

When We Come To Christ-To What Have We Come

(**Bold type** and underlining of scripture text have been added for emphasis)

(Your questions and comments are welcome)

When we come to Christ our great need is to realize, not only, “Who have we come to?” but also, “What have we come to?” While both of these questions are carefully and completely answered by scripture, our personal realization of each is a progressive matter according to one’s diligence in seeking to know the Lord. The need for diligence in, and the progressive nature of the learning process are indicated in the following passages of scripture:

Hebrews 11

6 But without **faith** it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a **rewarder** of them that **diligently** seek him.

2 Peter 1

5 And beside this, **giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue**; and to virtue **knowledge**;

6 And to knowledge **temperance**; and to temperance **patience**; and to patience **godliness**;

7 And to godliness **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness **charity**.

8 For if these things be **in you**, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in **the knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, **give diligence** to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3

18 But **grow** in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...

Growth in its very nature is a process of progressing in and by God’s grace in the matter of knowing the Lord. The passage in 2 Peter 1:5-11 shows us some of the content of this growth process.

The question, “What have we come to?” is addressed by the apostle Paul at:

1 Corinthians 1

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's:

3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto **the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Here we see that when we come to Christ, we come to the fellowship of Christ.

The word “fellowship” is most often translated from the Greek word “koinonia”, and according to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,

means “partnership, i.e. (lit.) participation, ...” Other English translations are: communicate (Heb. 13:16), communication (Phm. 6), and communion (1 Cor. 10:16; 2 Cor. 6:14; 13:14). Further, the Greek word “koinonia” derives from the word “koinonos” which means “a sharer, i.e. associate”. Other English translations of the word “koinonos” are: companions (Heb. 10:33), partaker (1 Pet. 5:1), and partakers (Matt. 23:30, 1 Cor. 10:18, 1 Cor. 1:7, 2 Pet. 1:4).

Thus, we learn that “fellowship” as herein discussed, refers to sharing in, or partaking of, the things of Christ. This is what we are called to when we come to Christ.

The apostle Peter tells us at:

2 Peter 1

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of **him** that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We should take note of the role of knowledge in the matter of one’s sharing in or partaking of the things that are of Christ. Peter says that all things that pertain to life and godliness are “through the knowledge of him that hath called us...”

There are common phrases among some groups within the Christian community: *Do you “know the Lord”? He or she “knows the Lord.”* As generally used, these expressions are equivalent to saying, “*Are you a Christian?*” *He or she “is saved”, or “is born again”.*

However, the terms “know” and “knowledge”, as applied in scripture, have in focus a specific reference. The term “know” is with few exceptions, translated from two Greek words: *ginosko* which means “to know” (absolutely)...; and *eido* which means “to see” (literally or figuratively)...(Strongs)

Other English translations of the Greek word *ginosko* are: aware, perceive, resolved, sure, and understand. **When viewing the context in which these words are used, it is evident that they involve *an inward clarity of comprehension:***

Aware---Matthew 24

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not **aware** of,

Perceive---Luke 8

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I **perceive** that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately

Resolved----Luke 16

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, **What shall I do?** for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am **resolved what to do**, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

Sure----John 6

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are **sure** that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Understand----Acts 8

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said,

Understandest thou what thou readest?

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

The Greek word *eido* is also translated aware, perceive, sure and understand. **An additional translation of the term *eido* is “behold”.** **After his resurrection, Jesus stood before his disciples, and because they supposed that he was a spirit, he said** at:

Luke 24

39 **Behold my hands and my feet**, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he **shewed them his hands and his feet**.

Here Jesus is saying to His disciples, **know for a certainty** that it is me, and not a spirit. The essential meaning of the word “know” involves **a mental**

grasp of a matter or situation. To “know” is seeing (in a figurative sense), perceiving, awareness, being sure, and understanding.

When Jesus gave sight to the man who was born blind, we read at:

John 9

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, **I am he.**

There was no vague discernment by the man himself as to who he was. Clearly, **he knew** that he was the one who had been blind. He also **knew** that now he could see.”...one thing **I know**, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.”(v-25)

The referenced scriptures show that the word “know”, as used in scripture, is referring to cognitive **reality**. Thus, the expression, he or she “knows the Lord” cannot properly be a general reference to being a Christian, but rather, it refers to the function of one’s cognitive faculty. This explanation is consistent with the scripture’s usage of the word “know”.

Now, referring back to the passage in 2 Peter, chapter one, we read that: “According as **his divine power** hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through **the knowledge** of him...”(v-3). Here we see that God’s provision in and through the Lord Jesus is entirely adequate for living according to the will of God. **And this is through knowing him. In this regard, we read:**

John 17

3And **this is life eternal**, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 1

4 **In him was life**; and the **life was the light** of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

John 8

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light** of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk **in darkness**, but shall have the light of life.

