

A•B•C *Reader*



SPIRITUALITY

versus

CARNALITY

A B C D E F G . . .

We all know the letters. We all know the tune. It was one of the first songs we ever learned, and for most of us it was the first glimpse into the world of communication and knowledge. Since the advent of spoken language, **A Basic Conceptual** understanding of the use of letters has been vital for the understanding of words, sentences, and stories. Without such mastery, one cannot hope to share ones thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Considering knowledge of an alphabet as a basic building block for the transference of all information, how much more important is this type of simple, pragmatic understanding when it comes to knowing and living the Word of God?

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All 'Bout Christ

All **ABC Readers** are written under the direct supervision of Bob Bolender, pastor teacher of Austin Bible Church. According to grace principles of Christian giving, they are offered free of charge, and are distributed in the hope of helping you become the **Absolute Best Christian** you can be.

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Why learn the Doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality?

Before diving into the more technical aspects of our study, it might be a good idea to ask ourselves: *Why do we want to learn this doctrine?*

We want to learn this doctrine so we can fulfill the ultimate objective of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. That is God's own objective, and should be our objective as well. God sent his Son to save us, but once we are saved, then what? In many Christian circles today, this basic question goes unanswered. How do I grow? How do I mature? How do I grow closer and more intimate in my relationship with God? Can I "feel" more spiritual? How can I be more Christ-like? The post-salvation questions are endless. But thankfully, there are answers.

If we are to be like Christ, the best way to do so is to imitate him. We need to be walking in his footsteps, following his way of thinking. If we study the Bible, which is the mind of Christ, we find that there is a specific, understandable, executable way of living the Christian way of life to the fullest.

There is a step by step guide, and the first chapter of understanding we need (after placing our faith in Christ and being saved) is the doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality.

What is Spirituality?

What a fantastic question. What is spirituality? Is it a feeling or an emotion? Is it something we grow into? Are there degrees? Can I be more spiritual or less spiritual? How do I know if I am spiritual? Am I spiritual right now? Are you? How can you tell?

By definition, **spirituality is a sphere in which the believer functions under the controlling influence of God the Holy Spirit.** By sphere, we mean it is a state of being. It is not an emotion. It is not a feeling. That is not to say you cannot have feelings while you are spiritual. You may have valid feelings of happiness, joy, or even sadness and woe. But these feelings are not spirituality itself. You cannot feel spiritual. It is a sphere in which you live. It is a mode of operation, a mode in which you can be influenced by the Holy Spirit.

When you are spiritual, you are experientially sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You are able to be taught the Word of God, and you are empowered to execute the decisions you make. It is a provision set forth by God, and is the way Christ lived during his time on the Earth.

Conversely, Carnality has a similar definition. Carnality is a sphere as well, but notice the difference. Carnality is a sphere in which the believer functions under the controlling influence of the flesh. By flesh, we mean the Old Sin Nature, we mean the fallen estate of all human beings after the fall of Adam. Ever been taught that people were basically good? Well, that's not the story the Bible tells. In our very bones, in every cell in our bodies, there lies a drive to serve the flesh. The body has its own lusts, its own desires, and its own agenda. It is a powerful influence, and is a sphere in which we can live. The unbeliever has no choice to but to live in the sphere of Carnality. The Bible says the unbeliever is born into sin, the way we all were. Only after salvation, after our human spirit is reborn, can we even begin to be spiritual. (John 3:7)

⁷ "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

After salvation, spirituality and carnality are basically two modes of operation. There are two spheres in which we can live:

We can live under the influence of the **Holy Spirit**, or
we can live under the influence of the **flesh**.

The two spheres are absolutely mutually exclusive. God is light, and in him there is no darkness. There are no shades of grey. So at this very moment in time, you

are either spiritual or you are carnal. There is no in-between. There never will be, there never has been. The answer is black and white.

Likewise, there are no degrees of spirituality or carnality. You cannot be a little bit spiritual or a little bit carnal. You cannot grow more spiritual or less spiritual. You make your volitional choice every moment of every day to be one or the other. You either live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, or under the influence of the Old Sin Nature (the flesh). It is your choice.

Now don't take our word for it. Take God's word for it. In this study, we will use scripture to prove this condition, and further assist you in understanding the fact that this is God's will for your life. God's will is not some esoteric guessing game, nor is it a lofty generic goal you happen to achieve. God provides this doctrine as a basic instruction for how to execute the Christian life. As you will soon see, it's as straight-forward, pragmatic, and practical as putting one foot in front of the other.

The Christian Walk

The Greek word περιπατέω (peripateo) is often translated: *to walk*. It literally means to put out one foot, manage a controlled fall, and put out another foot: all for the purpose of moving forward. It is an excellent analogy to the living of the Christian life. Every day, every second, every millisecond, we are walking through our lives in a step by step fashion. But peripateo means so much more than just taking steps. A person's walk is also a person's way of life. It is the manner in which they conduct themselves. In our way of thinking, the walk is more than a mode of locomotion. It is a *mode of thinking*. It is a thought process. It is way of handling the endless stream of temptations and decisions we make throughout the duration of our human lives.

Spirituality and carnality are two “walks.” They are two ways we can conduct our lives.

How do we choose to be spiritual? Is there a trick to it, or is it just a feeling? Is there a ritual? Do I need to go to a priest? Do I need a twelve step process?

Before we go any further into our study, we should first introduce possibly the most important, yet under-utilized point of Scripture today. The teaching comes to us from the Apostle John in his first epistle. (1st John 1:8-10)

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

The text is plainly written, but the implications are more universal than we might initially think. Christ died for our sins on the cross, so all sins are forgiven. However, the fact remains that we still sin. If we think or say we don't sin any more, we deceive ourselves. So the remedy is clearly spelled out in the middle of our text. If we confess our sins to God, he will forgive us. Thus, this becomes the trigger of the Christian cannon. When we sin, we submit ourselves to the influence of the flesh. When we confess (cite) our sins and name them back to God, he then forgives us and places us in the sphere of spirituality. We do not have to say them out loud, or to another person. It is not required that we feel guilty, or make any kind of painful penance. The spiritual death of Jesus on the cross paid the penalty for all sin. As in a court case, any sins we now commit during the course of our lives are declared forgiven the moment we name them back to God.

