

## Summary of Christianity, 17 pgs

### Introduction

1- Christianity is **founded upon** (one act) the completed work of Christ on the cross ... *Jesus said, "It is finished."* With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, **Jn.19:30**. The finished work of Christ [**Jn.4:34; 5:17, 36; 19:30**] is the foundation of our new life in the Spirit. It is not based on our performance. Our living hope of glorification with Christ determines our priorities.

2- **The Christian life is accessed by** believing in Jesus ... *to all who received [embraced] him ... who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **Jn.1:12; Rom.10:10-13***. The only thing that can minimize Christ's saving work is our failing to lay hold of it by faith. **This is the foundation, the underpinning, the universal constant for God's people.**

-----

3- **It is maintained by** continuing the discipline of carefully working out one's own salvation. **What does this statement imply?** [*Paul writing to Philippian believers*], *as you have always obeyed [commendation - listened to me, took seriously my words] ... [an apostolic injunction to the whole church - discipline yourselves (implied) to] continue [developing] your salvation [relative to your own, peculiar situation, ie. building upon the two fundamentals of the faith above, persevere in living true to your faith **by working at, on, & out the details of living before God**] with fear and trembling [a strong warning about doing what you know to be right], for it is God who is [actively] working in you [spiritually, through the events and circumstances of your lives] **to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose** [our lives are woven into the tapestry of God's cosmic plan], **Phil.2:12-13**.*

One way to look at *working out your salvation* is *figuring out how to navigate an antagonistic world pursuant to your faith.*<sup>a</sup> It boils down to growing & maturing by discovering and acting upon the wisdom, knowledge, & understanding that God is working through your experiences, **tier 3 [p.4-5 below; GT#6, p.1-4]**. **This is not business (life) as usual.** It calls for nothing less than perseverance - a serious, ongoing, intentional, effort in the power of the Spirit, **stage 3 [GT#2, p.6-7]**. Our endeavors are not to be undertaken in the power of the flesh. We are empowered supernaturally by trusting in God. **It is not a matter of "trying harder!"**

Christianity is not primarily about **self-improvement through disciplined effort** [The God who is there by D.A. Carson, **p.188**] ... Biblically faithful Christianity does not present itself as a nice religious structure that makes for happier parents, well-disciplined children, and good taxpaying citizens [**p.210; GT#2, p.13**]. Training in true spirituality - supernatural living is the real of goal. *The righteous [supernaturally reborn, **Jn.1:12-13**] shall live [walk, carry on in this world] by means of faith, **Rom. 1:17**.* [see 4- **p.15-16 below**]

-----

*a. I am sending you out like sheep surrounded by wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, **Mt.10:16**.* [The craftiness of serpents is proverbial, **Gen.3:1**.] Jesus was warning of violence, and preparing the 12 disciples, and all who follow them, for persecutions described in **Mt.10:17-25**.

-----

**Thesis:** God is actively training his people to live supernaturally by using the events and circumstances that come into our lives. These are not the problem, **embracing** God's training regimen for us is.

**#1 RULE for living the Christian life:** Always give God the benefit of the doubt. Interpret all things in his favor. In other words, **learn to place a positive construction on the events and circumstances of your life** because God is good, he cares for you, and always does what is right, Eph.5:20; 1 Thes.5:18.

**1<sup>st</sup> Corollary:** Develop a mindset **beyond** merely resolving *your own difficulties* or *taking care of your own affairs*, Phil.2:4. Reclassify problems as opportunities to trust God and serve others [cf GT#3, note k, p.12]. Though such intervention will initially move you out of your comfort zone, there is much joy in helping other people work out their issues under God's tutelage.

*Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility [lit. lowliness of mind], be moved to treat one another as more important [lit. above, higher ranking] than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well [both], Phil.2:3-4.* Practically this means **taking a support role** to restore others and help them with their heavy burdens.