When the apostle Paul was before King Agrippa, and in recounting the events on the road to Damascus, he told the king that Jesus said to him:

Acts 26

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 **To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

In the above referenced epistle written by the apostle Peter we read:
2 Peter 1

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers** of the divine nature, **having escaped** the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The preceding scriptures are explaining that this life is eternal life, and that this **life is the light** that we come into in Christ. Jesus said that it is the “light of life.” (John 8:12) The above scriptures also explain that we partake of the “divine nature”, and this is another kind of life.

The practical question relates to how an individual becomes a partaker of such life and light. The apostle Paul writes: Romans 5

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly.**

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**

9 Much more then, being now justified **by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God **by the death of his Son**, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life**.

Reconciliation is the removal of the sin barrier that naturally exists between God and man. The above passage in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, along with many other scriptures, explains to us that the death of God’s Son is **the ground** on which man can approach God.

Jesus’ death was a condemnation of man’s sin, and His resurrection was a demonstration of God’s power to deliver man from sin’s control, from which man, due to the weakness of the flesh cannot extricate himself. In this regard, the apostle Paul says at: Romans 8

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God sending his own Son in **the likeness** of sinful flesh, **and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:**

And God did it to accomplish his purpose as expressed at:

Romans 8:4

That the **righteousness** of the law might be **fulfilled in us**, who walk **not after the flesh**, but **after the Spirit.**

Persons who learn to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit are those who receive scripture’s testimony in an unqualified commitment to the Person and work of Christ, both in the **meaning** of his death, and also, in the **essential benefit** of his resurrection.

From these passages, and others that will be cited, there are several points to be noted:

1. An individual’s acceptance by God is an act of mercy resting on the death and resurrection of his Son. **The apostle Paul wrote at:**

Titus 3

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but **according to his mercy** he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

2. The function of the law is to provide persons with the knowledge of sin.

Paul writes: Romans 3

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for **by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

Romans 7

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not **known** sin, **but by the law**: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The law offers no assistance to move from sin to that which is right, nor did God so intend. **As we read at: Romans 8:3**, “For what the law could not do, in that it was **weak through the flesh...**” *Therefore God intervened in man’s dilemma by sending the Holy Spirit to deliver from sin, those who live by faith.* **At the end of Romans chapter seven, Paul poses the question:** “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” **He then, answers the question in Romans chapter eight, verse two:** “For the law of the **Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus, **hath made me free** from the law of **sin and death.**” **Also, Jesus said:** “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter**, that he may abide with you forever; **Even the Spirit of truth...**” (John 14:15-17)

3. Even though God has given to His children the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, and granted that they might “be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4), *walking according to the Holy Spirit can, when we are young, be a challenging learning process.*

When we come to Christ, we desire and expect to turn from what we know to be sin. Initially, we may find some degree of freedom from what we know to be sin. But, in our eagerness to read the scriptures, we learn that in laying “...aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...” (Heb. 12:1), *the victory over sin, that scripture says can be ours, is not our experience.* And, lest we become discouraged, *we must understand why we do things that our knowledge will not support.* There are several reasons why our behavior does not conform to our knowledge of what we should or should not do.

While the issue could be **our unwillingness** to forsake something that we know to be sin, for those of God’s children who are determined to do God’s will, their failure is **a lack of understanding of**, at least some of the following: 1) The function of the law. 2) Their own lack of strength to overcome the influences of the flesh. 3) How to avail themselves of God’s provision for freedom from sin.

The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans has addressed this perplexing situation that inevitably confronts the faithful. We read at: Romans 7

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, **but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, **which was ordained to life**, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion **by the commandment**, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore **the law** is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. **But sin**, that it might appear sin, **working death in me** by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that **the law is spiritual**: but **I am carnal**, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 **If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.**

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18 For **I know** that **in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing**: for **to will** is present with me; but how to perform that which is good **I find not.**

19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see **another law in my members**, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! **who shall deliver me** from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then **with the mind** I myself serve the law of God; but **with the flesh** the law of sin.

Romans 8

1 There is therefore **now** no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who **walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

As previously explained, the function of the law is to make sin known.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) ***The requirement to keep God's commandments, standing alone, has no enabling power. So, the more we know and the harder we try, the more condemnation we experience.***

In the Romans passage, this feeling of condemnation is referred to as death. So,

while we expected the commandment to bring life, instead, we experienced death. (V-10)

But, what we can learn from God's commandments is that *we are, by our very nature, "exceeding sinful". In our carnal nature "dwelleth no good thing". Unless God will intervene, even though "I delight in the law of God after the inward man", the desires of sin will prevail.*

Our interests, our habits, and our desires have a strong hold in us. *But we have seen in the preceding scriptures, that the Father has made adequate provision for our deliverance from the desires of the flesh. We refer again to: 2 Peter 1*

3 According as **his divine power** hath given unto us all things that pertain unto **life and godliness**, through the **knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers** of the divine nature, having escaped **the corruption** that is in the world through lust.

His "divine power" that delivers from sin is encompassed within the term **grace**. Also included in **grace** is the Holy Spirit's work in bringing God's children to see **how** we share in the divine nature. In scripture, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the "**Spirit of grace**". (Heb. 10:29)

Previously, we considered how "knowing" is understanding, being aware, or perceiving in a specific matter or situation. And that the "things" that pertain to life and godliness are realized through the Spirit's enlightening us concerning these "things".

