

FACING OUR PROBLEMS

IN A PROBLEM AGE

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Table of Contents

No. 1	The Problem of Assurance	pg. 3
No. 2	The Problem of the Battle for the Mind	pg. 5
No. 3	The Problem of Evil Thoughts	pg. 7
No. 4	The Problem of Anger	pg. 10
No. 5	The Problem of Knowing the Will of God	pg. 13
No. 6	The Problem of Suffering	pg. 16
No. 7	The Problem of Worry	pg. 18
No. 8	The Problem of a Lack of Growth	pg. 20
No. 9	Facing the Problem of Doubts	pg. 23

This study will bring great benefit in the life of those who study through these subjects. It will help you solve the problems that all of us face at times. It will give your materials to help someone else in the midst of their trials. May the study bring you great blessing.

The Problem of Assurance

Illustrations: ideas, thoughts:

A. The Saints of God are privileged to have assurance in all the following areas:

1. **Their election**--- Psa 4:3; I The. 1:5; Eph. 1:11; Tit. 1:1; Rom. 9:11; I Pet. 1:2
2. **Their redemption**---Eph. 1:7; I Cor. 7:23; Isa. 44:21-23; Gal. 4:4,5; I Cor. 1:30;; Psa. 49:8; He. 9:12; Eph. 4:30
3. **Their adoption**----Rom. 8:16; K Jh 3:2; Gal. 4:4,5; II Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:19, 23; I Jh. 3:2
4. **His Eternal Life**----John 3:14-18; 5:24; 6:37; Jh. 10:27-29; Jh 11:25
5. **The unalienable love of God**----Rom. 8:39.39; John 15:9;

The areas of assurance are seemingly innumerable. It is said that thirty six different things takes place the moment we accept Christ as Savior. Therefore there are thirty six things that GOD does in our lives the very moment we are saved. They are all of grace, through faith, and are unconditionally performed by God for His own. *We are sealed, sanctified, justified, adopted, protected, reconciled, forgiven or pardoned, given peace, eternal life; redeemed, became a son, received an inheritance, preserved, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, given a new nature (His nature that cannot sin and hates sin perfectly) given a living hope, and given immediate access unto God.* And some day we will be glorified as we are received unto glory. This is but a partial list of what God does for His own. Since God has done all of this for HIS own, surely we can see that full assurance of salvation is but a byproduct of that "finished work" through the blood of His cross.

Let's discuss the Doctrine of Assurance. When we say, "One can know for sure that he is saved, some will say or think that we are presumptuous and are overstepping." They might say, "Do you mean to say that you can know absolutely that your sins are forgiven and that you are on your way to heaven?" I have had people say to me, "Don't you think that it is terribly conceited to say that a person with all of the faults and failings can know absolutely that his sins for forgiven and that he is on the way to heaven."

The word know, (Greek, eido) used many times in the Epistle of I John means "full knowledge, knowledge which is complete, that cannot be improved upon." Then the Greek word, Kinoskao, means "to come to know". That knowledge comes from God, from the Word of God, and from the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

B. Why People Lack Assurance:

I suppose that there are many reasons by many lack the assurance of salvation, some that probably I am not aware of... but let's consider a few:

- 1. Seeking it through Law keeping, or through good works.** (Isa 64:6; Titus 3:5; James 2:10) Whenever a person endeavors to feel right with God (and such people will go by feelings) by the things they DO, or fulfill assurance can never be theirs. The Holy Spirit cannot bear witness with the spirit of a person who is trusting their goodness, acts, doings, etc.
- 2. Never honestly facing sin, or dealing with sin question.** (Acts 20:21; 17:30) The effect of "easy believism" has been great in our nation. Many have been dealt with hurriedly, incorrectly, and with the goal of manipulating the person into making a decision. The motive has not been right nor has the person doing the personal work understood the aspects involved in correctly giving the gospel message. Therefore we have many who have made decisions about salvation without any assurance of salvation, with no changed life and no witness of real salvation within the life or by the outward life style.
- 3. Because of a lack of trusting what God has said.** Some examine conduct, rather than what God has done. Some would have such an unhealthy introspection that lacking perfection they feel undone before God and unworthy. Hence they doubt that they could be truly saved or would ever deserve knowing they are saved.

We are not saved because of anything we have done, but through the unfinished work of Christ plus nothing. He died for ALL our sin, from the moment we are born until the moment we die. A study of Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 are precious at this point.

- 4. Because there is doubt whether we can ever know in this life.** These dear people may have truly accepted Christ, but still doubt that we can have full assurance of salvation. They may have embraced doctrine that is "man centered", that we can take ourselves away from Christ, and be lost again if we so desire, and thus fall away from grace. They have usually embraced false or incorrect teaching from Hebrews chapters 6 and 10, and other portions which some have used to teach the loss of one's salvation. Such have not fully accepted John 5:24; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; II Tim; 1:12; John 10:27-29, or other similar portions.)

I will not go into a study of I John here... but would encourage you, to mark every place you find the word.. KNOW... in the book of first John and then think through some of these portions. I challenge you to think through the negatives in the first section. You will find it stimulating to your own life and possibly see the obvious reasons why we have so many professors who do not possess.

The Problem of the Battle for the Mind

Introductory Ideas:

Many people are seeking for peace of mind. The fact that this is a pressing problem is shown by the demand for every book written on this subject. That the problem is very real is also shown by statistics concerning mental illness. Today there are hundreds of thousands of patients in mental hospitals or who are considered to have mental illness. Many of the patients in the hospitals are suffering from some form of mental illness according to many specialists. Whether this is accurate or not, it is still evident that many lack "healing" for the mind because of the lack of "healing for the soul."

Back of the problem is the battle for the mind. The basis of the problem for the many who suffer today is the problem of wrong thinking. Someone has cleverly stated, "You are not what you think you are; but what you think, you are." Emerson said, "A man is what he thinks about all day long." This fact is also clearly set forth in the Scriptures where it is written that a man is as he thinks in his heart. (Proverbs 23:7) It becomes evident that a person's thoughts will control his life.