Are you spiritual right now? That depends. Do you have any un-confessed sins? Stop reading right now and cite those sins back to God. The moment you do, *you are spiritual*. If you have any sins at all, you are completely carnal. If you confess, you are completely spiritual, and can be influenced by the Holy Spirit. This process is our prescribed spiritual walk. We take a step, (have an impulse), we fall (commit a sin), then we catch ourselves (confess) and continue to move forward.

This is God's will for us. This is the means by which we regain the provision of the Holy Spirit. It is how we are cleansed, and brought back to fellowship.

God will wash away our sin. In an illustration of this principle, of God washing our sins, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. (John 13:8-10)

⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean,

If we don't let Jesus wash us, we have no fellowship with him (salvation.) Afterwards, we need only to have our feet washed (removal of our temporal sins) to be restored.

If you have honestly confessed your sins, you are now officially 100% spiritual. You are now filled with the Spirit! You are now in the sphere of influence *managed by* the Holy Spirit. The minute you sin, you fall from that sphere into the sphere of carnality, and are being led by the flesh. You choose to sin. You choose to confess. This is the spiritual way of life. More specifically: *This is the Christian walk.*

Moving Forward: Walking *in*, *by*, and *according to*

It is no accident that the Bible uses the terms of walking to explain the Christian way of life. As we have seen, the term *peripateo* is a very appropriate and intelligent way of representing our temporal lives. But the Bible has more to say about our walk. It clearly describes the spheres of spirituality and carnality using various walking terminology. In this context, the New Testament describes walking as having three parameters. The Scriptures talk about “walking in,” “walking by,” and “walking according to.”

We walk in the light. We walk by faith. We walk according to love. The three parameters of “**in**,” “**by**,” and “**according to**” establish a framework for our study. Our walk (our Christian Way of Life) ought to be in, by, and according to the scope of what God Himself has revealed to be His will for us.

For our first example, let’s return to 1 John: (1st John 1:5-7)

⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;⁷ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

We are to walk in the light, not in the darkness. See the contrast here? This is one scripture that helps us to significantly clarify our doctrine. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. This is the basis for our absolute claim that at any point in time you are either *spiritual* or you are *carnal*. There is no middle ground. But this passage also tells us why we walk in the light. We walk in the light because that’s where Christ is! We can’t say we are spiritual while we walk in darkness. If we do, we are lying and we are not living according to the truth of the word.

Another vivid illustration comes from Paul’s writings to the Roman church. In this passage, we see that walking in the light is a volitional choice: (Rom. 13:12-14)

¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Again, we are to walk *in* the light of day. Light is the antithesis of darkness. Even further, we are to *put on* the armor of light. We are to *choose* to confess our sin, to *choose* to cast off the darkness, and to *choose* to live in the operational sphere of light. In this way, the passage also tells us that there is a protection in the light. By putting on our armor (confessing our sins and choosing to be spiritual) we make a preemptive strike on the onslaught of temptations paraded before us by the flesh. Remember, this is a *mental battle*, a thinking process. By choosing to be spiritual we are utilizing the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit.

It is worthwhile to note here that while we submit our wills to the Spirit, we are in no way being brainwashed. Spirituality is not mind control, and we are not puppets or robots. We still and always have volition. Christianity is a consistent, persistent way of thinking through life. We can always choose to sin, and operate under the influence of the flesh. Thus, we can easily see the spiritual battle we are to fight every day, every hour, every second. By walking in the light, we imitate Christ's own experience on this earth. This is the Christian walk, lived in the very same fashion that Christ prescribed for us.

We are instructed how to walk, in terms of walking *in*. We are to walk in the light and not in the darkness. But we are also instructed to walk *by*. Grammatically, this is called the dative of *means*. It describes *by what means* we are to walk. If you have ever gone somewhere by car, by boat, or by train, you can understand this terminology. It describes how something gets accomplished. From our perspective, the scripture points us in two important directions. It is best said by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: (2nd Cor 5:7)

⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight—

And again in his letter to the Galatians: (Gal 5:16)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Paul's instructions let us know *by whose power*, by whose means we are to walk our walk, think our thoughts, and make our decisions. We are to walk by faith, and by the spirit. And how do we do that? The same way as we have already described. We *choose* to be filled by the Holy Spirit through confession of sin, and thus we are restored to the sphere of spirituality. (Eph. 5:17-18)

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

We have shown that we can walk *in* a spiritual sphere, and *by* spiritual means. But there is another portrayal of how we should walk. This third description of walking is produced by a compliment in the accusative case. The accusative case creates an understanding of motivation and orientation. Thus, we are instructed to walk, think, and act *according to* God's mandates. This evidence comes to us again from Paul's writings, most prevalent in the book of Romans. (Rom. 8:4-6)

...do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.
⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

As he has done in the past, Paul does more than admonish us. He consistently sets up a contrast. We are to walk *not* according to the flesh, *but* according to the spirit. Motivationally, Paul is shedding his own light on the desired perpetual mindset of the spiritual believer. He continues developing this contrast in Ephesians. (Eph. 2:1-2)

¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

This is one of Paul's best walking descriptions. When we have our minds set on the flesh, on our old propensity to sin, under the influence of our bodies, we are no doubt following the *course of this world*. We are living according to the precepts the world enjoys enticing us to follow. Living for pleasure alone, fulfilling whatever our bodies desire, even allowing for grey areas where right and wrong are indistinguishable: these are the instructions the world would like us to follow. They are the satanic doctrines of selfish pride and rebellion that are in direct opposition to God. By following those impulses, and allowing our sinful natures to guide us, we are indeed following the prince of power of the air, *the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*.