To understand how the Spirit brings us to know the things of God and of Christ, let us look at the Greek word *photizo* (pronounced fo-tid'-zo), meaning "to shed rays, i.e. to shine or (trans.) to brighten up". (Strong's Concordance) This Greek word is translated "lighteth" at John 1:9, referring to Jesus, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And at Ephesians 3:9 *photizo* is translated "make...see", "And to **make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery..." **This same Greek word is also translated "enlightened" at: Ephesians 1****

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of **your understanding** being **enlightened**; that **ye may know** what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of **his power** to us-ward who believe, according to the working of **his mighty power**,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, **when he raised him from the dead**, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Here Paul's prayer for all who believe is that God give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, and that the eyes of their understanding be "enlightened" that they "may know".

These scriptures, and many other scriptures, inform us that the Holy Spirit that dwells in us grants us to comprehend or discern things that are outside the range of our natural comprehension. For example:

1) The Lord, by His Spirit, grants us to know that we are His children.

Romans 8

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

While this is how we know that we are God's children, I have heard people being counseled that they should write down the day and the hour when they received Christ into their heart. Then, if they have assurance problems concerning their salvation, their assurance could be restored by referring back to the exact time when they were saved. This will give temporary relief at best; **for it does not address the actual cause for lack of assurance**, nor (as just noted), is such reference back in time **the means for assuring us that we are God's children**. This may be a subject for future consideration.

2) He gives us wisdom to understand the true nature of our thoughts, words, and deeds. We read at: Proverbs 14

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

The Spirit shows us, either directly or indirectly, through the scriptures, the true nature of our thoughts, words, and deeds. 2 Timothy 3

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

An example of scripture's instructive and corrective function: The word "covetousness" at Hebrews 13:5 is from two Greek words, *philos*, meaning "fond", and *arguros*, meaning "silver". (Strong's Concordance) And the word "covetous" at Ephesians 5:5 derives from two Greek words, *echo*, meaning to "hold", and *pleon*, meaning "more" or "major portion". (Strong's Concordance) ***Thus, we see that covetousness, greed, or avarice are experienced inwardly as a desire for money, or a desire to have more than we already have or need. As we study the scriptures, the Spirit makes application to our own inner state.***

Such application is addressed at: Hebrews 4

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things are naked and opened** unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

3) The following passage makes it quite clear that we can actually know God's will in the situations that we encounter. And, for this purpose, that we

might walk in a manner that is pleasing to Him. This passage also shows us that knowing the Lord is a growth process. As we walk worthy of the Lord by doing his will our knowledge of God will increase. The Lord ministers to us according to where we have attained. He knows how to instruct and work in each of his children. **Colossians 1**

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be **filled** with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**;

A further and most significant point with regard to knowing God's will is that *his will is comprehended in terms of wisdom and spiritual understanding*. Knowing God's will rests in *a reservoir of understanding, whether small or large, resulting from the Spirit's enlightenment of the truth through scripture*. Wisdom is the Spirit's granting to us discernment of what is the Lord's will in specific matters, and **how** to accomplish it.

4) **As previously mentioned**, we know that we are God's children because His Spirit bears witness with our spirit. But also, it is by the Holy Spirit's ministry to us that we know that He abides in us and that we abide in him. **In this regard, we read** at:

1 John 3

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby **we know** that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 John 4

13 Hereby **know we** that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of **his Spirit**.

Thus, one's knowing that God's Spirit dwells within is more than an acceptance of the objective fact of scripture's testimony, but also involves an actual awareness of the Spirit's ministry, and this, according to the testimony of scripture. Abiding in Christ is not simply an objective fact attributed to all who are God's children. *One's abiding in Christ involves inward recognition of both, the Lord's will, and our compliance with it. Such compliance with God's will is how we keep his commandments.*

The Greek word translated "abide" means to *stay*(in a given place, state, relation or expectancy), (Strong's Concordance) This Greek word is also translated "abide", "continue", and "remain" at: **1 John 2**

24 **Let** that therefore **abide** in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. **If** that which ye have heard from the beginning shall **remain** in you, ye also shall **continue** in the Son, and in the Father.

In response to the question of how does a person become a partaker of the life and light that is in Christ, we have considered: 1) How Jesus removed the sin barrier that exists between man and God. 2) That the function

of the law is to make sin known. 3) Man's inability to perform. 4) The Spirit's exclusive power to save from the "law of sin and death" (flesh). 5) And God's gracious provision of the Holy Spirit to enlighten.

As we continue responding to this "how to" question, we must be mindful that God's gracious provision of, in, and through Christ becomes beneficial to us *solely on the basis of one's inward posture of unwavering commitment and devotion to the Person and work of Christ, which is faith.*

Let us review a few scriptures in this regard:

Romans 4

16 Therefore it is of faith, **that** it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Romans 5

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

James 1

6 But let him ask in faith, **nothing wavering**. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For **let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord**.

