as a basis for everything else that we do in relationship with Him.</i></li> <li>• <i>The last three verses are the other types of prayer, including petition for provision, confession and forgiveness, and protection. Also, there is a further affirmation of who God is, recognizing His power and glory.</i></li> <li>• <i>Notice that Jesus taught this prayer and this sequence to the disciples. Affirming relationship with God first and then all other things coming out of that relationship. So, unless we seek the relational aspects of prayer first, there is a lesser basis on which we can ask for anything.</i></li> </ul>
-------------------	---	---	---

<p><b>2.3</b></p>	<p><b>So can you see the problem?</b></p>	<p>If we were to transfer that order of priority into all aspects of our normal lives then there would not be any problems. However, it is pretty clear that we do not always do that and carry the principle into our lives and think and act in that way.</p> <p>The components of what we are calling Rule One, indicate that they are to do with establishing and affirming a relationship with the Father.</p> <p><b>A suggestion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, we are acknowledging Who He is – Our Father.</li> <li>• Second, we are acknowledging that we want Him more than we want what He can provide.</li> <li>• Third, we are reminded of our status in being in an abiding relationship with Him.</li> <li>• Fourth, we are reminded of His life within us, due to the presence of His Spirit.</li> <li>• Fifth, we are in effect seeking to further our relationship with Him.</li> <li>• Sixth, it establishes a basis for everything else we might do with Him.</li> </ul> <p>So, unless we seek this relational aspect of prayer first, there is no firm basis on which we can ask anything of Him. In everyday life, we need to have an attitude of considering God first in all things, especially before we rush into petitioning Him for what we think we need. Pausing in the first stage of what we refer to as Rule One, may in fact result in the Lord speaking to us on matters that are to do with our petition, or on other new matters initiated by Him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirming relationship with God, then all other things that might come out of that relationship. (<i>So, unless we seek the relational aspects of prayer first, there is far less basis on which we can ask for anything</i>) It was similar in relation to His two commandments.</li> <li>• The first and great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. In other words, this is the first thing we should do, before all else. Then what follows that is to love your neighbour as yourself. Such times are of quiet reflection whilst we can listen and consider the wonder of a relationship with the Creator of the universe.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>What is <u>Our</u> priority prayer?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The way that most of us seem to have learned to pray is to ask God for what we want. By doing so we reveal our paucity of knowledge of who God is and what He expects of us. We cannot expect to receive from Him if we only press His buttons to receive – there is no relationship to which He can reasonably respond.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>When we learned to pray we learned to ask God for what we want. An examination of the Lord's prayer reveals this.</i></p>	<p>For an extensive study on this later go to <a href="http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/2009january-trueprayer.pdf">http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/2009january-trueprayer.pdf</a></p> <p>My version of his books on prayer have been approved by Dr. Larry Crabb to be on my website.</p>



<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>The Law the and new covenant.</b></p> <p><b>This is the third of the three issues in this study.</b></p> <p><b>Its purpose is to question our ability to live, not out of law but fully out of the new covenant.</b></p>	<p><i>Dr. Larry Crabb in his book The Pressure's Off provides a well argued point that modern Christianity is still involved living in law, without knowing it and thus not being able to take up the fullness of life that The New Covenant involves where life is led out of the Spirit of God.</i></p> <p><i>To emphasize a central critical part of this argument, I am now going to present, as succinctly as possible, some comments from Chapter 2 of Crabb, which he calls Our Set Patterns. It sets out the old original law and then shows the progressions to the new arrangements since Jesus.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Let me propose a radical thought: Maybe we have it all wrong! Maybe the Christian life is not about "doing right" to "get blessed." Maybe the Christian life is not about the blessings of life we do badly want and doggedly pursue. Maybe our obedience and faithfulness are to be energized by a very different motive....." (Crabb p 26)</li> <li>• "The secular journey is rooted in linearity, the bondage of control; do this and that will happen. The spiritual journey is not about living as we should so life works as we want. It's not a linear path. The spiritual journey is rooted in liberty, the freedom of grace. Come as you are, trembling, and learn to rest. Then go out into life doing what's right because you're privileged to do so, because you want to be holy, not because doing right is the way to a pleasant life. Life may provide rich blessings. Or it may not. Either way you can know God." (Crabb 1 p 26)</li> <li>• "Passages in scripture have persuaded me that a linear understanding of the Christian life is seriously flawed. This scripture summarizes the conditions of an (initial) arrangement God put into effect with His O.T. children.</li> </ul> <p><i>"Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do." (Deuteronomy 29:9)</i></p> <p>In this second passage, the writer tells us that God has annulled that Law of Linearity.</p> <p><i>"For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." (Hebrews 7:18-19)</i></p>	<p>The former arrangement of doing good to secure God's blessings has been replaced by a new arrangement. We can draw near to God, and from Him draw our identity, find strength to persevere, and experience the joy of anticipation and occasionally taste what is to come." (Crabb 1 p 27)</p> <p>Then, a third passage says:</p> <p><i>"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world....But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" (Galations 4:3 and 4:9) (p 28)</i></p>
-----------------	--	---	--