One of the famous books used by some who labor in counseling today is the book titled... "Telling Yourself The Truth" and the companion book... "Telling Others the Truth". We do not readily tell ourselves the truth. It is easy to deceive ourselves in manipulation in the mind. We play many mental games by which we side-track the truth about ourselves. This is one of the reasons why many people find it so difficult to change, or to face the truth about sin in the life.

Many of our members of fundamental churches across the U.S. have become spiritual dropouts. Many did not lose out because of a return to secularism or necessarily because of becoming a victim to sensualism, but they simply became bitter in the battle. They lost the battle for the mind.

The mind has been likened to the room of a house where visitors are entertained. All the visitors to one's three-fold being come in through the mind. They first enter the mind, then drop down into the spirit and get root, then possess the whole man.

Thoughts are bold and daring things, and strong and persistent. Like armed men they force themselves into the mind. They come enticingly, insinuatingly; they come threateningly. And they come in a thousand different ways. They come singly, they come in droves; some times they keep up a din and chatter and strain the nerves and chill the heart. A thought knocks at the door of the mind. It is admitted and entertained, then passion enters the mind, and soon possesses the whole being and leads it to sin and shame.

I. The General Condition:

The natural state of the mind of man is contrary to the will of God. He cannot accept the things of the Spirit of God unless God works in His heart and life. It is the things of the Spirit of God which bring peace of mind and heart. Therefore the inability of man's mind to grasp that which brings his healing makes it necessary for the person to be saved, or regenerated. The mind must be changed for it is contrary and only obeys the things of sin. (Romans 8:5-7)

The result of the natural state of the mind is that man becomes occupied with earthly things. He is unable to lift his thoughts above the troublesome matters of everyday life. It is well to note that this is one of the factors which make a man in his natural state unfit for heaven. His mind is entirely taken up with material concepts and this would cause him to be extremely unhappy were he to be in heaven in his natural state.

People who are Christians are often derided by those who are not saved, and are accused of not being "right in the head." But just the opposite is true. The Prodigal son when he came to himself, decided, "I will go back to my father and home." In other word it is the person who is out of right relationship with God who is beside himself. An interesting story is told of a girl who became the butt of criticism by her friends after she had trusted Christ as her Savior. Among other things, they told her that she was "cracked in the head." Her swift rejoinder was, "If I am cracked in the head, that must be where the light got in." We must be "born from above" for the mind is naturally in darkness and obeys the path of sin.

II. The Glorious Facts:

1. The Mind must be Controlled:

In the healing for the mind, in the battle for the mind there must of necessity be a controlled mind. The Bible is very clear about this. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of a sound mind. (II Tim. 1:7) When we "gird up the mind" we have here an Oriental figure. (I Pet. 1:13) It is that of a man with a long flowing garment which would impeded any swift progress if he did not gather it up, and tie the loose ends about his waist. The application to the mind is that person is to gather up the loose ends of his thinking. Instead of allowing his thoughts to run thither and yon he is to gather them in and keep them under his control.

If the Christians does not control his thoughts he will find the enemy of the soul, Satan, encroaching upon him to insert thoughts which bring unrest, sin and despair. Many people, through lack of control of the mind, leave themselves open for the "broken record" experience. You have heard of a phonograph record on which the needle remains in the same groove, resulting in the continuous repetition of just a few words or thoughts, Nothing is more distressing than to have in the mind the constant repetition of some thought or some idea and be unable to dismiss it from the thinking.

In the text of II Cor. 10:3-5 the Word of God warns us about "imagination, and thoughts." It is so easy to have negative thought patterns of 1). *Evil thoughts*, Matt 15:19 (later we will have a lesson just dealing with evil thoughts.) 2) *anxious thoughts*, Phil. 4:6,7; and 3) *unfounded imaginations*. Many Christians are unaware and unarmed for this area of battle.

2. The Mind Must Be Renewed:

Daily the mind can be renewed only to the extent that we saturate it with the Word of God. Most of have heard volumes of sermons, yet the knowledge of spiritual truth can be so meager. Is it because we have a mind renewed daily to retain the things of the world and we do not work to retain spiritual truths?

Could it be that we have not surrendered the mind to the Holy Spirit to control. Could it be that we have clarity of mind with regard to things of the Word, but little interest in the things of God? Romans 12:1,2 must be a reality of the life.

A deliberate choice must be made to remove the mind from the realm of the natural and from the control of Satan and bring it into the realm of the spiritual and under the influence of God and the Word of God. (Rom. 8:5-16)

This correction of the renewing of the mind is not one which can be performed once for all, however, but it is a continuing daily process. It must be continued action with a determination to daily seek to walk in close fellowship with the Lord as we study and mediate upon His Word.

3. The Mind Must be Disciplined:

Again I Peter 1:13 comes into play here, maybe even more so here than in the earlier point. To gird up the mind takes determination, discipline and desire. It takes effort. For this to take place the mind must be occupied with the right things.

"Want of occupation is not rest. A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed!!" In Phil. 4:8 we are told of the things upon which we ought to think. Such practice will help us bring about a disciplined mind. We live in a very undisciplined age, so none of us find it easy to have "every thought brought unto obedience" to our Lord. And this cannot take place without the heart and mind becoming totally saturated with the Scriptures.

4. The Mind Can Be At Peace:

The peace and tranquility of the mind depends upon all the foregoing factors. If we are to be set free from worldly, sinful obsessions and from the oppression that sin brings and Satan would work in our lives, it depends upon victory in the mental areas of our lives. In Him is peace, for Christ is our peace. But this will never be a reality without the mind being under HIS control. "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on Thee."

CONCLUSIONS:

1. We need the "mind of Christ", which means to think His thoughts. (Phil 2:5) When we determine to allow the Word of God to permeate our lives, and life becomes the "outliving of the in living" WORD, (James 1:19) then we will have victory in the area of the mind.
2. As Christ suffered for us in the flesh, we are to "arm ourselves likewise with the same mind". (I Pet. 4:1) We must think through the importance of our life being totally yielded to Christ. It is in the mind that the resolves of dedication and surrender must begin. This will bring result in the actions of the will.