8 A **double minded** man is **unstable** in all his ways.

We learn from the passage in James' epistle, that if we waver between the Lord's will and our own natural inclinations, we will receive nothing from Him. James says that we must, "ask in faith, nothing wavering". ***Thus we see that wavering between the two positions is less than faith. If our heart is divided, we do not have power with God.*** An elder brother, now deceased, once said, "There is no power against the evil one, while there is conflict between the two natures within".

This point is being emphasized because anyone who comes to Christ will experience such conflict. If we are **willing to abandon** the desires and interests operating in the carnal nature, coming to an understanding (as previously mentioned) of the means of deliverance, will enable us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18) ***And it is important to know that we cannot walk, indefinitely, between these two positions. At some point, our clarity concerning the things in which the Lord has enlightened us will begin to fade.***

Those inner workings that displease the Lord, as well as the means of salvation from them are identified in the following scripture: Galatians 5

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and **ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh**.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are **contrary the one to the other**: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But **if ye be led of the Spirit**, ye are not under the law.

19 Now **the works of the flesh** are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

And, as is common knowledge, those inner workings often find expression in what we say and do. Jesus said at: Luke 6

45 A good man out of the good treasure **of his heart** bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure **of his heart** bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance **of the heart** his mouth speaketh.

A significant portion of scripture is explaining the manner in which we should or should not behave. In coming to Christ, we will necessarily recognize our unworthiness to partake of the gift of salvation. It is this recognition that enables us to understand that it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Titus 3:5)

God’s mercy lies in the fact that He does not give us what we justly deserve. **His grace** is his divine power toward us wherein He gives us life, and that, in His Son. *And only through the Son are we accepted before the Father. Thus, we can stand before the Father only because we are rightly related to his Son, and that through faith, an unwavering devotion and commitment to Him.*

We read at: Ephesians 2

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should **walk in them**.

Here, we learn that when we come to Christ we are created anew that we might walk in the way of God’s own design. And it is important to note, that we walk in God’s way **by His enabling grace**, which we **access through faith**.

In this regard, the apostle Paul writes to the churches of Galatia, and is addressing their return back to the externalisms of the law, and in particular, circumcision.

Galatians 3

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should **not obey** the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye **the Spirit** by the **works of the law**, or by the **hearing of faith**?

3 Are ye so foolish? having **begun in the Spirit**, are ye now made perfect **by the flesh**?

Galatians 4

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Galatians 5

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; **but faith** which worketh **by love**.

The “good works” mentioned in the above Ephesians passage is *not referring to any system of religious practice, but rather, to knowing and doing God’s will.*

We will review Colossians 1

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be **filled with the knowledge of his will** in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might **walk worthy of the Lord** unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

It is especially important to understand that before the Lord, what gives any work the quality of “good” is that the thing done is His will. And, as previously mentioned, God’s will is comprehended in terms of the understanding that we have by the Spirit’s ministry to us through the scripture, and the wisdom that the Spirit gives as to what to do and how to do it.

We are told at: Philippians 2

4 Look **not** every man on **his own things**, but every man also on **the things of others**.

This is an attitude that the Lord would establish in us, that we give first consideration, not to our own interests, but to the interests of others. ***This is a general principle according to which the Lord would have us relate to others; however, we need wisdom to function properly in specific situations.*** For example, such consideration toward others, if not exercised wisely, could unnecessarily encourage dependence on the giver or resentment by the receiver. Every person has his or her own zone of privacy, and we must be wise about entering it.

Another general principle for the conduct of one’s behavior is expressed at: **1 John 2**

15 Love not **the world**, neither **the things** that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that **doeth the will of God abideth for ever.**

Love of the world is shown within the passage to refer to desires toward the world and the things that are in it. While we live in the world, we are told that it is the Lord’s will that we do so, not being influenced by natural desires and pride. ***Loving the world is when our worthwhileness for living is found in the gratifying experiences provided by the world and the things in it.*** The things in the world appeal to a person’s natural desires and interests, as opposed to the Spirits interesting us in the things of God’s kingdom. ***The double mindedness referred to above, in the epistle by James, applies to God’s children if we are trying to have purpose for our life in both kingdoms.*** According to that

scripture, this divided **inward position** does not coexist with faith, which is an **inward posture** of commitment and devotion to God.

Because God will not share our love for Him with the world, following the Lord:

1) Requires decisions that touch the very foundation *of one's purpose* in living; 2) Is impossible apart from *the power of God's grace* that delivers us from the influences of those persistent demands issuing from the flesh; 3) Requires *understanding and wisdom* to live in this world on a significantly different basis than that to which we have been accustomed. *Apart from divinely bestowed wisdom*, such an effort not only unnecessarily offends men, it brings reproach to the name of the Lord as much as, if not more than, worldliness.

Concerning the level of devotion and commitment to the Lord, Jesus said at: Matthew 22

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God **with all thy heart**, and **with all thy soul**, and **with all thy mind**.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour **as thyself**.