**Most Important Consideration** no matter what happens, <sup>b</sup> ... rejoice that your names stand written in heaven, [Secure salvation (citizenship in heaven) is a greater cause for celebration than worldly or spiritual power. It is the source of joy that outweighs all earthly troubles.] Lk.10:18-20; Phil.4:3; Heb.12:22-24; Rom.8:28-39; Rev.3:5; 20:12-15; 21:27; **Coming of the Kingdom, p.10.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp7HZ1My3II>  
Therefore The Redeemed of the LORD Shall Return

**Essential Weapons** for the Day of the Persecuted Church [GT#2, p.5]: *Our sole defense, our only weapon, is a life of integrity ... 2 Cor.6:7 (Phillips).*

**Premise:** Scripture does not prescribe a course of action for every situation. God has intentionally left tier 3 gaps for us to fill in as part of the maintenance of our salvation & the maturation of our faith.

-----

**b.** In the movie, **Draft Day**, 2014, at the NFL Draft, Sonny Weaver Jr. (Kevin Costner), General Manager of the Cleveland Browns, has the opportunity to rebuild his team when he trades his number one pick, the #1 quarterback in the nation, Bo Callahan, to get Vontae Mac, a standout linebacker his team needed plus a couple other key players. Sonny carried a hand-written note all day throughout the negotiations as a reminder of his goal, **Vontae Mac No Matter What.**

### The Tiers of TRUTH

The God's Training essays serve as a spiritual conditioning program for his people. The 3 tier approach divides truth into categories: **Tier 1** = Creation, what does nature tell us; **Tier 2** = classical theology, what does scripture say according to systematic theology, biblical theology, etc; **Tier 3** is based on a mix of **knowledge** [accumulation of facts] and **understanding** [integration of facts, dis-

cernment] modified by **wisdom, common sense, and experience** [the wise application of understanding to real world situations] within the Christian framework, **GT#6, p.1-2**. **Faith and understanding have a reciprocal relationship**. Faith is a necessary first step that provides the framework for understanding which then substantiates faith. Faith that the universe is rational kick-started science.

**Wisdom** [personified] *calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares ... in the gateways of the city she makes her speech [wisdom is commonly available everywhere to all who will pay attention], **Prov.1:20-21; 8:1-4; 2:6; 23:12**. [cf **Self-Awareness in the Pursuit of Truth, Beauty, & Wisdom** , p.5-9 ]*

### Tier 3, working out your salvation

**The third tier** [usually described by the terms “practical” and “application,” of **Implications-the Depth and Nuances of Scrip.**] represents **God’s training program** for his people. It is tailored for each of us by the situations, events, and circumstances of our lives. Usually a few Scriptures define the subject in terms of **what** one should or should not do, leaving the wisdom, knowledge, & understanding of **how to proceed, why, what to avoid**, and other important details unspecified. **It is these details that comprise the third tier** and **they are for us to work out** in reliance upon the Holy Spirit as we develop tier 3 applications of Scripture to life, **Phil.2:12-13** [cf **Journey**].

*... may your love abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best*, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ ... **Phil.1:9-11**.

### Christian Maturity, GT intro, p.4

<https://www.redeeminggracepittsburgh.com/sermons/sermon/2024-01-14/1-peter-2:1-3:-growing-up-into-salvation?defaultaudio>

Having to be told **what** to do, **how**, and even **why** is for children, the immature. **Discerning what is right and how to go about it defines spiritual maturity**. Paul describes it like this ... *herein do I exercise myself, to always have a [good, quiet, clear] conscience void of offense toward God [ 1 Pt. 3:21; GT#6, p.3 ]*, and *toward men, Acts 24:16*. As a matter of maintaining a good conscience before God, always work out how to thoughtfully implement what you know IN YOUR HEART to be right [**Heb.5:14**], good, or according to God’s will, even if you don’t have a specific command or directions as to how to proceed. **That is deliberate. It is for You to work out the details** and purpose to do them. **Do not let fears or rationalizations hold you back from taking the appropriate course of action**, **1 Pt. 3:16-17; 4:19; Gal.6:9-10; Jas.4:17**.

**GT#6 covers what this means in different situations**. Let’s work through an example. **Tier 2 instruction & Tier 3 discussion**. **There are at least 3 steps necessary for correctly handling Bible passages:**

- (1) What does the passage **say**? [requires an accurate **translation and definitions**]
- (2) What does the passage **mean** by what it says? What am I to understand from it? [requires an accurate **interpretation and definitions** of **both the passage and its logical implications** °]
- (3) Examine yourself by asking what does this passage call me to believe, do, avoid, or stop doing?