The Problem of Evil Thoughts

The Thought life of a Christian Must Build Christian Character: One of the most important truths concerning human character building was spoken in passing by Solomon in Proverbs 23:7: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The thoughts of our minds are like building blocks with which we build our character. If a person permits himself to think often of evil, he will soon be doing evil acts, falling into evil habits, and finally living an evil life.

Pure and good thoughts ennoble the character, uplift the mind, and even exercise a wholesome influence upon the body itself; but evil thoughts have a directly opposite power.

Christ spoke of the impact of the thoughts: Jesus had this in when He spoke as He did as found in Matthew. What defiles the man? Not that which enters his body, but that which cometh out of the man... for from within , out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, all these evil things come from within and defile the man." All of these sins are the result of the thoughts.

Possibly ALL sin committed by a person is first conceived in the thought life. Every deed that a man performs is born first in his thought life. Most deeds are not brought to birth with a sudden impulse, but lie rooted in many repeated thoughts. This is particularly true with evil deeds. No man sins suddenly. The sin must first be conceived in his mind, and by a series of evil thoughts the natural repugnance to the deed, the strivings of conscience and training, the influence of the Holy Spirit and of good friends, are all overcome until the evil thought drives the inner thought on to become an outward deed. WE HAD BETTER HEED THIS TRUTH.

The guarding of the thought life is a matter, then of utmost importance. Every evil thought is a dangerous thing. It carries with it the seeds of evil, the promise of ugly growth which if not rooted out will bring forth a character of weakness and sin.

One of the greatest sources of thoughts come from our reading, and our viewing of TV. Almost every person who reads constantly, or avidly can be tempted to read that which will greatly hinder his Christian walk. The modern mind is ever seeking new thoughts, and our world is filled with materials to read, most of which is produced by sinful hearted, wicked people. Advertising has seized upon the hunger of the mind for reading and it fills the highways, the billboards, the sides of buildings, the cards in trains, or buses, the pages of our newspapers and magazines with its message. Daily the modern mind is besieged by a clamoring of insistent messages that easily enter into our thoughts. The huge trade in magazines and paper backs is a witness to the power of printed thought. Never in history has there been such a barrage of ideas, and sinful, wicked materials hurled upon the minds of men. Much of modern reading is filled corrupt, debasing, and unwholesome ideas, if not outright wickedness. And the same can be said for TV, and its impact upon the minds and therefore the acts of mankind.

All of this is a daily choice. And we reap what we sow. (Gal. 6:7-9) It is a not a light thing to be careless or indulgent in our choice of reading matter and TV viewing.. It is foolish to excuse a trashy book or magazine or a trashy TV program by the words, "Oh this once won't hurt me." One thing leads to another. One indulgence calls for further and deeper indulgence.

FACING OUR PROBLEMS

A taste of ungodly literature or of trashy ideas breeds a deeper hunger for more of the same. It is easy to cultivate a taste for the light, the sinful, and the popular. Worthwhile reading takes effort and thought, and lazy minds rather prefer the light reading and the pictorial treatment of the modern day.

We must "fall in love" with the Living Word and the Written Word. The only sure answer to the problem of the battle over thoughts is to "set our affection on things above" and to make Christ "preeminent" in our lives. (Col. 3:1-4; 1:18) HE must be loved and we must live for HIM.

Daily we speak to ourselves many tens of thousands of words. We can speak up to 2,000 words a minutes to our selves. This is often called, "self-talk", and is just a part of life. These thoughts can be Bible truths, Biblical beliefs or they can be **sinful misbeliefs or literally lies.** When we speak lies to ourselves, naturally practices of sinful action will fall in due time. If we speak lies often to ourselves in the inner thought life the practice of sinful actions will be the fruit.

Consider as Biblical illustrations the following events. Meditate upon what kind of thoughts could have been, and probably were entertained by the persons involved.

David when tempted as he saw Bathsheba.

Joseph when tempted daily by Potiphar's wife.

Achan when tempted to take the wedges of gold, silver, etc.

Elisha's servant as he went after the materials things offered by

Naaman but turned down by Elisha.

Peter, when wrestling with the idea of going to the Gentiles, (Acts 10)

The Prodigal's son's brother, when he came from the field and heard the singing, making merry, etc. (Luke 15)

Daniel, as he prayed as aforesaid, notwithstanding the decree.

Paul, as he was fearful to remain in Corinth, after so many beatings, etc., in prior cities or towns. (Acts 18)

In all of these we have illustrations in which there had to be thoughts which greatly effected the choices, the will, the character, and the issues of life then and in their future. AS A MAN THINKETH, SO IS HE.

CONCLUSIONS:

WHEN WE LOSE THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND, OR THE THOUGHT LIFE, WE LOSE THE BATTLE FOR THE BODY:

So we must make.....

1. A **diagnosis**, we must locate the problem, the source, is it TV, wrong literature, etc. Psa. 139:23,24; Psa 19: Prov. 23:7, Matt. 9:4) Consider Samson's fall, he did not consider the problem, nor the source which eventually brought his downfall.
2. A **decision** must be made; we cannot cover it, we must confess it thoroughly, and repent of it thoroughly, or we will continue it. Restoration only comes through thorough confession and repentance. (Prov. 28:13; I Jh. 1:7)
3. A **dependence** must take place totally upon God as we do our part in the above aspects. God understands, and undertakes. The Holy Spirit will work to bring the victory, making us sensitive to inward sin. (I Cor. 10:13; Phil. 4:13; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:18; Gal. 5:16,17)

4. A **determination to destroy** must take place for we must see the destruction of all that entices, corrupts, being willing to break with the wrong crowd, (Prov. 1:10,15; Acts 19:10-20; Psa 119:63).
5. A **desire to replace the evil** with the good must take place. Making a covenant with the eyes (Job. 31:1), with the total body...to not look upon evil. (Matt. 5:28; II Tim 2:22; II Pet 2:9; I Thess. 4:3-5; II Pet. 4:2)
6. A **determination to rebuild** the thought life must take place. (Rom. 12:1,2; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10, 16, 17; Romans 6:16,17)

THE PROBLEM OF ANGER!