40 On these two commandments hang **all** the law and the prophets.

And at: Matthew 5

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but **to fulfil**.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The manner in which love fulfills the law is explained by Paul at:

Romans 13

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Here we see that love fulfills the law, simply in that, one who in fact loves his "neighbor" *seeks to avoid causing detriment to the person, property, or interests of another*. And equally true, one who loves God *will not knowingly do those things that displease him*. We read at: 1 John 3

21 Beloved, **if our heart condemn us not**, then have we **confidence** toward God.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things **that are pleasing in his sight**.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by **the Spirit** which he hath given us.

These and many other scriptures make it quite clear that being a disciple of Christ is not a part-time or casual endeavor. The level of devotion and commitment that God requires for a person to learn from, and know Him, can receive inadequate attention by His people. The Greek word *mathetes* is translated disciple, and means “a learner”, i.e. “pupil”. (Strong’s Concordance)

This is the message regarding discipleship that the apostle Paul delivered to the “saints” who were at Ephesus. We read at: Ephesians 4

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, **that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk,** in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being **alienated from the life of God** through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 **But ye have not so learned Christ;**

21 If so be that ye have **heard him**, and have been **taught by him**, as **the truth is in Jesus**:

22 That **ye put off** concerning the former conversation **the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And **be renewed** in the spirit of **your mind**;

24 And that **ye put on** the **new man**, which **after God** is created **in righteousness** and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

While this may seem to be a rather demanding requirement, God has made adequate provision for its accomplishment, and we must remember what Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia: Galatians 5

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

This can be one’s inward state, rather than various demanding desires, anger, hatred, fears, plus all the other inward experiences of man. While the natural inward state depends on what happens, the inward state of one who walks after the Spirit, depends on, and is steadfast in the Lord.

Continuing with the consideration of what we have come to in Christ, it is important to understand what has been left behind. In this regard we read at Colossians 2

13 And *you*, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out **the handwriting of ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16 Let no man therefore judge you **in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:**

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And **not holding the Head, from which all the body** by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, **increaseth with the increase of God.**

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ **from the rudiments of the world**, why, as though living in the world, are ye **subject to ordinances**,

21 (**Touch not; taste not; handle not;**

22 **Which all are to perish with the using;**) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

In the Colossians passage we learn that the external observances “are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” And in the Hebrew epistle: Hebrews 10

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws **into their hearts**, and **in their minds** will I write them;

The apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth: 2 Corinthians 3

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, **known and read of all men:**

3 Forasmuch as **ye are** manifestly declared to be **the epistle of Christ** ministered by us, written **not with ink**, but **with the Spirit** of the living God; **not in tables of stone**, but **in fleshy tables of the heart.**

It would have been easier for Jesus to have joined “Jewry” in “sacrifices and offerings” than to do the Father’s will by offering Himself. Sacrifice, offering, ceremony, and rituals may appear easier for the Lord’s people, than submitting oneself to God, as we read at: Romans 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your **reasonable** service.

2 And **be not conformed to this world:** but **be ye transformed** by **the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, **will of God.**

We have discussed the light in terms of the Spirit’s enlightening us, or “to make” us “see”, whereby we come to know things from the Lord. *The Christian life is lived by walking according to such knowledge, and doing so wisely, and this by the enabling of the Spirit.*

It is common knowledge that God created man with a mind, which is the seat of our intellect. The mind is a faculty of understanding, reasoning,

knowledge, and memory. When the Spirit enlightens, there is a seeing or insight that we can attend to mentally. With our mind we can consider what we have seen from the Lord. By such mental consideration, that which we have seen is translated into knowledge that is stored in our mind for recall.

This is the process by which our mind is renewed as referred to above in Romans chapter 12, at verse two. It is also the means by which we come to “spiritual understanding” referenced in Colossians chapter one, at verse nine on page 13 of this paper. The end of this process is that we might be able to discern the Lord’s will in life’s situations.

Some important points to be aware of in this process of the Spirit’s ministry to us are:

1) While reading the scriptures, when we see something in particular, we must stop reading and attend to what we see. This is a function of the mind in this process. If we do not immediately consider what we have seen, it will fade from view. We will be aware that we have seen something, but we are unable to recall it.

2) When considering what we have seen, we must not mentally attend to it beyond what we have, in fact, seen. What the Spirit has evidenced to us must not only stimulate our mental consideration, it must also govern and limit it.

3) What the Spirit shows us does not just “pop into our mind”, so to speak, but shines forth in our spirit from within where the Holy Spirit dwells. Contrary to thoughts arising **in** our mind, enlightenment, or that which the Spirit grants us to see, requires that we **volitionally** engage in mental consideration of what we see.