What is an **appropriate response** to (attitude toward) this passage and its logical implications?  
[requires that we believe in & trust God, and act accordingly]

**c. Implication:** We are responsible for **understanding and believing the truth, command, or promise and its logical implications** [which are inextricably bound to it] as well as **implementing the task** we are given by it.

### TIER 2 EXERCISE: Examining Passages & Identifying Principles

**Mt.5:20-22** ... unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the Pharisees and scribes [hyperbole in the way they present themselves & are generally perceived], **you will certainly not** [an absolute] **enter the kingdom of heaven** [Who then can be saved? **Mt.19:23-26; Mk.24-27; Lk.18:24-27**]. **You have heard that it was said** to the people long ago [mixed multitude of Israelites and Egyptians at the time of the Exodus from Egypt] ... **anyone who commits murder** [literal meaning] will be subject [liable] to judgment [command > **Ex.20:13; elaboration > 21:12-14**]. **But I say to you that** [further elaboration > it's much more serious than that] **(1) everyone who** [even] **remains angry** [maintains this posture (**GT#6, p.11-12**) pres. pass. part.] with his brother will **continue** to be subject to [in jeopardy of God's] judgment ... [ **Eph.4:25-27** ].

**Mt.5:23-26** For example, if you are presenting an offering at the altar [in the Temple] and you remember that **(2) someone has something against you** <sup>d</sup> [or visa versa, **Mk.11:25 p.5** below, **tier 3**], **leave your gift at the altar. Go** [pres. act. imp.] and [make every effort to] **be reconciled** [aor. pass. imp.] with that person. [**The principle**, If possible, **so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all, Rom.12:18, is understood.**] Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. **Settle matters** [come to terms, reach an accord] **quickly with your adversary** ... Do it before you get [to court (implied) ... warning to resolve issues promptly to avoid being caught in the judicial process and end up in prison] until you have paid the last penny.<sup>e</sup>

**d.** When your conscience has been bothering you or it has become evident by their **changed** (cool or strained) **attitude** toward you. A guilty conscience reveals that one is unacceptable to God (unclean) and **therefore his offering (prayer & worship) will be also, Gen.4:2-8.**

**e. Talmudic tradition** and context suggest that for bodily injury (excluding death), **the principle of lex talionis ("an eye for an eye") is taken to mean financial compensation for damages, covering medical expenses and loss of time.**

### Formulating Tier 3 Actions

**1, Get the story straight.** Write a concise description of what the passages are saying. Include what you know about God and scripture that is pertinent to the situation: **Someone has a justifiable complaint against you**; It is in your best interest to **placate** them before it reaches the official adjudication and penalty stage; **only when the matter is resolved will it be appropriate for you to present praise and worship to God because** he desires peace and unity, and is averse to strained relationships between his people. He loves us and calls upon us to love one another. **It is this condition**

that sanctifies our sacrifice, GT#6, p.11.

2, Seeking reconciliation with someone whom our conscience or their department is telling us we have wronged **requires that we approach them with genuine remorse.** **It softens my heart to think about what the scripture communicates to me as I listen to Christian hymns & songs.** The more we think about people the more sensitive to their moods we will become. Our awareness of hints and clues embedded in our circumstances will also expand.

(1) You are only responsible for dealing with your sins that affect another and your attitude toward them. Since life situations are often **complicated by action and reaction** involving more than one person, it is important to identify **your part** whether it is small (5 percent) or larger (50 or 85 percent). Once you have determined that you have hurt someone and have not sought their forgiveness, you ought to do so *without delay*. (2) *Purpose to sincerely try to **reconcile** with them and work out how to approach them.* Our designation as children of God means we are to be *peacemakers*, **Mt.5:9**, implying that we initiate and implement the reconciliation process.