At this point, we have effectively shown that there is a pattern in the scriptures that accurately outlines our doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality. There are, as explained, two absolutely opposing spheres in which we can function. We choose

which one we function under, and the barrier between the two choices is our sin. We can always choose to lift that barrier, through confession, and be restored to full spirituality.

This would be a fine place to stop. We could sum up the doctrine right here, and send you off into the world telling you to simply stay in the sphere of influence of the Holy Spirit.

But fortunately, we won't do that. Not just yet. Why not? Because there is so much more to learn on the subject. Now that we have made our definitions clear, it's time to develop our ideas, and apply them to our temporal and eternal lives. Now that we know what spirituality is, we need to make sure we understand why it is so important to implement these principles into our own spiritual walk. God does not leave us hanging. He included in the Bible a full spectrum of deeper understandings. This spectrum splits the darkness, and illuminates truths that help to convince us that this is His divine will. By following these instructions, we are following the path of righteousness that will ultimately further glorify Christ our Lord.

The Battle of Spirituality

Why do we need to be spiritual? How does it help us? How does Carnality hurt us?

Our study would be remiss if we did not address the *why* aspects of this doctrine. God is a thinking God, and his revealed truth is our greatest weapon. It is a weapon we need if we are to fight the battle facing us. This battle is being fought in our minds and in our souls every waking moment of every day. The aggressor wants us to lose, and will do everything in his power to conquer us. We cannot defeat him by ourselves. We must enlist the power of the Holy Spirit if we are to emerge victorious.

In Ephesians, Paul continues to help us understand a very personal dilemma which we all face. It affects us at the most basic levels, and has eternal consequences beyond anything we can imagine. This condition is the sinful nature of man. Under this condition, we have within us, living in our bodies, a desire to sin. (Rom. 7:18)

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good not.

This desire never leaves us. The unbeliever is born into it, just as we were born into it before we were saved. Paul writes: (Eph. 2:3)

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Is it any wonder why it is so hard not to sin, so hard not to fall into temptation? The desire to rebel against God is with us 24-7, 365 days a year, for the entire duration of our lives. It is not as the world describes: that there is a good and a bad angel on our shoulders. Instead, there is one major evil influence, and it is much closer to us than just sitting on our shoulders. It is an internal influence, not external. Our flesh wants nothing more than to satisfy itself, to gratify itself. It lives inside our very bodies, and it will never stop trying to lead us down the self-serving path. It is a silent voice, and is so devious we might think it is our own voice telling us what to do. The unbeliever follows this desire every moment of every day. How can he not? He knows no other desire. Believers, on the other hand, are in a different situation all together. Paul once again describes it for us:

(Gal. 5:16-17)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

The spirit and the flesh are two desires living within us. At salvation, God gave us a living human spirit, and sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us as well. They are our provisions to help us defeat our sinful desires.

This is a *mental* battle.

In its true nature, sin does not start with an external action. Sin is not only manifested by what we do, it is manifested by what we think. Once you have made the volitional decision to sin, you have already committed that sin. Sins happen *mentally* long before they ever happen *physically*. Our evidence is in Matthew 5:28, in which Jesus himself gives us the true originations of the sin battle:

²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So when we imagine sinning, or have fantasies about sinning, that sin is already taking place. It's hard to believe, and even harder to comprehend the vast array of sins we have already committed, and continue to commit every day when we are carnal. (*Don't forget 1st John. If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves.*)

Fortunately, in this ongoing mental battle, we have an ultimate and proven defense. In our daily fight against the flesh, activated spirituality carries with it a promise from God. (Rom. 13:12b-14)

¹² The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to lusts.

By staying in the light, and staying under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we put on armor so strong that nothing can penetrate it. The believer who volitionally chooses to be under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit will not submit to

the sinful nature of the flesh. As said earlier, by putting on the Lord, we take a pre-emptive step to keep ourselves from falling to temptation.

But once again, we have to stress that this is not simply a *feeling* or a *sense* that we have. We have much more to lead us than just an experiential “hunch.” We have the mind of Christ himself to guide us. We have the ability to learn and understand the word of God.

To prove this, let us also not forget that Christ himself lived the life of a man. *A human being*. And although through the virgin birth he did not possess a sinful nature, he was indeed tempted to sin. We see his own story of temptation when he faced the “spirit of the air” himself, Satan. (Mat 4:3-10)

³ And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’ ”

Strike one.

Satan tempts Jesus. He tells Jesus to exercise his deity to end his human hunger. Is it written that Jesus had a “hunch” as to what to do? Did Jesus “feel” his spirituality, and come up with some magic power to thwart the devil. *No*.

⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; AND ‘ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’ ” ⁷ Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’ ”

Strike two.

Again a temptation, and again a similar defense. What is Jesus’ ammunition?

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”

Strike three.

In every instance, Jesus' own defense to each and every temptation is the same. He uses scripture, what *is written*, the Word of God, the mind of Christ, to disarm the satanic attacks. The Word of God told Jesus exactly what to do. It provided a course of action that helped him to stay sinless. We, too, can utilize the teaching power of the Holy Spirit. When we are confessed up and spiritual, the Holy Spirit can *teach* us. In fact, that is the only way to learn spiritual things: (1st Cor. 2:10-12)

¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

Earlier in this study, we asked you to confess your sins (if necessary) and become spiritual. This was for a very good reason. When we are spiritual we can be taught by the Holy Spirit. He can teach us, guide us, and empower us. The unbeliever, or even the carnal believer, loses this important provision because he is in the sphere of carnality.

