



The Steps

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

How should we be when we have accepted Christ, and received the work of the Spirit? What should our attitudes about the working of the Spirit, and our former lives be--and how does this tie into the ever-pervasive subject of WILL?

"The Christian faith is not an automatic cure-all for you. If you want to go on in sin, you will go on in sin, and nothing can stop you! Unless you want to be different, you never will be different. And until you desire victory over temptation enough to take a stand against it, you'll get exactly nowhere."

"If you are determined to resist temptation in the strength that God gives, come to the throne of Grace and receive it! 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'"

"What if you fail? You are still quite capable of failure. Should it occur, confess your sin immediately, being explicit about it in prayer. The 'Lord bless me' kind of prayer will not do here. It's 'Lord, I lied' or 'Lord, I cheated,' or whatever might have occurred. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'" (1 John 1 :9)

"Christ used the Word of God exclusively in dealing with Satan during the wilderness temptation. To every leering suggestion of the devil, our Blessed Lord answered, 'It is written...' After the final, triumphant scripture, 'It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and only Him shalt thou serve,' we read 'Then the devil leaveth Him.'"

"Right now, if you mean business with God, you can bow, and deliberately give over to God the Holy Spirit complete control of yourself--body, soul, and spirit. That is the first step in developing Christian character. Only He can develop it, so start by letting Him take control.

One big surprise you'll meet about this time is that the things for which you sought so eagerly along the line of Christian character--things like a loving heart, a generous disposition, and a faithful performance of duty--are not an end in themselves, but a result!

The life of the Holy Spirit unites with your life, and produces a life product. Christian character is never primarily the things you do--it's the person you are, as a result of being indwelt by The Person--the Holy Spirit.

Don't worry about anything; pray about everything, and God will give you that miraculous, perfect peace that the world envies, but only Christians possess; take everything you know about yourself to Him--and everything you know about Him to yourself!"

"We grow by the Word of God: 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' (I Peter 2:2,3)

We are changed by the Word of God. 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' (II Corinthians 3: 18)

We are cleansed by the Word of God: 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to Thy Word.' (Psalms 119:11)

We are kept by the Word of God: 'Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.' (Psalms 119:11)

We share God's life through the Word: 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.' (John 6:63)

We defeat the devil through the Word of God: 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.' (Revelation 12: 11)

We win souls through the preaching of the Word of God: Christ preached the word unto them; the early church preached the word; God promises to bless His Word--not our opinions.

We base our faith on the Word of God; we produce faith in others by proclaiming the Word.

Our eternal authority is in the Word of God: therefore, we speak confidently and authoritatively, as did the prophets when they said 'Thus saith the Lord.'

Every needed blessing is in the Word of God: Here are just a few from Psalms 119: "strengthening, cleansing, quickening, guidance, establishing, comforting--we also receive hope, order, pleasant meditation, joy, understanding, deliverance."

"Start reading the easier portions of the Bible first; the Gospel of John, for instance, was expressly written to lead folk to Christ, and presents Him in a most wonderful manner. The Book of Acts tells how the early church was formed, and how any normal church operates~ tells of missionary endeavors, and creates a soul-winning attitude in the hearts of those who read it. The Book of Romans breaks down in detail the truth of the Gospel--why you need a Savior, how you are saved, and what happens after you are saved."

"Avoid habitual forms of expression in prayer. Remember, you are talking to a wonderful Person; think how embarrassed you would be if you followed the 'Dear Heavenly Father' repetition idea in speaking to a neighbor? There is no substitute for sense, thought, and courtesy in prayer."

"Expect the Holy Spirit to pray through your personality--not someone else. Never try to pray like another person. If you do, you will turn out to be nothing but a pious fraud. Avoid 'ministerial tones' and 'pious whines' like the plague. Strive to be perfectly natural, utterly sincere, and completely yielded to the blessed Spirit of God. Then, no matter what your prayer assumes, it will really be you--praying in the power of the Spirit."19

"There are many hindrances to effective prayer:

The first one is insincerity; in I John 3:20 we read 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.' It is possible to keep up this form of prayer, and in so doing to be asking great things of God while the heart of the one praying is condemning it all. Surely all have heard of the woman who lived at the foot of the mountain. She had read about having faith as a grain of mustard seed and being able to move mountains; so she prayed one night that God would move the mountain away so she could see farther. When she rose the next morning, the mountain was still in its place, and she said, 'Aha, just as I thought; it's still there.' She had not expected an answer to her prayer; she was praying without sincerity. She did not mean business with God in her request.