The apostle Paul, in referring to himself, stated at: **2 Corinthians 10**
4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to **the pulling down of strong holds**;))

5 Casting down **imagination**s, and every high thing that exalteth itself **against the knowledge of God**, and bringing **into captivity** every **thought** to **the obedience** of Christ;

The word “imagination” in the above passage is an English translation of the Greek word *logismos*, meaning “computation i.e. (fig.) reasoning...”(Strong’s Concordance)

This scripture informs us that the mind has a strategic function in the matter of acquiring knowledge from and of God. But, that it can be a stronghold through unrestrained reasoning resulting in faulty perceptions or conclusions. And further, that reasoning is an obstacle to knowing God. **However, a consideration under the direction of the Holy Spirit is within the process for acquiring knowledge of God.** Significantly, the restraint to reasoning is not in the form of force or coercion by God, but rather, by one’s willingness to obey Christ by not reasoning to a conclusion that is beyond what has been seen. This

is what is meant by “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”.
Based on such willingness to obey, God empowers us to perform.

Unenlightened reasoning is within the category of kindling one’s own fire. We read at: Isaiah 50

10 Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and **stay upon his God.**

11 Behold, all ye **that kindle a fire**, that compass yourselves about with sparks: **walk in the light of your fire**, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; **ye shall lie down in sorrow.**

There are conflicting theological systems of thought within the Christian community, which, if observed closely, are at least in part, the product of reasoning to a conclusion that goes beyond the scripture referenced for support. It is each person’s responsibility to avoid such reasoning by oneself, and to not accept the reasoning of others.

Also, we must learn to recognize the difference between the enlightenment that is by the Holy Spirit and the darkness resulting from the “fire” that we, or others, may kindle. If you will allow, I will share a time of study when I did begin to recognize the Spirits bearing witness. I was studying Paul’s epistle to the Romans and using three “verse by verse” commentaries. Sometimes I would read a passage and would be aware that I did not understand it. Then I would turn to the commentaries. Some times all three commentaries would say, “there is more than one view on this scripture” and then proceed to explain the two or more views, and then each would often endorse one of the views. Occasionally, in these explanations I couldn’t see that any of those views expressed the meaning of the particular passage of scripture. At other times, as I read their explanation, particularly when they expressed the same view, I could see, “that is what that scripture is saying”. In this time of study I came to recognize when I could see the truth of the matter and when I could not.

So, as the Spirit bears witness as you read and hear, you too will increasingly come to know when you see and when you do not. Just as important as seeing is our knowing when we do not see. Do not try to see what a scripture means, just be thankful when you do. This is a learning process wherein we increase in knowledge of the Lord. **And, it is most important to avoid our natural tendency to want the complete answer immediately and proceed to a conclusion about the meaning of scripture through the reasoning process.**

Recall that what we are called to is the “fellowship of God’s Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. Scripture teaches at: 1 John 1

5 **This then is the message which we have heard of him**, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have **fellowship** with him, and **walk in darkness**, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 **But if we walk in the light**, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship** one with another, and the **blood of Jesus Christ his Son** cleanseth us from all sin.

While the reasoning process may serve to make accurate conclusions in the material realm, the clear testimony of scripture is that ***the mental functions***

must be according to the enlightenment of the Spirit to know the truth as revealed in God's Word. In the physical realm, faulty conclusions are discovered because things do not work properly when based on those conclusions. (Also, with faulty conclusions, things do not work well in the spiritual realm, however, the cause is not as readily discovered). We should take note of, whether or not, **our perceptions** and **our behavior** are in agreement with the scriptures.

Another dimension of our mental processes addressed in scripture:

Romans 8

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Colossians 3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set **your affection** on things above, not on things on the earth.

The word 'mind' and the phrase "set your affection" in the above passages are both from the same Greek word, *phroneo*, which means to "exercise the mind...by implication to be (mentally) disposed more or less earnestly in a certain direction; intens. to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience)". (Strong's Concordance)

In the Colossian's passage, we are told to exercise our mind toward the things of God and not the things on earth. And in the Roman's passage, we learn that our mind can be disposed either, toward the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit. *It is in this regard that we should control both, the things that we think about, and how we think about them. It is a matter of obedience to exercise restraint in our thought processes.* We have seen that the "works of the flesh" include such behavior as anger, deception, hatred, fornication, bitterness, covetousness, and the list continues. **These things** working in us **stimulate** our thought processes, and thinking on such things can, and often does, lead to faulty conclusions and to inappropriate behavior.

While the Lord purposes to deliver us from our indwelling sin, *which deliverance is essential to the control of our thoughts*, we do have to be willing to turn from such thoughts. And even when we are enjoying salvation from sin, the devil appeals to our mind to stir up latent sin. He attempts to stimulate thinking in a way that activates sin. (Some examples are: anger, pride, covetousness, and the many other "desires of the flesh and of the mind") If we are to continue in the Lord's salvation from sin, we must immediately turn from any thoughts that provoke our carnal nature, and "draw nigh to God".

Concerning Satan's effort to stimulate thoughts that lead us to sin, let us turn to: Genesis 3

1 Now the serpent was more **subtil** than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is **in the midst of the garden**, God hath said, **Ye shall not** eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, **lest ye die**.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die**:

5 For **God doth know** that in the day ye eat thereof, then **your eyes shall be opened**, and ye shall be **as gods**, knowing good and evil.