Losing the Battle

For the unbeliever, they are in a position of darkness. With no ability to become spiritual (before faith in Christ) the wisdom of God's Word is wholly lost. (1st Cor. 2:14-16)

¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

¹⁶ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

But for the carnal believer, the situation can regress until their perception is nearly parallel to the unbeliever. Paul found this situation when he was teaching the Corinthians. They had grown carnal in their thinking, and were unable to grow in the teaching aspect of the Word. (1st Cor. 3:1-3)

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Furthermore, Paul indicates that the carnal believer is no more able to discern spiritual teaching than the unbeliever. Carnal believers find themselves “stunted” in their growth, and cannot digest the meat of the deeper understandings of God. Instead, they must once again be fed baby's milk, *the basic principles of doctrine*. They have seemingly forgotten spiritual matters of which they had already been taught. (Heb. 5:11-14)

¹¹ Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

From these passages, we can reasonably assume some of our own basic principles. First, we must be spiritual to learn spiritual matters. Second, if we do not continue walking in the spiritual sphere, we cannot continue to grow. In fact, in the carnal sphere, our growth is retarded and we return to the state we were in when first saved. We become Christian babies who can only ingest the easiest of God's teachings. In contrast, if we do stay spiritual, we can continue to mature and can develop the means to digest the deeper things, the doctrinal "meat" of God's word. Solid food is for the mature believer, for those who have been spiritually trained to distinguish right from wrong. In short, the progression from milk to solid food requires the believer to remain in fellowship for the purpose of learning the Word of God.

The Spoils of War

Again, God does not leave us hanging. Want proof that his word is working? Want proof that you are in the light and not in darkness? The easiest way to tell is to look at the fruit your Christian life is manifesting. An apple tree grows only apples. A cherry tree grows only cherries. In like fashion, the carnal life only manifests the fruits of walking in the darkness of the flesh: (Gal. 5:19-21)

¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice the end of verse 21. The “*and things like these*” portion of the sentence is significant. It means that this is not an exhaustive list. Feel free to add to this list any sin you can think of (especially one you might be prone to.) Also notice that there are both physical and mental sins included on the list. It further details the wide panoply of possible sins originated and committed in the mental realm.

In contrast to the life under the influence of our sinful natures, we have a list of the fruits manifest in spirit-led believers: (Gal. 5:22-23)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Again, the “*such things*” reference above lets us know that this is also not an exhaustive list. There is a wide and wonderful harvest of positive growth that comes from living a spirit-filled life.

Please note that the claim is not made here that unbelievers are continually unhappy. Quite the contrary. Unbelievers and carnal believers alike can have happiness. However, it is a happiness supplied by the world, by the kosmos, by the flesh. It is a temporary happiness, a happiness that feeds *on*, and is fed *by*, sin itself. But the Holy Spirit offers a different type of happiness. It offers us peace in the face of life’s toils and trauma. Like fruit from the vine, it grows within us, and enables us to handle ourselves in a truly enlightened fashion. As we will see, it offers us a chance to be *sanctified, to be set apart*. It offers us a chance to redeem the time, to keep our periods in carnality short, and to reap spiritual benefits. These benefits not only enhance our temporal lives. More importantly, they will bless us with riches and rewards that bridge the divine chasm into the infinitely longer course of eternity.

Admiral Paul, the Ultimate Sinner

The Apostle Paul wrote extensively on the experiential side of the sin battle. Paul was known as the “chief of all sinners.” Before being saved, he was a murderer, hunting down Christians because they claimed that Christ was God and had risen from the dead. After his own conversion on the Damascus road by the risen Christ, he underwent a spiritual journey the rest of us can only imagine. But even though his mind was literally swimming in doctrinal understanding, he was first and foremost *a sinner*. But Paul knew who and what he was. More importantly for us, he had an exceptional understanding of who and what *Christ* was. Because of this insight, Paul’s writings to the Romans give us a priceless description of the inner struggles fought in the battle of spirituality. (Rom. 6:1)

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Paul starts here with a question you might already be asking yourself. “If we are forgiven, why not just keep sinning? It’s OK, right? Wouldn’t more forgiveness just prove more Grace, and further glorify Christ? Paul provides an answer. (Rom. 6:2–4)

²May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

By the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are identified with Christ. We are identified with his life and his death. This is called Positional Sanctification. If we are saved, we already have eternal life and we are sanctified in heaven for all eternity. This is *Grace*, God’s grace eternal plan for the ages. He gives us salvation, and all the powers, benefits, and blessings that come with it. He hands them to us up front.

Positionally, in heaven, we have already won the battle. We are eternally sanctified, made perfect. We are the Bride of Christ, the royal family of God. And thus we have quite a lot *to live up to*.

Experientially, we are still here on this earth. We still have fallen bodies, and sinful natures. We must then *choose* to be temporally sanctified in time.

But we have something here in time that is quite extraordinary. Christ *died* on the cross, but he also *rose*. Christ broke the dictatorship of sin; he freed us from

the bondage of the flesh. In him, we now have the unique chance to walk in the newness of life. (Rom. 6:5-9)

⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

Christ killed sin's absolute monarchy. Because of our faith in him, we likewise have died to sin. This does not mean we will never sin again. It means that we no longer *have to*. (Rom. 6:10-11)

¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Enough about death! What about life? We were dead in our sins and transgressions, but now we have a chance to be alive. We have a chance to live for God. We must consider ourselves dead to sin. But how do we do that? (Rom. 6:12-13)

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Yield brother! Yield to God! Yieeeeeld! You may have heard this admonition before. It's a Pastor's favorite. But *yield* is such a generic term. What does it really mean?

The "yield" reference so often preached is from the King James Version of the Bible. The one used for this **ABC Reader**, The New American Standard Bible, uses the above wording "*present yourselves*." This translation is more precise. We do not *passively* yield. Remember, we are volitional beings and have constant flow of choices to make. Instead, we *actively* present ourselves. And what process do we follow to present ourselves to God? By now, you should start to piece together your own answer.

If: We present ourselves by *being spiritual*.

And: We become spiritual by *confessing our sins*.

Then: *We present ourselves to God by confession of sin.* (1st John 1:9)

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Through the Grace of God in salvation, we are given the power to volitionally choose whom we serve. By using the promise of 1st John 1:9, we actively and volitionally present ourselves as willing slaves requesting entrance into the Holy Spirit's sphere of influence. Thus, we are likewise commanded to constantly choose to be spiritual, living each moment under the divine and benevolent influence of God the Holy Spirit.