The second one is willfulness; Psalms 66:18 says 'If we regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' When the believer is conscious of iniquity in his heart and is unwilling to confess that iniquity, he cannot expect to get answers to his prayers. I John 1:9 gives the formula for believers in these words: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' As long as there is that barrier between the believer and the Lord there is no use in asking

for anything, except to claim the promise of the scripture just read.

The third one is selfishness; James 4:3 says, 'Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.' Wicked pride and selfishness may ask God for things which will only feed the lusts of the flesh. Here is a preacher who asks for preaching ability so that he may be recognized as a 'great preacher.' That is asking selfishly. If we ask God to enable us to preach so that sinners will be saved and the saints edified and Christ shall be magnified, that is righteous asking. God will not give His Glory to anybody. Or, here is a wife who prays for her husband's salvation only so she will have an easier life at home. That is the wrong motive for praying, even for the salvation for a lost sinner.

The fourth one is impatience; Psalms 40:1 says, 'I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.' Too often we are in too big a hurry to wait on the Lord to work out His Will. If God can afford to wait, so can we. Patience in prayer is woefully lacking. When we pass through some kind of tribulation, we forget the passage in Romans 5:3 which tells us that 'tribulation worketh patience.' And Isaiah 40:31 says, 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; and they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.'

The fifth one is unbelief; Mark 11 :24 says 'What things soever ye desire, when we pray, believe that ye receive them.' Unbelief closes the door on expectation. Why pray if you do not believe that God is interested in all that concerns us? Unbelief is the granddaddy of all sins. This was the very sin that caused Eve to fall. She did not believe that God meant what He said. Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Little faith brings the soul to heaven; great faith brings heaven to the soul. O, that we might come to God in faith, believing that what He has promised, He will also perform.'"

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in the heavenlies."

Satan uses flesh and blood as an instrument, and while the warfare appears to be with flesh and blood people, it is in reality with the immortal powers of evil that rule in the lives of these who belong to Satan.

Satan does not only attack preachers of the Gospel; he is against all who have by faith received the Lord Jesus Christ. It may seem he is not bothering many professing Christians; of course, some of them do not possess eternal life, and whether they know it or not, are in league with the devil. Others who have in reality been saved by God's Grace are so indifferent to spiritual things that Satan has no fear of them. They have

been cast into a deep sleep, and as far as doing God's Will and accomplishing His purpose is concerned, they are doing nothing.

The wiles of the devil are adapted to suit the different tendencies and tastes of every individual believer. Regardless of age, the enemy still makes his bid for the attention of every believer in order to turn him aside from serving God. If the tricks of the enemy fail, then watch out for the 'fiery darts' mentioned in Ephesians, Chapter 6. The fiery darts may come as wicked thoughts, shot into the believer's mind like arrows from the very presence of Satan. They will come even when we are trying to pray, teach a class, or preach a sermon.

The enemy is subtle, powerful, tricky, cunning, deceitful, and damnable. He accuses the brethren, sows discord, authors confusion, and is the father of lies--the oppressor of God's people. He steals the good seed of the Word from listeners. He distracts those who are intent on hearing the message of the Bible. He puts wicked purposes in men's hearts. He blinds their minds, harasses or buffets, enters into people, sows tares among God's wheat, resists and hinders God's servants, and holds the world in his own power. He presents to every person a three-fold path into sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. In the face of such a mighty and invisible enemy, every believer needs the whole armor of God!

1 Ben A. Byrd, Jr., D.D., *Complete In Christ*, Daniels Publishers, Orlando, FL, 1972

*Brian L. Jackson, **An Apologetic Exposition On Christian Faith**, Unpublished, 1984*

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