<p><b>3.1</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Millions of Christians are following Jesus to gain a better life of blessings now.....The Spirit is inviting each one of us to walk a very different path.....We’re bidden to come as we are, boldly, without fear,....abandoning ourselves to God.....Remember Paul’s words: “We have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”(Romans 7:6) (Crabb 1 p 28)</li> </ul> <p><i>My (Ken) comments. To paraphrase what Crabb has said here, I believe that he is pointing out how the old way of the law of “do this and that will happen”, has been replaced by a way of knowing God personally, through the law being annulled and the bringing of a better way that enables us to draw near to God, trusting our entire lives to Him, whether He blesses us or not. Whilst this new way might be difficult to learn, the old way is impossible and has no future at all. However, we should remember that the requirements of the law are still set down to be met, but are met by following the Spirit and doing His will. As we cannot meet the requirements of the law through our self effort, we can only offer ourselves through the Son who by His power and authority can move us toward fulfilling the law. (<b>Reference</b> Crabb (The Pressure’s Off) Chapter 2)</i></p>	<p><b>For an excellent presentation of the new covenant by Jimmy Stewart go to</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthgr-17.html">http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthgr-17.html</a></p>
<p><b>3.2</b></p>	<p><b>My summary in paraphrase</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>God modified His arrangements with mankind over time. Each one was an agreement or covenant. He has modified His covenants over time, each one being an extension of His purposes with man.</i></li> <li>• <i>The covenant of the moral law made it possible for the Hebrews to be looked after with a simple arrangement – if the Hebrews did what God said, they could expect certain things to happen. If they got it right, life worked, if they didn’t get it right, they were without God’s provisions and protection.</i></li> <li>• <i>This set a pattern which seems to have seeped down through history, whereby NT believers tend to do the same thing. We seem to have missed that God’s game plan has changed. Since Jesus came, God has expected us to fully realize and appropriate all we have been given as a result of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is so simple that we have missed it, tending to want to follow laws (even some NT ones) so that we will get what God has for us.</i></li> <li>• <i>The old way of the law has been annulled and the new way of the Spirit has been introduced as the way of a better hope. Each of us has been given the life of Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God. Whilst the new way is difficult to learn, the old way is impossible to achieve.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>But those old ways are gone forever and there is a new and better way. This way is that we now have the Spirit of God living within us and we are supposed to live with that full knowledge of His Spirit and have faith in Him that by the presence of His life within us, we can live as He expects us to live. But for lots of reasons, most of us never quite understand or find that hard to implement and therefore never reach that state that Jesus intended, falling back into self effort and law keeping.</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>3.3</b></p>	<p><b>Check yourself out</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Did you realize that the new covenant that is now operating, excludes the use of the law and that living via the Spirit of God is what God desires, being the only way we can reach Him?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you put knowing Jesus ahead of your desires for blessings from Him?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you realize that making life work in order to be blessed is not God's way?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Are you living by the new and better way?</b> <i>If you don't have these basics right, then your spiritual life will be unbiblical and inhibited. You will be trying to live a way not envisaged by God, a way which is ignoring the role of the Spirit of God.</i></p>
<p><b>3.4</b></p>	<p><b>We do not seem to know God's plan for our use of faith, or walking in the Spirit and fall back into law and works.</b></p>	<p><i>As Crabb has pointed out, it is very easy to be living with the wrong guidelines to achieve what God intended in our lives. Lack of knowledge of N.T. application, leads to confusion as to how we live out our faith, in fullness of faith and with the full cooperation with the Spirit of God. Lack of that knowledge makes it very easy to fall back into self effort styled works, into law based behaviour, where the Spirit can only stand by and watch the resulting failures. It does appear as though there are at least two particular features of Christian life that might inhibit such progress. We should know that faith comes primarily (as a gift) from the witness and power of the Spirit based on the truths of scripture. A brief description of how this can happen now follows.</i></p> <p><i>Walking in faith and in the power of the Spirit are, or should be the two main focuses of Christian life. (surrender of one's life being an important precursor) From them all other things follow. There are at least two aspects of normal Christian life that might prevent believers being able to live in true faith by the Spirit of God. The first one is that the instructions and commands of the New Testament are often preached in such a way as to influence believers as though they are laws. If this happens, the implication is that they should be able to live out these laws just as they are, presumably out of their own fleshly strength, rather than through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, although the flesh and Spirit might not be mentioned. So it is implied that if the N.T. says this, then we should be able to live that way. Because the method of achievement is not specifically mentioned, most people take it that they should be able to do what they are being asked to do.</i></p>	<p><i>That might sound strange, but unless they are aware of communication with the Spirit, they may attempt to live out the law just as they are, with whatever they do have by way of strength.</i></p> <p><i>Preachers sometimes wrongly presume that their flock know the whole and full Gospel of Jesus Christ and how faith and the Holy Spirit operate should operate in their lives. But there is far more to this Gospel than is normally taught in Christendom. A full statement would detail not only the normally taught part of the gospel (forgiveness, regeneration, going to heaven) but also the parts needed to live the life on earth.</i></p>