(Rom. 12:1)

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

This is it. This is our charge. This is spirituality.

Grace, Not Law (Rom. 6:14)

¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

As promised, if we submit ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will not be controlled by our sinful natures. Additionally, we are no longer under the Law. Paul mentions the Mosaic Law here to show a contrast. The Mosaic Law was an extensive set of rules that the Jews were to follow. It was a spiritual standard that the human spirit could recognize, but not live up to perfectly, because of the sin dwelling within us. In effect, the law could accomplish nothing but to effectively *condemn us* for our sin. The difference here is that Christianity, and in a life lived *in Christ*, is not merely a list of “*Thou shalt not’s*.” As fully forgiven creatures, we are free to serve God in a positive fashion. This in no way belittles the truth of God’s commandments. However, it is clear that following a set of codified laws does not attain righteousness. Instead, we are to properly present ourselves through confession of sin, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us into a life of righteousness which is therefore pleasing to God.

The importance of this distinction deserves additional review, because of its prevalence in Christian circles today. If we are free from the Law, then why is it that most churches have so many of them? No meat on Fridays, no dancing, no drinking, attending services on holy days of obligation. Is that freedom? Is that walking in the newness of life? The condition is called *legalism*, and it is a dangerous trap. We might think that by punishing ourselves, giving things up, that we are somehow better than those who do not. Worse, we might simply assume that we are spiritual because we have put a stop to overt, external sins. Spirituality is not a system of human bondage. On the contrary, it is a volitional system of *divine* servitude. (Rom. 6:15-16)

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Paul’s insight here is a humbling thought. What does it say about human volition? We might think we are making all the choices in our lives. We might think that we are free to follow any path. But are we really? Remember, we are either *carnal* or *spiritual*. There is no in between. Every moment of our lives, we are slaves to either our sinful nature, or the Holy Spirit. We are slaves to whom we obey. We chose our own master. (Rom. 6:17-18)

¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

We are now slaves to righteousness, or we can be *if we so choose*. Christ broke our exclusive bonds to sin. Because of that doctrinal truth, we have a choice as to whether or not we follow the guidance of our flesh.

But staying spiritual is no easy task. It takes a great amount of diligence and prayer. As much as we may want to serve our Lord in our hearts and minds, we are constantly reminded of our temporal condition. We are, in our fallen human bodies, operating under a disadvantage. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak. (Rom. 6:19)

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

When we were unbelievers, we did not truly know the difference between sinning and not sinning. We lived in ever-increasing circles of greater and greater iniquity, yielding to the influence of our bodies and the teachings of the kosmos. In contrast, we can now choose to walk the opposite direction, yielding our wills and our bodies to a more desirable end.
(Rom. 6:20-23)

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What return do we get for living in carnality? That is indeed a personal question. What return did you get from your sins, the consideration of which now bring you shame? What fruits were manifested when you were under the bondage of the flesh? Paul is very curt about the fruit of sin: being a slave to sin leads to (physical, spiritual, and operational) death.

But we can choose life. We can *choose* to be slaves of God. As His servants, we can manifest his spiritual fruits, and be the heirs of an eternal harvest.

Corporal Paul, the Bodily Christian

By the absolute tone of his passages, and by the great provisions they promise, it might be easy to conclude that fighting the battle of spirituality and carnality is easy, taking no effort whatsoever. But experientially, this is not the case at all. We use the word *volitional* over and over. It means choice. But it is a lofty word, and not entirely indicative of the relentlessly personal battle we are facing. Fleshly desire is condition more easily described as “what we want, and what we do to get what we want.”

The plain fact is: *We sin because it feels good. We sin because we want to. And we continue to sin, even when we know it is wrong.*

Paul understood this bodily condition far too well. Some of his most passionate, most personal writings come to us on the subject of his own struggle with personal sin. He is open and honest about his frustrations, his frailties, his failures. (Rom. 7:14)

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

And what a condition we find ourselves in. We know what spirituality is. We know what carnality is. We know right from wrong. We know we are saved, have eternal lives, and belong to a loving and giving God. We know Christ was nailed to the cross for us, and we love him and thank Him for it. We know we won't go to hell for all eternity, and won't be bathing infinitely in an indescribable, intolerable lake of molten fire. We are free from sin, and we know it. Yet, when tempted, we continue to sell ourselves back to our previous master. (Rom. 7:15-17)

¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

A description of total slavery. Paul is the doctrinal champion of all time. He has seen the risen Lord. He has even at one point died, gone to heaven, been sworn to secrecy, and resuscitated to continue his ministry. *But when he is carnal*, his will is no longer calling the shots. His sinful nature has total control.

The battlefield of the soul is where each believer must volitionally submit his will to the Holy Spirit, or else he will be taken captive by the Old Sin Nature and

plunged into the walk of darkness. Having volitionally submitted his will to the Old Sin Nature, even Paul finds himself doing that which his spirit knows to be wrong.

We can easily find ourselves in the same position. Even the greatest of believers can find themselves doing unspeakable things. Sin is a slippery slope. Once under the influence of our sinful natures, the temptations can compound, leaving us seemingly powerless to stop ourselves from going deeper and deeper into the darkness. (Rom. 7:18-21)

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

Few passages can be more illuminating when it comes to the nature of the battle which we must fight. There are no angels or devils sitting on our shoulders, trying to tempt us to do good or bad. The sinful nature is much closer than that. It is truly close at hand. It is within our very bodies and it attacks our very souls.

As Paul describes, we are fighting an endless, tedious, temporal skirmish. It is not an esoteric or symbolic battle. It is not a battle of lofty concepts, fluffy rhetoric, or obscure morality. The battle we wage is fought in our own minds, and against our own bodies. And according to Paul, It's more than just a battle.

It's an all-out war. (Rom. 7:22-24)

²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Wretched man that I am. Wretched man that you are. Wretched men, us all. We are all wretched, totally depraved beings engaged in a war that will continue until we die and are removed from our physical bodies.