Most Christians believe that it is definitely wrong ever to outwardly express anger in any form. And yet anger is an emotion and God created us an emotional being. This leads to a very important question, "Is it always wrong and a sin to be angry?" To answer this, one must know the nature of anger as defined in the Bible, how it affects us and others, what the Bible says about expressing it, and how to handle it.

I. What is Anger?

Anger is a strong emotion of displeasure. The New Testament uses three words for anger?

1. **Thumos** -- turbulent commotion, boiling agitation of feelings, blazing up, passion, anger boiling up and subsiding, an outburst from inward indignation (Eph. 4:31)
2. **Parorgismos**-- (wrath) anger that has irritation, exasperation, embitterment (Eph. 4:26b, 6:4)
- 3, **Orge**- An abiding and settled habit of the mind aroused under certain conditions (against evil and injustice) a just occasion for this feeling (Eph. 4:26a; Mark 3:5) (Sometimes with a view to taking revenge that can be lasting. But forbidden in Col. 3:9 for here it includes the scope of revenge.)

II. What Are It's Effects?

1. **When anger is present it produces energy in abundance.** It impels individuals to do things that tend to hurt or destroy. Some of the many names for anger are aggression, resentment, hate, fury, bitterness, spite, rancor, scorn, disdain, enmity, defiance, antagonism, hostility, etc.
2. **When a person is angry we say** --he is mad, bitter, griped, fed up, sore, seething, annoyed, exasperated, vexed, hurt, irked, pained, hostile, ferocious, vicious, dangerous, provoked, etc.
3. **Anger will motivate a person to** -- hate, wound, damage, annihilate, despise, scorn, loathe, vilify, curse, despoil, ruin, demolish, abhor, ridicule, get even, laugh at, humiliate, criticize, scold, bawl out, irritate, beat up, fight, crush, offend, bully, etc. He will probably attack verbally, or subtly.

III. What Happens to the Body When One is Angry?

Many things, such as: sugar pours into the system, creating energy. The blood pressure increase maybe as much as from 130 to 230, and the heart beats faster, often up to 220 or higher.

Additional adrenalin is released, which dilates the pupils of the eyes. Muscles tense up and the digestive tract can become so spastic that severe abdominal pains are felt during or after the time of anger. People have had strokes during a fit of anger because of the increased blood pressure. During anger the person can have a fatal coronary attack.

IV. What Causes Anger?

Why do we become angry? Are there logical reasons for becoming angry?

1. **Some people become angry when they are frustrated.** When a person is blocked from obtaining satisfaction or fulfilling his desires, impulses, ambitions, hopes, or drives, he readily becomes angry.
2. **A person may become angry because of experiencing pain.** This may be physical or psychological. A child may turn upon the parent, after spanking, and say "I hate you!" Harsh or brutal words or experiences that hurt can also make us angry. (Job. 19:2)
3. **Another reason for anger is anxiety over the threat** to oneself or a possession, or a loss. But the anxiety so quickly turns into anger.
4. **Injustice is still another reason or cause of anger.** Injustices occur every day and are perpetrated upon people often in all levels of society, Far too little anger is expressed at times over the injustices many people suffer, yet it is perhaps one of the most valid reasons for anger.
5. **A final cause of anger is selfishness.** We want our own way regardless of what happens to others. Some of our frustrations could easily be traced to the fact that our way has been blocked. We could give in and let the other person have his way, but instead we become frustrated and angry. We could eliminated our anger by putting others first. Perhaps at times it is the awareness of our own imperfections that leads us to attack and become angry with those who fail to live up to our expectations. We criticize others which makes us feel better at their expense.

V. When is Anger Wrong?

1. **Some Bible verses clearly tell us not to be angry.** (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Prov. 29:11, and many more.)
2. **Other passages forbid provoking others** to anger, and especially our children (Prov. 20:9; Col. 3:21). In Proverbs 15:18 and 16:32 we are encouraged to be slow to anger, i.e. *take time to think before acting*.
3. **People given to anger should be avoided.** (Prov. 22:24, 25; 29:22)

VI. When is Anger Right?

Ephesians 4:24 declares "Be angry and sin not." This does not contradict what was just stated above. "Orge" kind of anger (look earlier) is a settled kind of anger aroused under certain conditions. The person is aware of it and in control of it. There is a just occasion for anger. The reason is involved and when reason is present anger such as this can be right, if under God's control.

There are times when Scriptures would not only permit it, but on occasion demand it. Many of us think that all anger is wrong, but that is totally in error.

1. **The meek are not passive people, who are never angry.** Meekness is not weakness, but the person knows how to be self-controlled by the Holy

Spirit, even under pressure. We must be careful when, and if we get angry. Meekness is the sanctification of anger. It includes patience and long-suffering for personal affronts, but will speak out vigorously for the glory and honor of God.

2. There are Certain Characteristics of Righteous Anger:

These will be found in the times of Christ's reactions in anger. (Mark 3; Matthew 23; John 2)

- a. First of all it must be controlled, not a heated nor unrestrained passion.
- b. There will not be hatred, malice or resentment.
- c. It's motivation must be totally unselfish.
- d. It is directed against wrong deeds, or situations, not against people.
- e. It ought to lead to positive and constructive action to right the wrong.

VII. How Do You Handle Anger?

It will take a while to get victory. You don't change a lifetime of patterns over night, so don't get discouraged and give up. Try some of the following suggestions.

- 1. First, when angry, accept the fact of your anger,** admit it to the Lord. Confess it and take full responsibility for it. Don't project the blame on someone else by saying "You made me angry." No one else can *make* you angry; you allow it yourself. You are to blame, and no one else.
- 2. Second, try to understand what You are doing to make yourself angry.** It is not the situation, it is YOU.
- 3. Third, control your anger.** It is possible, Pray about it. Think before you act. Tell others in your group, or family that you need encouragement and that you are determined to change.
- 4. Fourth, don't respond to anger with anger** (Prov. 15:1), but rather speak softly and get control of your person.
- E. Fifth, spend time visualizing how you want to respond** the next time you may possibly get angry and practice it. (Prov. 15:1; Phil. 4:6-9)
- F. Sixth, develop a sense of humor;** it will keep you from taking yourself too seriously.