		<p><i>(freedom from sin, fullness of faith and walking in the Spirit) The first, normally well taught, is to do with the blood aspect of the cross, but the second, to do with the body death of Christ is rarely taught or understood. To me, this lack has crippled many parts of the church. If preachers do make that presumption and believers are not so equipped, this renders believers little better off than Old Testament people trying to live by the Mosaic law. To try to live like that, is life by the works of the believer and not by the Spirit who enables all things through His power and strength from His indwelling Spirit in the believer. James 2:10 indicates the difficulty of life in that situation. Not by fleshly initiated works, but only by the Spirit of God are these New Testament standards achievable.</i></p> <p><i>The second one is where some preachers, because of their relative immaturity in spiritual matters, are unable to teach in the power of the Spirit, not as ministers of the Spirit but virtually as ministers of the letter only.</i></p>	<p>For a very full discussion on these matters go to <a href="http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthqr-12.html">http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthqr-12.html</a></p> <p>(Two Vital Aspects of the Christian Life)</p>
4	<b>Summary</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Getting our own way should not be the source of contentment and self-esteem. We have to stop wanting our own way and reacting negatively when we do not get it.</li> <li>2. We need to not depend on people, places and things and events for our emotional stability. We have to learn to stop putting the things of creation ahead of looking to God for love, joy, peace and comfort. We need to rely primarily on God. The things of creation were never meant to provide our joy, as only God can do that.</li> <li>3. We need to avoid blaming people and circumstances for any instability we may have.</li> <li>4. When approaching God in prayer, we need to acknowledge Him first, before we ask for anything.</li> <li>5. We need to think of God first in every circumstance of life – as Jesus said.</li> <li>6. We need to recognize the importance of the law as showing our need for Christ. To let it rule our lives is to invoke sin and rebellion and we will never learn to live as the New Covenant of Jesus intended. It is the Spirit that gives life!</li> </ol> <p>So there it is. A very long study. Whilst these are things we can do that might assist us in avoiding some of God’s chastening, these studies also stand in their own right as Bible Studies of importance in us living how God always intended, and are in keeping with the general theme of these studies of living in Fullness of Life in Christ.</p>	<b>Prayer</b>

5	<b>Further information may be obtained from these references</b>	<p><i>There is great value in reading these books.</i></p> <p><i>Reference 1 - Living above your circumstances. Twelve Steps for the rest of your life. Dr Sam and Mary-Glynn Peeples. Christian Ministries Inc P.O. Box 531147 Birmingham, Alabama 35253)</i></p> <p><i>Reference 2 - Living above your circumstances – A Unique Biblical Approach by Dr Sam and Mary-Glynn Peeples. Obtainable from either the Birmingham address above</i></p> <p><i>Dr Larry Crabb’s books are (1) The Pressure’s Off. Published by Waterbrook Press, Colorado Springs, USA – A division of Random House 2002 and (2) The Papa Prayer, published by Integrity Publishers Brentwood Tennessee USA</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Larry Crabb is a best selling author, counselor and psychologist. (I have read most of his books, which, in my opinion have moved to being more and more biblically based thematic studies on how life can be lived in the Lord)</i></p>	<p><i>If you search the web using either ‘peeples” or “the sheep book” you will find more contact details.</i></p> <p><i>or from Ambassadors For Christ (Aust) P.O. Box 252, Wynnum Central, Q 4178.</i></p>
---	--	---	--

*This is the ninth in a series of articles* to further outline and provide resource for believers to move towards Fullness of Life in Christ. *This unit of study continues the study of an aspect of adversity.*

**Ken Walker – Webmaster of Fullness of Life in Christ - <http://www.goodnews.org.au/fullness/index.html>  
Email – [kgww @tpg.com.au](mailto:kgww@tpg.com.au) (leave out the space before the @)**

**March 2009**

**Availability.** *This study is for use in one to one teaching or in small groups by those who know this experience for themselves, or by those open to the Spirit to learn together.*