But wait? Isn't this the doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality? We've been talking about confession, righteousness, and walking in the light. How is all that possible? (Rom. 7:25)

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Therein we have our sanctified separation:

We can serve the law of God, while our flesh still serves the law of sin.
All because of Christ. (Rom. 8:1-4)

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Believers have the privilege and blessing to walk according to the Holy Spirit, and walk in the light for the pleasure of God the Father. This is our divine appointment. We are to volitionally *set our minds* on the Spirit: (Rom. 8:5-9)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Thanks Paul. Your candor and understanding bring the light into focus. We now know what you know, and understand the inner battle before us. But how do we fight this war? How do we defend ourselves, and how do we kill our enemy? (Rom. 8:13-16)

¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

Paul says that by the Spirit, we can put to death the deeds the flesh. We can actively fight this war, or choose to be volitional carnage. When walking in the spirit, we are soldiers wearing the armor of light. When we are walking in the flesh, doing what our sinful natures tell us to do, we are causalities in the spiritual struggle. Thus, we can conclude that as believers we are *operationally* alive or dead, depending on which *sphere of influence* we have volitionally chosen to operate within.

So, as admiral of our armada, Paul is very clear as to our field orders. We can be alive, or we can be dead. God can use us if we are alive. He cannot use us if we let ourselves be dashed. We must kill the temptations that confront us using the sword of the Spirit (namely confession of sin and knowledge the word of God.)

We can be heroes or we can be headstones. As always, it's our choice. The admonition continues: (Heb. 12:1)

¹ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

The metaphor may be different, but the intent is the same. Weather it is described as a battle, a war, or a race, we are to fight, walk, run, with full speed of purpose. And why?

Sin is an ongoing entanglement which is always close by. Believers must lay aside sin and endeavor to run the race at full speed. Sins, obsessions, or even distracting details of life can serve to take us off our pace.

We cannot let them hinder us, for as in any race worth winning, there are winners and there are losers. In this case, the winners win maximum eternal glory in the name of Jesus Christ.

The losers...don't.

Paul helped to make this point by reminding us that the time is short, and our focus is needed for due diligence: (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5)

¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

⁵ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.

Time spent in carnality is *lost* time. It's a spiritual sick day. We are not at work, and are not fruitful in the overall objective of glorifying Jesus Christ. Time spent in Spirituality, however, is redeemed, and is worthy of reward in eternity.

Believers who are spiritual are working for the Lord: (1st Cor. 3: 9)

⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Spiritual work yields spiritual rewards, which withstand the test of eternity. Rewards of the flesh yield only temporal reward. They are burned away, consumed in the transition.
(1st Cor. 3: 12-15)

¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

In this context, we can be heartened by the wonderful plan of God the Father. As God's fellow workers, we are given a promise. Time spent under the influence of the Holy Spirit will yield eternal gold, silver and precious stones. The "work" that we do in spirituality does not have to be some on some holier-than-thou list of degrading, sacrificial, or insufferable acts. Any time spent in the sin-subversive sphere of spirituality is worthy of eternal mention, because it is in alignment with God's grace eternal plan of the ages. By believing in Christ, confessing sin, and being led by the Spirit, you are glorifying Jesus Christ. You are fulfilling God's objective for your life. Learning the word, living your life, and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit will guarantee eternal riches.

Now, this does not exclude service to others or the church. The Holy Spirit may very well lead you to perform some great and needed charitable work. It may lead you to help the sick, the dying, or the hungry. It may lead you into ministry to feed Christ's sheep. It may lead you to the military to protect the nation as a divine institution. Or, it may lead you to cut the grilled cheese sandwich diagonally, because your wife likes it that way. Regardless of the act itself, if you are spiritual, the "work" is counted for righteousness.

Human Bondage: a warning

Whenever the term “work” or “works” is used, it is easily misinterpreted. Many religious institutions today have a preconceived list of “good works” and urge their patrons to practice these services for the betterment of their souls. But is the unbeliever, or even the carnal believer any better off by performing a sacrificial “work.” Absolutely not. In fact, as we have shown, any act of kindness or charity that is done outside the sphere of spirituality will be counted as wood, hay, and stubble. It will be burned away, because it is not guided, motivated, or taught by the Holy Spirit. Thus we see the importance of this Spirituality and Carnality doctrine, and the danger we face if we ignore it. Imagine the numbers of believing Christians who will stand before Christ at the Bema, only to have their rewards cremated by eternal fire. Even more heartbreaking, is to imagine the scores of unbelievers who will stand before the last judgment, proclaiming that they led “spiritual lives” because of their “works.”

Humans naturally desire to do good. They desire to see themselves as good people. But the bible tells us we are not, none of us, good people. (Rom. 3:23)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Right down to our inner selves, we are sinful. We have sinful natures. (Jer. 17:9)

9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?

All men are sinful. Thus, any “good” conceived by man, would be rooted in this sinful nature. We call this “human good” for it is good conceived by the human mind, but is lacking divine viewpoint.

Unfortunately, the “Human Good” movement is the predominant doctrine of Christian churches today. Even to the point where people presume that “good people” go to heaven and “bad people” do not. This philosophy ignores the clearly written salvation teachings of the Bible, and follows a simplified doctrine of “tell people what they want to hear.”

But the ambushes of human good are constantly launched by our enemy. They are some of the easiest and most ensnaring traps known to man, because they work on the mental aspect of the sin nature. God’s most hated sin is the sin of pride, yet that is the easiest and most prevalent sin in the world today. And nowhere is this sin more abundant, than within the world body of religious institutions.

Religion is defined as man's attempt to gain the approbation of God. It is an attempt to somehow "be good enough" to get into heaven. Christianity, on the other hand, is a relationship with God through Christ. We are sinners saved by grace, not beings worthy of eternal salvation because of our own actions. We accept God's gift of salvation through faith in His Son, we do not earn it through a series of good works. This fundamental difference may seem subtle, but it is the entire crux of Paul's teaching, and the gospel message in total.