The Problem of Knowing the Will of God

I. Why Is It Necessary that We Know God's Will?

There are few things in the life of a Christian that is more precious than to know and do God's will. Epaphras (Col. 3:4:12) prayed that the Colosse believers would stand "perfect and complete" in the all the will of God. He wanted them to know that will, and to be main stream in the will of God. For this he had prayed fervently knowing the importance of the saints fulfilling God's will. The will of God is not for a few years, or for the early part of life when physical strength abounds, but is for the life, from birth to death for God's own.

To be outside the will of God is to suffer loss. Some day we will face HIM at the judgment seat of Christ, (II Cor. 5:10; I Cor. 3:11-15) and we will give account for everything done in the body, whether good or bad. The will of God is center core of the totality of our lives. To miss the will of God is to miss constant blessing, future reward, present joy and the sense of well-being that comes with His will embrace and fulfilled.

II. What Is God's Plan For Our Lives Like?

God's will includes every aspect of our lives. He would order our very steps, (Psa 37:23). If we do not walk in the **general will of God** (all the commands, things we need to live and do... as a Christian which is for every saved person) we will also miss the **specific will of God** for our lives. It is very dangerous to take lightly the planned, ordered, specific and general will of God.

God's will is wonderfully detailed from beginning to end. We need to have the desire that Paul had, that was to "fulfill" the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19) We should understand that God's will is that "perfect, good plan" for our lives. (Rom. 12:2) And our lives should manifest the fact that we are fulfilling His will. Others should sense that we are in the will of God.

The will of God brings joy, spiritual rest instead of turmoil, fulfillment, and peace. It does make a difference in our lives and those around us. His will includes fruitfulness in the winning of the lost, discipling those whom we reach for Christ, producing reproducers for the harvest fields of the world.

III. What Must We Do to Know the Will of God?

Maybe the most difficult thing is to walk in total yieldedness and have no will of our own. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. (Jere. 17:9) It is so easy to be led by our own sinful hearts and sinful wills and not even sense that basically we are living for self... even if it is good moral self. Since we are saved, we have also been "**called**". (II Tim. 1:9) Every saved person is called of God, and must find the "when, where and how" of God's will about the matter. This demands we seek God's will realizing that His plan can only be known by the surrendered person. So many of God's people are waiting for God to call them, or just feel that they are not called.

Proverbs 3:5,6 are definite steps for us to act upon. But this also demands "waiting" upon God. We are not very desirous to WAIT. Waiting upon God for His timing and His revealed will is not something we find easy, and the flesh rebels to

the thought of waiting upon God for direction. We go quickly off one direction or another under the leadership of our own thoughts, wills and inclinations. Often it is obvious to us and to others that we are NOT in the will of God, for God's leadership is not sensed. I do not mean that the will of God will always bring a life without trials and testings. The opposite is true, but we will see God's hand in it all.

- 1. To Paul, serving the Lord meant being a "slave, a doulos" (Grk) which means to belong to the Master, solely, entirely, completely. Thus our talents, time, money, bodies, minds, possessions, children, ALL we have is to be HIS. This is a fundamental principle if we are to know and do the will of God. The Christian life is to be a life live as an obedient bond-servant. (Rom. 1:1; 7:17, 22; James 1:1; I Cor. 7:22; Romans 14-22) Paul often called himself a "servant of Jesus Christ", this expression was reoccurring in Scripture as Paul loved this position and used this statement often. To be a bond-servant of the Lord means to recognize ourselves as one who has no will of his own, but living totally to do HIS will.**
- 2. There is what could be called, "the disciple of decision" meaning that we must be disciplined, or walk in spiritual discipline, if we are to know and do the will of God. There must be the willingness to ask guidance, for God to show us the way, and for us to be willing to seek His will. Moses did at the Red Sea, Ruth did at Bethlehem, David did in the wilderness, Nehemiah in the court, Paul on board the storm tossed craft, as well as many other instances recorded in the Word of God.**
- 3. There must be the willingness to ask, which implies honesty, sincerity, with faith, with committal, and assurance that God will guide. (Heb. 11:6; 11:1)**
- 4. Then there must be a willingness to 'WAIT' for such waiting upon God will cause a sifting of our values, a changing of circumstances which God might desire to bring about and an altering of objectives within HIS plan and purpose. (Isa 40:25-31; 30:18; Job 23:8-10)**
- 5. Also there must be a willingness to obey God's guidance, if this is lacking why should God give direction? Are we truly willing to obey? Are we insisting on our preference? Do we substitute something for immediate obedience?**

IV. There are some warnings to be giving in seeking the Will of God:

- 1. Don't lean too heavily upon circumstances.** God is sovereign and often leads us through such means, but often people use this almost totally with some kind of mystical attitude about it all. Often we had pastors phone us for meetings, and when I could not come at the time they desired (often only 2 - 6 months in advance) then they felt since I could not come it was not of God, and would not schedule a meeting possibly two years later. There was a mystical attitude on their part, that if it was God's will, then I would be able to come three months from the time they phoned.

By way of illustration a pastor made a decision to leave a church if he slept in until 10 AM on a certain Saturday. He used that sign to tell the church sometime later that he was leaving. He did sleep in, who caused that? God or the devil? Just because he rarely slept in, or maybe never to that late in the day, it was a poor way to ascertain the will of God.

A man says "If I see a sign that has INDIA printed on it in six foot tall letters then I will go to India to serve the Lord." Another man opens his Bible at random and whatever he points at... that is what God's will is.

By irrational arbitrariness one can go astray.

- 2. Don't seek some special revelations.** The Holy Spirit is not going to lead by some special revelation given through some strange, unusual events, circumstances, etc. God may indeed bring about some unusual events in your life, but that will not be a primary means of direction for the knowledge of His will.
- 3. Don't depend upon hunches, impressions, mental impulses, etc.** The only infallible directive for our lives is the Word of God. Don't depend upon feelings. It is so easy to go by our feelings or impressions about something, and self will then is apt to reign supreme. God basically directs through His Word, the leadership of the Holy Spirit, providential workings of many details in your life, and through the counsel of others.