6 And **when the woman saw** that the tree was **good for food**, and that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree to be desired **to make one wise**, **she took** of the fruit thereof, **and did eat**, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Here we see that Satan engaged “the woman” in the consideration of a matter about which there should be no question. At this point, Eve had a clear understanding of the matter as evidenced by her response. When Satan began to cast doubt on God’s testimony, Eve should have withdrawn from the dialogue. Likewise, any thoughts arising in our mind that question the clear testimony of scripture, or that will provoke the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), are not initiated by God. Such thoughts, if not immediately rejected, will lead us into confusion concerning God’s will, and finally, into sin.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, said at:

2 Corinthians 11

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his **subtilty**, so **your minds should be corrupted** from the simplicity that is in Christ.

As with Eve, if we continue with such thoughts, we too will become deceived. **As sin is stirred in us, we will either engage in a rationalization process that, to us, legitimizes our behavior, or we will simply be overcome by the power of our sin.** James, in his epistle tells us at:

James 1

12 Blessed is the man that **endureth** temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away **of his own lust**, and enticed.

15 Then when **lust** hath conceived, **it bringeth forth sin**: and **sin**, when it is finished, **bringeth forth death**.

James is explaining that our own desires or longings, first tempt us, then, if we allow such temptation to continue, our desire will seize us and bring us into sin. And when sin is finished with us, we are estranged from the light and life that is in Christ, which is death.

So, we can see that the mind is a stronghold against knowledge that is of God. Whether by the influences of the flesh or the deceptions of the devil, our

perception and knowledge is distorted. *However, such distortion can be avoided by our not attending to, and rejection of, any thoughts that tempt us toward sin, or that contradict the testimony of scripture. But, we should search the scriptures to determine, whether or not, our knowledge, and also, what we hear from others, is accurate.* This is a noble approach as we read at: **Acts 17**

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were **more noble** than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word** with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures** daily, **whether those things were so.**

12 Therefore **many of them believed**; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Another faculty that has a unique and indispensable function in our relationship with Christ is our conscience. Conscience should be familiar to all persons capable of responsibility. However, the purpose of its function, and the relationship between conscience and knowledge may be less familiar.

According to Strongs’s Concordance, “conscience” is translated from the Greek word “*suneidesis*” meaning **co-perception, i.e. moral consciousness.** “*Suneidesis*’ derives from ‘*suneido*’, which consists of “*sun*” meaning **union**, and “*eido*”, meaning **to see.**

Thus, “seeing” or “awareness” is an essential element of conscience.

This is not an attempt to dissect the human psyche, but rather, to understand scripture’s explanation of the admonition to “**workout your own salvation...For it is God which worketh in you** both to will and to do his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12,13)

We will look at several scriptures that show the function of conscience. In the gospel of John, the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman who had committed adultery.

John 8

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and **said unto them**, He that is **without sin** among you, **let him** first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

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

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: **go, and sin no more.**

On the question of stoning the woman, Jesus confronted her accusers with the pureness of their own lives. “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”. When they were focused on their own behavior, their consciences witnessed against them. Not one man among them could, with good conscience, stone the woman. If eligibility for stoning was based on their being right before God, their consciences “convicted” or witnessed a fault or faults to each of them. Upon heeding their consciences, they did not proceed with their plan.

For further explanation of the function of conscience, we read that the apostle Paul says:

Romans 9

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, **my conscience also bearing me witness** in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Here the apostle Paul makes a statement of such intense concern for his Jewish brethren that it could appear an overstatement. He prefaces it by saying, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost”. Paul’s conscience witnesses no fault to him in what he has said, but rather, that his attitude was, in fact, as he stated.

And again Paul says: 2 Corinthians 1

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward

As in the previous passage, Paul’s conscience (and apparently other brethren included in his statement) testifies to him that their behavior was as he stated. From these scriptures, we see that the function of conscience is to witness consistency, or inconsistency, between our behavior and our knowledge. (Regarding this last point, read James 4: 17).

Regarding the relationship between knowledge and conscience, we will consider a passage in: 1 Corinthians 8

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But **to us there is but one God, the Father,** of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit **there is not in every man that knowledge:** for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it **as a thing offered unto an idol;** and **their conscience being weak is defiled.**

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

According to the law, under the administration of the Old Covenant, the children of Israel were not allowed to eat any food that had been offered or blessed before an idol. This prohibition was very much a part of the Jews' mentality. When people were new converts to Christ, they had not yet come to understand how that Christ, in his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, had fulfilled the meaning of the law. As one's understanding in Christ increases, we realize that an idol is nothing, and meat that has been offered in sacrifice to that which is nothing is simply food. When we have this knowledge, we are inwardly free to eat such meat without offence to our conscience. We know that God views the idol as nothing. "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled"-1 Corinth. 8:7.