When does religion become its most dangerous? When *religion* adopts *legalism* as its mode of operation.

When a series of laws becomes the way of spirituality, then the truth of God's word is lost, and human good becomes the gospel truth. Paul warns us about this inevitable shift, almost as if he were living in the world of today. (Col. 2:18)

¹⁸ Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

Self-destructive acts like flogging or beating of the breast, the worship of angels, trance-induced visions, all are without doctrinal understanding and "puffed up" by overzealous religiosity. Furthermore, by following these systems of false spirituality, practitioners are actually living in the sphere of carnality, and are forfeiting eternal reward. (Col. 2:19)

¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

Christ is often referred to as the "Head" of the church. For those who do not hold the truth of Christ, his sinless life, his resurrection, they are separating themselves from the living and abiding Word. They are losing sight of Christ, the Head, and are misplacing their priorities on a distracting mass of non-issues. (Col. 2:20-22)

²⁰ If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"

²² (which all *refer* to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

As believers in Christ, we no longer gauge our spirituality on our adherence to a set list of laws and regulations, especially a list concocted by men under the

influence of “human good.” We have the Holy Spirit. We can walk in the light. We can confess our sins, and be guided personally by a member of the Trinity. Such didactic institutions such as the abolition of meat on Fridays, the giving up of enjoyments at lent, or the discouragement of dancing don’t hold any value for us. They constitute an attempt to concoct man-made righteousness, devoid of divine viewpoint. Such religion proves worthless in our spiritual battle. The rules they hold to are not necessarily sinful in themselves, but they are detrimental in that they serve as a replacement of true spirituality. (Col. 2:23)

²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Rules, religion, human good, and legalism: these cannot guide us. They do not enter us into the sphere of Spirituality. Thus they have no value in defending us from the darkness of our sinful natures. They do not deliver us from carnality. Rather, they perform an opposite function: (2nd Pet. 2:17-18)

¹⁷ These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

Man-made religion is a well without water, devoid of doctrine, and the people who espouse religious teachings in great fervor do so in the sphere of darkness. (2nd Pet 2:19)

¹⁹ promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

Slaves of corruption cannot also be slaves of Christ. In this way, religion becomes its own bondage, certainly not a newness of life. Its effects leave people in a worse temporal condition than they were in their original carnality. (2nd Pet. 2:20-21)

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

Paul is again exposing a truth about the human condition, and our seemingly

endless willingness to return to our sinful natures. Not just the overt, external acts of lust and licentiousness, but the internal, pride-filling mental sins that creep in when we set up a human-good system and judge ourselves and others based on adherence to religious stipulations. (2nd Pet. 2:22)

²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

We have been saved, freed from the slave market of sin, and yet we return. We have been purged of our sins and given a divine provision for living a spiritual life, yet we are somehow drawn back, to once again consume the bile of our transgressions. This is the trap of religion. Its allure is an invitation to re-adopt the provisions of the law, and to sell ourselves back into enslavement.

Bask in the Light!

Comfort once again comes to us from the doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality. As long and complicated as the textual evidence might be, the practical and pragmatic aspects of the doctrine are ultimately simple. We can avoid religion. We can avoid our sinful natures. We can ward off temptation. We can stay alive in the battle before us. We can avoid using our sick days, and pile up eternal benefits in eternity. It's quite simple indeed, and we already know how to do it.

Walk in the light. Confess our sins and take in the word of God. Walk consistently, constantly, redeeming every minute for the glory of Jesus Christ. (Eph. 5:14-20)

¹⁴ For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." ¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Every believer should endeavor to be "under the influence" at all times. We are to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit's guidance, teaching, and empowerment as much as possible. This is our Christian walk. This is how we walk the "walk of wisdom." This is how we redeem the time. This is how we understand the will of the Lord. This is how we are empowered to edify others, and give thanks to God the Father. This is how we store up eternal riches, crowns that we will toss at our Lord's feet. This is God's will for your life. This is how we glorify Jesus Christ.

God's Divine End

All aspects of the Doctrine of Spirituality and Carnality culminate into one end, one divine desire. This end is a goal for which God has placed so high a priority, he asked his Son to hang to death on a cross to achieve it. It is not a technical, grammatical, or logical precept. It is not a desire to rule, to delegate, or to impose. It is not a desire to truly enslave, to create a collection of beings under tyrannical bondage. What good would that accomplish? God doesn't need us. He has no fields that require tending. He has no "to do" list he cannot himself complete. If God's ultimate objective is to glorify Christ in eternal righteousness, then what is his true end when it comes to the human race? What is all this about? All this sin and conflict, all this volition and choice?

Bold as it may seem, it's perfectly all right to ask the question:
God? What is your point? What do you really want?

The end desire for all of the dealings with the Human race, the creation of the kosmos, and the dealings with sin is expressed in one comforting word.

Κοινωνία. Koinonia. *Fellowship.*

All fellowship is grounded in the relationship between God the Father, and His Son. God desires a similar fellowship with us. When we are spiritual, we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, fellowship with Jesus Christ, and fellowship with God the Father. The filling of the Holy Spirit is what empowers believers to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and through that fellowship, to have fellowship with one another.
(1st John 1:1-3)

¹ What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— ² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³ what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

God is light, and in him there is no darkness. Light and darkness can have no concord, no communication, no common goals, no common objectives. Light and darkness can have *no fellowship*. (1st John 1:4-5)

⁴These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

To have fellowship with him, we must walk in the light. We must practice the truth. We must live in the sphere he has so carefully provided for us to live in, to walk in, to walk by, to walk according to. We must live in the sphere of spirituality. It is a necessity, because our bodies still contain sinful natures. To deny this fact is deceitful, and destructive to the believer's faith: (1st John 1:6-7)

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Now, since all of our sins were eternally forgiven when God established our relationship with Christ: (Col. 1:13-14)