LOOKING AT THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Introduction:

Various answers to suffering have been propounded. The evolutionist believes that suffering is the inevitable results of an upward struggle. To them suffering should be accepted as a necessity by man since it marks one of the stages in this ascending ladder of development. By arduous effort he will perfect himself in the same way that the dragonfly, straining to escape from the prison of the chrysalis, finally find his wings and flutters off into the sunlight.

Others have taken a more pessimistic view of the universe. A noted philosopher and mystic of the 19 century taught that the world in which men live is the worst of all possible worlds. All of life is essentially predatory and is simply an unending series of murders, robberies, lies, etc., he taught the only solution to life is to quit it; existence must be renounced once and for all if any person is to find peace. How sad!

I. Suffering presents a special problem for the Christian.

Believing as he does in the sovereign rule of a transcendent God who is all good and all just, it is hard sometimes for the Christian to reconcile the present status of the world with his concept of God. If God is good and just, how can HE permit injustice and unhappiness to continue in the world that He has made? Why does He not intervene to eliminate these evils?

1. **Paul knew suffering.** Paul knew the confinement of imprisonment, the frustration of a work undermined by his enemies, the privation of separation from friends, the pains of hunger and cold, the overbearing consciousness of increasing old age, and the dismal prospect of execution and all of this for Christ.

Nevertheless he accepted all of these things uncomplainingly as the expectations of Christian experience without seeking to refer them either to the unhappy accident of a blind cosmos, or the malicious meanness of an unfeeling deity.

2. **There are the following kinds of suffering.**

- a. Retributive or Judicial suffering---Rom. 2:2-11; 5:23
- b. Administrative, or Hereditary suffering---Rom. 5:12-21
- c. Punitive or Penal suffering---II Sam. 21:13-19; Heb. 12:15-17
- d. Corrective or Paternal suffering--Heb. 12:5-12
- e. Educative or Disciplinary suffering---Heb. 2:10; I Pet. 1:6,7
- f. Vindictive or Exemplary suffering---Job 1:2; Dan. 6; Eph. 6:10-20
- g. Redemptive, Voluntary, and Vicarious suffering---Col. 1:24; I Pet. 3:18; Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:13

II. Our attitude toward suffering makes a big difference. We must have the "right attitude" toward suffering. We will receive what God wants us to receive from suffering, if we will suffer "according to the will of God", and also if we will seek carefully what God is trying to teach us in the midst of suffering.

1. **The world does all it can to deny suffering.** So in death we cover it over with flowers so death will not look like death. The world tries to explain away suffering; we cover it over; we reject it. We don't want our children to suffer as we did, "so we say", so we do all we can to make life an experience of ease. Parents go to get ends to spare their child from any suffering, of any kind, whether mental, physical, emotional, etc. We often have the attitude along with the unsaved that we should not have to suffer anything we dislike. Being unwilling to suffer our tolerance level in marriage, about finances, or any other matter is very low. We don't want to put up with anything that is contrary to our wishes. Therefore we reject the fact that life is suppose to be struggle and in so doing we live in the "*spirit of impatience.*" We fail to see the teaching from or the blessing that comes from suffering.
2. **Most of us do not see the meaning of suffering.** We don't realize that according to the Word of God suffering renews, purges, and instead of taking us away from Christ it draws us closer to Him. Suffering helps us to cease from sin. We would rather have all suffering abolished, or we just take a stoic, ascetic, unhappy approach to the suffering God allows.
3. **We need pastors and workers who understand the importance of the ministry of God in our lives through suffering.**
 - a. We must help others to see the importance of this work of love from God's hand.
 - b. When we walk with HIM we understand that the crown (blessings) comes by way of the Cross, (suffering). (Phil. 3:10)
 - c. We must take the risk of being hurt as we minister to others, because that is normal and to be expect, we won't always be understood. (I Pet. 2:21-24)
 - d. Only the wounded can truly help another suffering person.
 - e. In giving mercy we will give ourselves away in ministry. This involves the risk of being misunderstood, rejected, and unwanted and that at times is a point of suffering.

III. CONSIDER CHRIST'S SUFFERING: (I Pet. 4:1; I Pet. 2:19-23)

We are to arm ourselves with the same attitude or mind, or insight with conviction, embracing suffering, as controlled by God the Father, for our good.

1. **Christ experienced every kind of suffering,** enduring without resistance, without denial, His anguish, concern and pain was not concealed.
2. **He goes as a sheep to the slaughter.** He does not leap over the river of death. He suffered in His hearing, in His sight, in His smelling, in His tasting, in every part and member of the body.
3. **He did not belittle or deny suffering.** His suffering was shameful, painful beyond measure; dying the death of criminal, slow, solemn, with the cursing of men upon and the rejection of the Heavenly Father his portion. (study Hebrews 5:1-7; 12:1-5)

The Problem Of Worry

Introduction:

1. Worry is a tyrant, enslaving multitudes of God's people daily.
2. Worry is often a an understandable anxiety, but it is often concern "out of place and out of reason."
3. God has not purposed any of us to live out a lifetime in the prison of overanxious care. His wise plan and purpose is abiding peace and continuing joy.
4. God does not want testings to bury us in the quicksand of despondency. It is possible to throw off the shackles of this giant of despair.
5. It is a terrible error and sin for us to enthrone worry and care. The crushing of the human heart in the flood of useless anxiety becomes a personal enemy of God and plants the seeds of doubt and despair in many a heart.
6. Basically it is fear, particularly fear of what may happen; worry is often foolish fear, unnecessary, useless, and without foundation.
7. It is sin for the Christian, sins resulting from worry are almost innumerable.
8. Worry destroys all happiness, and enjoyment of life; it robs of peace of mind and stifles peace, bringing in it's place only gnawing fear. The health suffers; the whole body can be depressed, digestion effected, tension develops, muscles tire easily, blood pressure increases, ability is lessened, and the person sometimes cannot even cope with life at that point.

I. The Human Approach to Worry:

Medical doctors prescribe drugs to try and quiet the nerves and tranquilize the spirit. Psychologists seek to understand the mind, to heal the mind and use various methods to unearth the problem; they probably have a multitude of approaches to the subject but most without any benefit to the sufferer.