In this passage we learn that our conscience witnesses according to our knowledge. As we increase in knowledge, we may find that the offence to our conscience changes in some matters because, heretofore, we lacked knowledge or had knowledge that was inaccurate. As our knowledge of God increases, we will find that some things that we hold as inappropriate are of no concern to God. With such new understanding, the offence to our conscience will cease. But, we will also find that with additional knowledge in the Lord, our conscience is offended in things wherein, previously, it had been silent.

A further point concerning conscience, the understanding and practice of which is an indispensable part of living by faith, is that we avoid any behavior with which our conscience finds fault. Pertinent to this point is a passage of scripture in Paul's epistle to the Romans.

Romans 14

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

5 One man esteemeth **one day above another**: another esteemeth **every day alike**. Let every man **be fully persuaded** in his own mind.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that **there is nothing unclean of itself**: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, **to him** it is unclean.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; **but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.**

22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he **that condemneth not himself** in that thing **which he alloweth.**

23 And he that doubteth **is damned if he eat**, because **he eateth not of faith**: for whatsoever is not of faith **is sin.**

In this scripture we are told to live according to the knowledge that we have in the Lord. “He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he the regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.” Living is according to one’s knowledge, with those who have conscience about eating certain things, and those who have liberty to eat all things. **Paul says**, “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: **but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean...**All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.” The apostle Paul is saying that *if something offends our conscience, we should not do it. For we are happy or blessed if we don’t do anything that our conscience condemns. And what our conscience condemns, we cannot do in faith.* Doubt or hesitation is a response in our conscience that arises when our knowledge will not support our action or intended action. And, we must not encourage anyone to act in a way that offends his or her conscience.

Scripture says, “The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17) To live by faith, we must maintain a good conscience. To behave in thought, word, or deed that is inconsistent with our knowledge, whether such knowledge is accurate or inaccurate, is not of faith. **Because conscience functions in relation to our knowledge, correct doctrine is essential to growing in grace.** If we consistently ignore our conscience, it will become insensitive to our conduct- 1Ti. 4:1-2.

It is important to understand that, in this matter of conscience and knowledge, Satan will bring to our mind suggestions of doubt that cause confusion within. This must be distinguished from conscience that objects to conduct that is inconsistent with what is in fact, our knowledge. This does not cause confusion.

The apostle Paul stated in several passages that he maintained a good conscience. He said at: Acts 23

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have **lived in all good conscience** before God until this day.

Acts 24

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to **have always a conscience void of offence** toward **God**, and toward **men**

A scripture that gives perspective to the circumstances wherein Paul maintained a good conscience says at: 1 Thessalonians 2

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were **bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God** with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was **not of deceit**, nor **of uncleanness**, nor **in guile**:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; **not as pleasing men, but God**, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we **flattering words**, as ye know, **nor a cloke of covetousness**; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, **when we might have been burdensome**, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for **labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you**, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

In the above passage, Paul identifies points of behavior that he and others were careful to perform in an appropriate manner: 1) Faithful to proclaim the gospel. 2) Honest in their exhortation. 3) Sought no material benefit from the brethren, but rather, labored night and day to not be a pecuniary burden to them. 4) Held the brethren in affection, etc.

In concluding this consideration, there are some points to briefly revisit.

1). Knowing God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ is eternal life, as we read at:

1 John 5

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us **an understanding**, that we may **know** him that is true, and we are **in him** that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God, and eternal life.**

Even though God has given us an understanding, we must learn the identity of the Spirit's enlightenment. *By contrast, the influences from the carnal nature are often compelling, while the working of the Spirit is not forceful or coercive. James' epistle explains this. James 3*

13 **Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge** among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works **with meekness of wisdom**.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 **This wisdom descendeth not from above**, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But **the wisdom that is from above** is first **pure**, then **peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated**, full of **mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy**.

The Spirit's ministry can be missed if we are not attentive to the Lord. The Lord appeals to persons who have *a willing heart, for the Spirit guides us by leading, not by driving.*

Exodus 25

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

Exodus 35

5 Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of **a willing heart**, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,

21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made **willing**, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

29 The children of Israel brought a **willing offering** unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them **willing** to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

2 Corinthians 8

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was **a readiness to will**, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first **a willing mind**, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

2). We saw in the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans the experience of God's children who have not yet understood: 1) The function of the law. 2) Their own inability to perform that which is right. 3) And the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing them to victory. **It is important to note that this is the inevitable experience of those who are young in Christ. However, if we are faithful to the Lord, He will bring us through this difficult period.**

During this time we learn that: 1) The law makes known what is sin. 2) In our flesh dwells no good thing. 3) Even though I delight in the law of God, I see that there is another law working in me that prevails.

We must learn this before we will quit struggling and look to the Father's power for deliverance. Now we can learn: 1) The way of the Spirit. 2) How to restrain our thoughts through obedience. 3) And avoid the temptations of our desires that lead to sin.

Much of this consideration has been focused on the process involved to "work out your own salvation". **Philippians 2**

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling.

13 For **it is God which worketh in you** both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be **blameless and harmless**, the sons of God, **without rebuke**, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights **in the world**;

A concluding admonition and encouragement at: 1 Thessalonians 5

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.