***if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old [our former identity] has passed away ... And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given [entrusted to] us the ministry of reconciliation ... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, Be reconciled to God! 2 Cor.5:17-20.***

### TIER 3 TRAINING

The remainder of these notes briefly discuss FORGIVENESS under the general topic of **our treatment of one another** both as Christians and as fellow human beings. There are many other topics left out that are connected with what is being introduced here. For **Wrong Reactions** to *failure and reproof* see **p.11 GT#3. A true confession** cannot contain excuses, self-justification, or attribute blame to someone or something else. Planning Our Encounters is more than working out our wording. Part of The Thoughtful Christian Life is learning to read people's moods and attitudes, becoming sensitive to their spirits. By projecting forgiveness, love, and acceptance toward them ... *let us pursue those things that lead to peace and building up one another, Rom.14:19; 12:18; 1:11-12; Mt.5:9.*

#### **Examination of an action/reaction escalation of a family conflict**

Honestly answer the following questions.

- (1) List each member in your family giving the ages of brothers and sisters.
- (2) Circle those with whom you have conflicts.
- (3) How often do you have conflicts with them?

Describe in detail the most recent conflict.

*Dad, mom, and I were at the breakfast table when we started discussing my future occupation. Somehow **I said the wrong thing!** I said that my life as a married woman would have little outside*

activity, etc. I gave mom as an example of such a life [shows daughter's lack of sensitivity and wisdom]. I didn't mean for it to cause friction, but it sure did! She told me I was ungrateful, unwilling to help around the house [statement by offended party reveals an attitude that has been bothering her for some time was brought into the present conflict, BASIC OFFENSE: daughter's attitude of ungratefulness and laziness in duties at home], etc., etc! **I said many things I shouldn't have** [in REACTION: retaliation to the mother's assessment]. It's so-o-o hard. I love her very much, but we always have a tense feeling between us [reveals the mother's basic offense - **harboring feelings of resentment** toward her daughter's laziness]. How could this situation have been avoided?

### List the wrongs and offenses a particular member has committed against you

- Failing to keep their promises
- Failing to understand why I do certain things
- Setting a poor example
- Taking out their frustrations on me
- Other

### List and assess your faults

**POOR ATTITUDE:** How would your parents rate your attitude around the house?

Good?                      Average?                      Below average?

**UNGRATEFULNESS:** When was the last time you thanked your parents for the ordinary things they do? \_\_\_\_\_

**STUBBORNNESS; UNTRUTHFULNESS; BITTERNESS; LAZINESS ... etc**

**PURPOSE TO ASK FORGIVENESS FOR BASIC OFFENSES:** requires complete sincerity, and genuine repentance with no reservations.

Distinguish between **immediate and basic offenses**. It does little good to ask forgiveness for specific small offenses when they are only expressions of an underlying rebellious, stubborn, resentful, or ungrateful spirit. There are several ways to seek forgiveness that are guaranteed NOT to gain it because they do not reflect the sincerity and humility of true repentance – such as: *I was wrong, but you were too! If I offended you, please forgive me; I'm sorry; I apologize; etc.* There is one way **to reflect genuine repentance**, I realize that I have been wrong (in my poor attitude; in failing to love you as I should; etc.). I know I've wronged you in this [confession] and I've come to ask, **will you forgive me?** The question puts the onus upon them because just as you need to be forgiven, they need to forgive [cf **Self-Awareness, p.7-9**].

**Approach** the one who has been offended most first. **Avoid shameful details** by identifying the basic offense. It is neither wise, important, nor appropriate to review **the details** of an offense. It is most important to identify the covert [underlying, hidden] attitudes that caused the overt [observable] actions. **Example**, ACTUAL OFFENSE: gossiping about another or slandering their reputation [slander can be lying about someone or telling the truth with intent to harm them]; Be prepared to answer without revealing the details.

**WRONG CONFESSIONS:** I realize I was wrong in saying unkind things about you to others. Will you forgive me? [they'll want to know what you said; **being too specific will make matters worse**]; I realize that I have been disloyal to you as a friend [They may question how you were disloyal]. Will you forgive me?

**COMPLICATIONS:** Whatever we bring into the world, evil or good, has an effect beyond the immediate circle of people. It propagates in unforeseeable ways like ripples in a pond. **The circle or scope of the confession** should be as wide as the circle of the offense. If others witnessed your transgression, they must also be made aware of your confession. There is a tendency for friends of an offended party to "take up an offense" against you either because he tells them about it or they notice his changed attitude toward you. It is not recommended that you personally approach a former lover for forgiveness. A phone call will suffice.