There are those who practice denial; that ignoring the problem, it will go away. Many Christian have a life time practice of worry, but at the same time would not readily admit their practice of worry, nor would they want to face it as SIN before God.

Worry often is misdirected imagination. The person has "vain imaginations" which control the thought processes and which produce fretting, anxiety, and constant anxiousness and a sense of impending doom. (II Cor. 11:3-5) The person is just sure that everything is going to go wrong, and that nothing ever goes right.

II. Statements Made by Mankind About Worry:

"Worry never robs tomorrow of it's sorrows, it saps today of it's strength."

"Some people bear three kinds of troubles: all they ever had, all they have now and all they expect to ever have." -- Ed. E. Hale

"I have had many troubles in my life, but the worst of them never came." - James A. Garfield

"There are two things about which one should never worry: That which cannot be helped and that which can be." -- Trotty Veck

"Many a person can look back and trace his good fortune to some misfortune."
-- G. M. Adams

"As a man handles his troubles during the day he goes to bed at night... a General, a Captain, or a Private."

III. Biblical Applications of Truth to Worry:

Worry is not one segment of our lives that can be handled separately from all others aspects. It is an expression of a response to life itself; if we would live well, we must apply the rules of God's Word for living. For if a person lives according to God's rules, worry problems will take care of themselves.

1. **God promises peace...** Isa 26:3; Col. 3:15-17. From the foregoing portions it obviously depends upon keeping our "minds staid upon Him", and allowing His peace to literally "garrison our hearts and minds".
 - a. Christ spoke peace to His disciples as they were full of fear and worry about their lives and doubtless about the future. He came into their presence saying "*Peace be unto you.*" (Cf John 14:27)
 - b. It is a matter of accepting HIS peace as we learn to bring every kind of trouble to Him, openly, transparently, fully, and with faith. (Phil. 4:6-13)
 - c. He then promises that "*the peace of God that passeth understanding SHALL keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*" He wants us to learn to accept His peace, to appropriate it for our lives, just as Abraham believed God. (Romans 4:20,21) But many do not really want peace; worry has become such a part of life that they enjoy their lot of self-pity.
2. **Peace will mean accepting God's will in the present.** Peace comes from an acceptance that God is sovereign and is working that which is best for us. (Romans 8:28, 29) Paul had to come to that point in his life as he learned in whatever state to be content. He had to face the "thorn" that was a great burden to him as he came to the place of being able to say. . . "*I will rather glory in mine affirmatives. . .*" (II Cor. 12:9-10)

"THE PROBLEM OF GROWTH OR THE LACK OF GROWTH"

Introduction:

- > A deacon has a disagreement with his pastor, and for months will not speak to him.
- > A professing Christian couple get their feelings hurt and stop coming to church.
- > A church business meeting erupts into a nasty display of tempers and harsh words. And, again, we are painfully reminded that the problem of carnality, and a lack of growth among Christians is still with us. (I Cor. 3:1)
- > The word translated carnal here is the adjective "sarkikos." It appears eleven times in the New Testament and has both literal and figurative meanings. Literally, it may be defined as pertaining to the physical body or the things necessary for its sustenance and growth. Figurative, it describes the sinful, human nature common to the saint and sinner alike.
- > A carnal Christian is one who at a given point is allowing the old nature to govern his conduct and has not grown in maturity, but is still a babe in reaction, and thought.

SEED THOUGHTS:

A child fell out of bed during the night, and remarked that he slept too close to where he got in. Many stay too close to where they got into the family of God.

Father stated that as an adult he had not truly grown since he was saved 20 years prior as a teen, and now realized that he had lost his wife and family in divorce because of his lack of growth.

A fruit tree is expected to grow, and we do expect fruit, likewise God expects fruit. We are not to be like unto a dead stick.

A small baby brought home from the hospital cried into the night, why?? He was hungry and the need had to be met. Do we have hunger for the Word for we need it the first thing in the morning.

Some men know they are growing, but it is only around the middle.

"I am becoming" must be a goal! I Pet. 2:1-23 He is becoming precious!

I. Symptom of A Lack of Growth, which are evidenced in carnality.

In the context of the verse referred to above, Paul mentions at least two symptoms of carnality: 1) envying or the sense of jealousy, and 2) strife, discord, or contention. There are other evidences equally familiar to us. Here are a few, we could add many more.

1. **Pride:** "I'll have you know, that I gave more money to. . . than anyone else."
2. **Anger:** "I'll show that preacher he can't push me around. I'll stop giving any of my money to the general fund, and we'll starve him out!"
3. **Critical spirit:** And this we witness too often among a church staff who work close together, or in the S.S. department, etc. "Well, I for one, thought that person did a lousy job." "Did you notice how many mistakes _____"

II. The Seriousness of A Lack of Growth:

1. **A lack of growth, which sets the stage for carnality**, strips the believer of his peace, joy, and thrill of service.
2. **The Christian can be so carnal that the lost are hindered** from coming to Christ because of the poor testimony of the carnal, weak, sinning one.
3. **When we do not grow, and are in need** of the "first principles" and cannot receive the "meat of the word", (study Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:1-12; 2:1-4), our lack grieves the Holy Spirit, and quenches His work.
4. **We help block the Spirit's power in Christian service**, and are a hindrance to answered prayer and to God sending revival blessings.
5. **Growth is a choice in the spiritual realm.** It does not take place automatically as physical growth does in the life of a child. It necessitates that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to bring about the growth so obviously needed. With that we must pay the price for growth, for all good things cost something. *Carnality is also a choice!*