¹³For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Then, every confession of personal sin produces temporal forgiveness. Thus, God is free to restore our fellowship (1st John. 1:9)

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When our fellowship is restored, we are then, truly, temporally, experientially, children of God. We are alive, fighting the good fight. (1 Tim. 6:12)

¹² Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

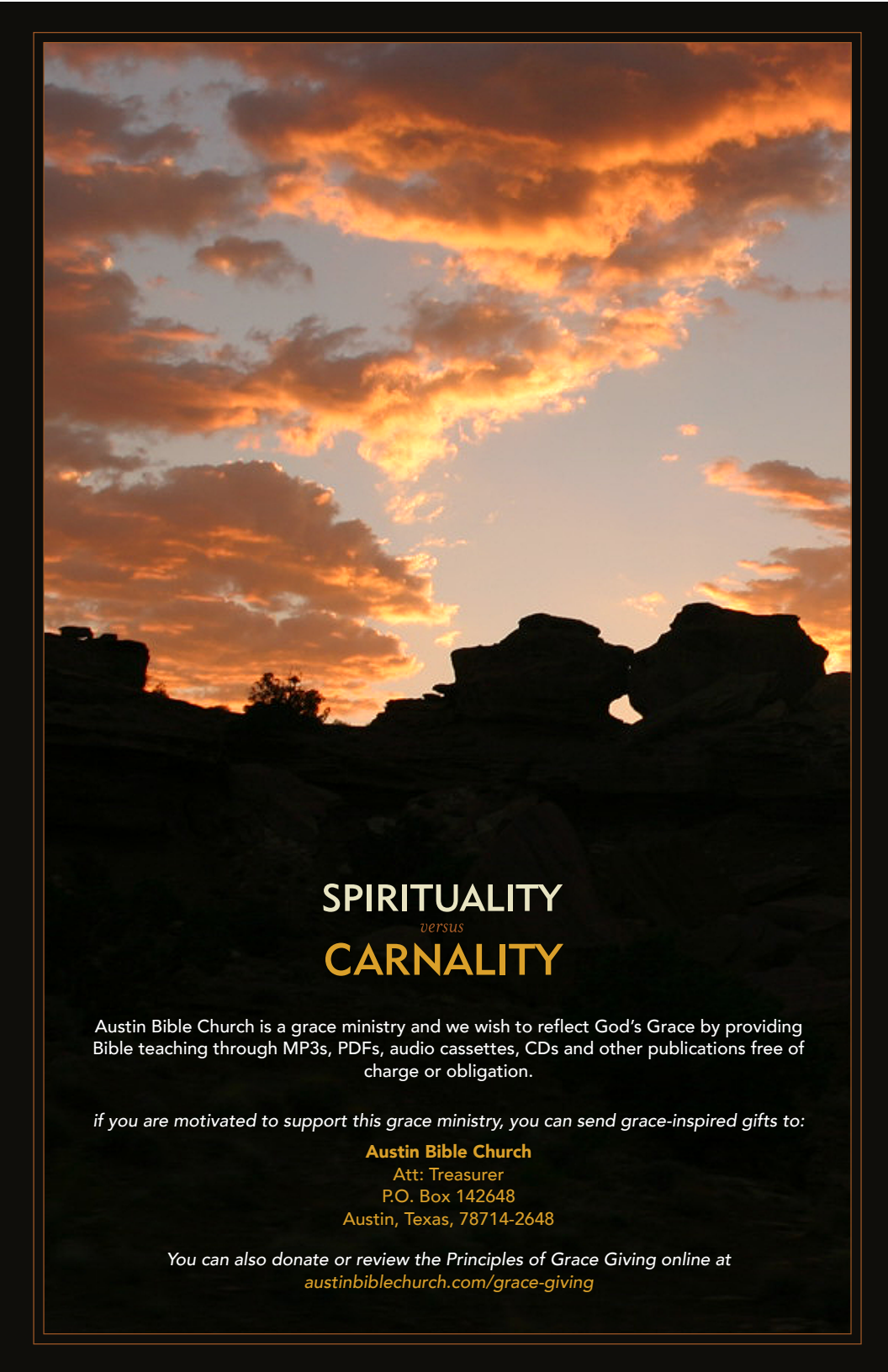
And we live our Christian lives, walking our Christian walk, fighting the inner battles, in the hope of one day standing at the Judgment Seat of Christ, with the ability to faithfully proclaim: (2 Tim. 4:7)

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

Summation, and Admonition

- Spirituality is a sphere in which the believer functions under the controlling influence of God the Holy Spirit.
- Carnality is a sphere in which the believer functions under the controlling influence of the flesh.
- The two spheres are mutually exclusive, you are either in one or the other at all times.
- We chose to be spiritual or carnal. We fall into carnality when we choose to sin, and choose to re-enslave ourselves to our sinful natures.
- We can likewise choose to be spiritual, by confessing our sins (1st John 1:9)
- When we are spiritual, we can be led, taught, and empowered by the spirit.
- When we are carnal, we are led by the flesh, we cannot grow and cannot learn spiritual truths. In fact, we can go backwards, losing the ability to handle the meat of the Word of God.
- The Spirit and the flesh are two powerful desires within us. We are enslaved to one or the other.
- Sin can entangle us easily, and should be avoided
- When we are spiritual, we will not satisfy the lust of the flesh. It is a pre-emptive defense against sin.
- Spirituality is a mental battle, taking place in the depths of our souls.
- Time spent in spirituality is redeemed, and rewarded in time and eternity.

Walk in the light! Be spiritual at all times. Put on your armor. When you do, you are in fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is no divine victory greater within the grace eternal plan for the ages than for once fallen humanity to have fellowship with God Himself! By presenting ourselves willing, warring participants in the plan of God through confession of sin, we glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in our temporal bodies. Armed with powerful promises secured in God's grace, we obliterate the carnal temptations that befall us and prove the Father's plan infinitely victorious in this finite, fallen world.



SPIRITUALITY *versus* CARNALITY

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