### CAUTIONS

**Be as brief and clear as possible, Lk.15:17-24.** **There is a major danger of talking too much while trying to obtain forgiveness.** Once I was at supper with a number of other assistant coaches in various sports and fooling around. I had food in my mouth and **accidentally coughed** food right in the face of a trainer. Everyone there saw it. He immediately got up and left, and I followed to apologize. I asked his forgiveness and said "it just happened, I didn't mean it." This is a case where trying to explain would be saying too much. It is all too easy to say something wrong or to involve matters that are not pertinent to the main subject. **This may sidetrack the whole purpose for your contact and give the impression that you are trying to justify your offenses in order to minimize them.** Often this leads directly to **arguments**. It will be very difficult to avoid implicating others if you attempt to give a full explanation of all the circumstances surrounding your offense.

Confess your transgressions as soon as possible. **If you wait too long**, you may miss the opportunity and you will tend to decrease the magnitude of your sins and the offended party will tend to increase it. This will make it all the more difficult to seek forgiveness. **It's not a good idea to try to fit a confession into your next visit about other things.** Gaining a clear conscience is a project in itself that **demand your special time and attention.** Do not wait for the opportunities to arise. Make your own opportunity at an appropriate time and occasion. Unless asked specific questions about your faith or salvation, **don't try to combine witnessing with restitution** or small talk. Your act of confession and **offer of restitution** is your witness at this point, **TS p.100**. You can be sure that they will be watching your life and listening to your words more closely in the days ahead. Further opportunities for witnessing will usually occur in the future as changes in your life are observed.

### Tier 2 Instruction & tier 3 insight

**PARABLE OF THE LOST SON**, repentance and working out the wording of a confession ... *There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate [implication: Old man, give me my inheritance now while I am young. I don't want to have to wait for you to die]. So he divided his property between them [probably according to custom with the larger portion going to his first-born] ... [He] set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living [revealing his immaturity and foolishness] ... Then there was a severe*

famine in that whole country ... he got a menial job that was barely enough to live on, **Lk.15:11-16**.

**When he came to his senses** [began thinking rationally. The events served to accomplish this.], he said ... I will ... go back to my father and say to him, [he purposed to confess his wrong, ask for forgiveness, and worked out the exact wording]: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son [full confession & judgment for his sin showing genuine repentance in humility]; make me like one of your hired servants [request for mercy] ... while he was still a long way off, his father saw him [he was constantly on the lookout for his return] and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him [he was not angry with his son, he was just overjoyed to have him home]. The son began his confession as planned, but the father [interrupting him] said to his servants, Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it ... For this son of mine was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found . So they began to celebrate, **17-24** . [The son was shown mercy, forgiven and restored to his former status, though the cost of this lesson was the loss of his inheritance.]

### Applicable Principles

**Spiritual Warfare:** I ... sent you out to battle for the right armed only with your faith and a clear conscience [ lit. in order that by them you might war the good warfare]. Some, alas, have laid these simple **weapons** contemptuously aside [violated their consciences by **not** doing what they knew or believed to be **right** or by doing what they knew or believed to be **wrong**] and, as far as their faith is concerned have run their ships on the rocks [expression]. **1 Tim.1:18-19** (Phillips).

Our conscience serves as a moral compass that may be calibrated. It is educatable which means we must take extreme care of the sense of right and wrong we impart to others as it will serve to bind their consciences. As we have seen in the GT life stories, **the chief duty** of parents is raising children. Passing on a living faith is **generational, Gen.18:19** [Great Commission, **p.2**]. Having a close-knit family and raising competent, considerate, and conscientious kids, as rewarding as that is, is spoiled when they turn away from the faith. **Christianity Is not primarily about effort and moral improvement** [The God who is there by D.A. Carson, **p.188**] ... Biblically faithful Christianity does not present itself as a nice religious structure that makes happier parents, well-disciplined children, and good taxpaying citizens [p.210; **GT#2, p.13**]. Training in the reality of supernatural living & true spirituality is the goal. The prerequisite is that parents (and anyone who has a position of teaching or leadership in the family or church) know something of this as well.

*Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it, **Prov.22:6** .*

*Fathers ... raise your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, **Eph.6:4** .*

### TIER 2 INSTRUCTION: Forgiving One Another

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, *Father ... forgive us our debts* [The parallel passage, **Lk.11:4**, uses the term **sins**, to fail to measure up, miss or fall short of the target, followed by *as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us, cf **Mt.18:21-35**; And when you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone**, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your **trespasses** , † **Mk.11:25**], as we have forgiven our debtors [tier 3, basic fault = who failed to love us as*

*Christ does]. And lead us not into temptation [a rhetorical way of asking for God's protection from sin], but deliver us from **the evil one** [ Mt.5:37 ]. For if you forgive people [not just other Christians] their trespasses [false step, blunder, deviation from the right path], your heavenly Father will also forgive you [reason and motivation to forgive others]. But if you do not forgive men [ continue to hold a grudge against them] , your Father will not forgive your trespasses [against him: **overstatement** to emphasize the seriousness and importance of forgiveness in living spiritually unto God], Mt.6:12-15.*

-----

**f.** The Gk NT has 10 different words that refer to some form of **wrongdoing**. Here the synoptic gospels mix three different words which suggests that everything in the **category** of wrongful treatment is in view. **Notice** that this **tier 2 examination** of **what to do** contains very little information that might help us construct a **tier 3 method (how)** to accomplish it. However it does provide a great deal of insight into **why**.

The **tier 2 instruction** for this situation suggests the following **tier 3 steps** elaborated elsewhere:

- 1)** forgive the offender by considering God's forgiveness of your trespasses, **Mk.11:25; Mt.6:14-15; Col.3:13**. Allow your meditation on Christ's sacrifice to soften your heart and pave the way for forgiving your neighbor's basic offense. **As you have received God's mercy, so extend mercy to others.**
- 2)** Thank the LORD for his undeserved mercy and ask that he would bless your visit and grant the offender repentance for his offense.
- 3)** Plan a brief contact with the offender at a time and place that you will not be interrupted.
- 4)** Consider that he is already experiencing the weight of guilt on his conscience.
- 5)** Approach him in love and confront him with his basic offense as a healer and tell him you forgive him.
- 6)** **The first step in restoration after one sins is to acknowledge the sin to God and respond with gratefulness and relief for his forgiveness.**

God supplies some detailed instructions and illustrations for what his words mean, and HOW TO implement them, but **he deliberately leaves much for us to think about** because the process of maturing requires it! [One key to maintaining an active faith is to work at our own salvation by continuing the process of bringing the Scriptures to life]. That is what **tier 3** is all about, staying engaged with Scripture in discovering wisdom and applying ourselves to giving substance to God's words existentially in this poor world. This is something each of us must decide to do, but not without or apart from other Christians or simply as a matter of personal discipline. We are linked together as one body in this. **God's Spirit helps us ... he has helped me.**

### **Consequences of Not Forgiving**

*Peter asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? ... Jesus answered ... every time. He then elaborated by parable on the kingdom of heaven as being occupied by people whom God had forgiven an unpayable debt, **and** who in turn had themselves  **canceled the lesser debt** of those who were indebted to them. But to the one who refused to treat others with the same mercy he had received, Jesus said *In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed [to him]. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart, Mt.18:21-35.**

Notice that the stress on **the genuineness of our forgiveness is associated with our awareness of God's forgiveness of us.**

**Many personal problems cannot be overcome or effectively counseled** without first obtaining a **clear conscience** [ie, people cannot be helped with most other difficulties without first dealing with the reproofs of their own consciences]. **Depression** is one of the most significant consequences of refusing to forgive the people who **wrong** us. It is exhausting because it requires emotional energy to maintain a grudge by resisting the pressure of our own conscience to humble ourselves. Just as we become WEARY when our physical energy is exhausted, so we become DEPRESSED when our emotional energy is drained ... **Unwillingness to say, "I'm sorry" to the one I have hurt makes my repentance meaningless hypocrisy** . This is why so many of us have **deadness in our lives**. We cannot just trample human relationships and expect our relationship to God to be lovely ... **TS p.157-159** .