III. If We Are To Change and Grow Up Into Maturity:

1. **First, we must quit playing games with God.** We must call pride, temper, gossip and unbelief, self-centered living, etc., what He calls them--sins that nailed Jesus to the cross and continue to grieve His heart.
2. **Secondly, we must repent of our lack of growth** and the things we have allowed to become priorities that have kept us from growth. This includes a genuine sorrow for our immaturity, selfishness and carnality and our willingness to repent and forsake those things that have kept us from growth. (Consider the third of the three kinds of soil -- *"cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches, and pleasures*, etc. Mark 4:18-20; Luke 8:14)
3. **Third, we must restore Christ to the throne of our hearts, and lives.** As we yield to the Holy Spirit He will control us, He will not only repress the fruit of the carnal nature, but will produce the fruit of the new nature. (Gal. 5:22,23; John 15:1-8) Consider that we are *"servants to whom we obey"*! (Rom 6:16,17)
4. **Fourth, fruitfulness, and growth**, (or to be established, settled, cf. I Peter 5:10) is dependent upon our continuation in the factors which produce growth. We will never totally arrive. Growth in Christlikeness is a life-long goal. (Study II Pet. 1:3-10 and note the things we must "ADD" to our faith in order to be fruitful and not barren as so many are who have not grown or added to beginning faith.)
5. **Fifth, we must set goals for growth.** This includes Scripture memory, meditating on the Word of God, and having a study method, i.e. study of doctrinal truths, biographical studies, book studies, etc.

IV. Marks Of Maturity:

1. **Dependability** -- can others count on us? (I Cor . 15:58)

2. **Determination**-- (Joshua 24:14-24)
3. **Control of the tongue** -- (James 3)
4. **Orderliness**-- (I Cor. 14:33,40)
5. **Decisiveness**-- (James 1:5-8)
6. **Loyalty, Faithfulness**--- (Rev. 17:14; I Cor. 4:2)
7. **Cooperation**-- (Phil. 2:1-3; Eph. 4:3)
8. **Confidence, faith in God**-- (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 11:6, 11:1)

V. Essentials for Growth:

1. **Food**- how many like food? Or would you just rather look at a lovely, or beautiful table setting. Many are more interested in how the table is set, (how the preacher spoke, how the choir sang, how lovely things were) and how it looks than the food thereon. A wife said, " Got the table set, but I'm too tired to get the food." Most of the time we just don't prepare the spiritual food for ourselves, and our lives how it.
2. **Light**- In a large city are many tenement houses with virtually no light from the sun. There is a lot of illness. Christ is our light, but we must take time to have the Light shine in. He is our SUN, and without HIS light in our lives we too will be spiritually ill. And in light is power. (Eph. 5:8-17)
3. **Exercise**- It is needed for strength. When flat on the back for weeks, we will be too weak, or dizzy to get up and walk. Also spiritually we can be too weak to even walk with the Lord. Also we need the spiritual walking of taking the gospel to others. (Phil. 2:12) We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. It takes work to have a good garden and it takes work to have a spiritual walk and excel for God.

You could ask the class how old they are? In Christ? A year old, 2, 5, etc., many new Christians are actually older in the Lord than some who have been saved for years.

There are four classes of Christians..... those who are bottled fed, those who are spoon fed, those who have come to the place of feeding themselves, and those who feed others. Were are you?

FACING THE PROBLEM OF DOUBTS

Introduction . . . Thoughts...

"This thing is from me." (I Kings 12:24) The disappointments of life are in reality only the decrees of love. "I have a message for thee, My child," says God.

But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel, was the cry of the unbelieving heart. "We had hoped," what common place words, what a familiar mood? Disappointment and doubt is one of life's common experiences.

I. There Are Various Occasions of Disappointment and Doubt.

1. **Some are very unnecessary.** Most doubt is inevitably the result of willful neglect of what God has said, and obvious unbelief. We work ourselves into a frenzy of doubt being overwhelmed with anxious doubt we are possessed by the domination of it all.
2. **Some doubts and disappointments are unfounded.** This was actually the experience of these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. All of their disappointment and doubt was imagined -- in vain; for in reality, Jesus Christ was alive.
3. **Some doubts and disappointments are seemingly unbearable.** Because of their very nature and because we cannot find answers and there is no earthly explanation, they become so very unbearable. The doubts and concerns of the apostles in the loss of Christ was seemingly an unbearable loss. They did not understand the purpose of His death, nor did they want to accept the reality of it all.
4. **By contrast they who believe are blessed:** happy, joyous, steady, strong, whose resources are from unfailing springs of refreshing. We must think through and study the Beatitudes of the Word of God. That "blessed" is the man ... Psalm 1, Psalm 103; Psalm 32... who finds that God is his trust, fully, and completely.

II. Where Does All this Doubt Come From?

1. **Where does this** this shadow of spirit, this searching of soul, this chastening of character, this manacle of mind and this hopelessness of heart come from?
2. **There are many causes,** but the greatest is the doubt of the mind, the determination that God does not care, and that surely if God loved me all this would not have happened to me.
3. **We stagger to rise and to shake off our doubts and fears,** but to what end, and by what means? There is no hope, we say to ourselves, rather; we concur with the poet:

"Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne."

We cannot vindicate ourselves nor get others to help us. We realize no alleviation of circumstances much less justice. We are brought into the net of difficulties; men ride on over our heads; we go through the fire and water, and we wonder, "Lord, art Thou He? Dost Thou care?"

4. **Whereas, formerly we had rejoiced** in the sweetness of His salvation and sunshine of His presence, now we doubt His Word, character, faithfulness, power, and perhaps even His Person, and say in substance..."Art Thou He, or look we for another?" as we saw in John the Baptist's life. As he doubted, so we doubt.
5. **Christ is concerned.** He does not willingly afflict His own. His heart is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, He is touched with compassion because of our need. He want us to come to Him, to obtain mercy in time of need, and to take doubt and difficulty to Him.
6. **He wants us to take our stand on His Word,** to believe what He has promised, all appearance to the contrary notwithstanding; to be steadfast, unmovable, unafraid, to find ourselves strong in Him. (Eph. 6:10)
7. **As His children we must get the best** of our doubts and disappointments, not to succumb to them, but to triumph over them. We must be masterful and victorious. (Romans 8:31-39)
8. **God desires to develop our faith,** to build our lives through the testing and difficulties. We must understand that doubts are commonplace. We must see His hand in it all, and make every disappointment . . ."His appointment." We must recognize HIS hand in every aspect of our lives, and when we "**Cannot see His hand, we know we can trust His heart.**"