### **Caring for Life in the Church & Doctrine, GT#4, p.1**

What assumptions does forgiveness FROM THE HEART imply, **Mt.18:21-35**? *I will not dwell on this incident or bring it up again to use against you, or talk to others about it, or allow it to interfere with our friendship. Love Keeps no record of wrongs, 1 Cor.13:5.*

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you, Lk.6:28; Rom.12:14. Jesus makes it clear that we are to love every person, including those who hate us and treat us as enemies, **Lk.6:27; Mt.5:43-45.** To do so is our warfare, to avoid being overcome by evil ourselves and instead to triumph over evil with good, Rom.12:20-21.

Do not hate your brother IN YOUR HEART [forgive him]. Rebuke your neighbor frankly [earnestly, without reservations, Acts 8:9-24] so you will not share in his guilt [ it's wrong not to correct someone who needs correcting, practice tough love for his benefit and yours, Ez.3:17; 33:6, Yes I am to be my brother's keeper] Lev.19:17. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself, v.18 [ By having compassion enough to do something – to speak truth to his conscience. Refuse to ignore his sin. Confront him in love with the truth (Mk. 10:21; Eph.4:25; 1<sup>st</sup> Corollary, p.2) ... love is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs, does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, 1 Cor.13:5-6.] If your brother [a fellow believer] sins against you, go and reprove him just between the two of you. If he listens to you [and repents], you have regained your brother, Mt.18:15. If you wait for someone else to make the first move, you will miss your opportunity and blessing that comes with **peacemaking**.

Brothers, if anyone among you errs from the truth, the one who turns him [back] will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins [interrupt the chain of misconduct from being fully expressed], Jas.5:19-20. What is an appropriate response to your brother who sins against you, Lk. 17:3; Mt.18:15? Don't let it pass because **it is a matter of caring for the life of the church**. Reprimand him, **call him on it to correct** him and to repair the damage, **Gal.2:11-16.** Continue to pursue the issue until it is resolved, Mt.18:16-17.

If a person is caught in some trespass, *you who are spiritual [Christians] should restore* such a person [his failure to initiate reconciliation shows that he needs you to jump-start the process] in a spirit

of humility, carefully watching yourself so that you are not also tempted [how is unspecified]. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ [love], **Gal.6:1-2**.

Is your forgiveness of someone who sins against you **contingent upon their repentance** or confession? **No**, holding a grudge is never appropriate, justified, or wise even though **Lk.17:3-4** sounds like it might be. Forgiving the one who hurt you is the first step, helping him to forgive you completes the circle [see comment on **Rom.12:20, p.5**]. **Lev.19:17-18** is telling us to go the extra mile. If you wait for someone else to make the first move, you will miss your opportunity and blessing that comes with **peacemaking**. Press him with his need to repent & assure him that you forgive him. Remember Schaeffer's words quoted in **GT#2, p.7**, *When I have sinned, I am to be sorry for it ... How to let my sin break my heart is a tier 3 matter, see p.4 above.*

-----

**FORGIVENESS LOOKS AT THE WOUNDS OF THE OFFENSE AS GOD'S WAY OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE OFFENDER'S NEEDS AND GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH HIM IN HIS LIFE** [**Partnership** in **GT#1, p.5**] On Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, a girl possessed by the devil continually disrupted Paul's meetings, he could have become angry and frustrated by her disturbances. Instead her disruption made him keenly aware of her spiritual needs and resulted in her healing and the authentication of Paul's Gospel to the glory of God, **Acts 16:16-18**.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, in accord with **ways to love others**, taking a support role in helping them overcome obstacles will result in joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment for us, **Phil.2:3-4**.

-----

**g. No good deed goes unpunished** is a cynical, secular proverb that often applies to Christians, **2 Tim.3:12**. The Apostles were certainly aware of this. As a result of casting out the demon, Paul & Silas were severely flogged, chained, and imprisoned. But about midnight, God unchained all the prisoners and opened all the prison doors which led to the salvation of the jailer and his whole family. *He was filled with joy because he and his whole family had come to believe in God*, **Acts16:34**. The account of how God worked these things out encouraged the local Christians before they left the area.

There are no insignificant people and no unimportant places, **NLP, p.13-25**. Some time after Peter's great sermon at Pentecost where about 3,000 people were added to the church, he & John were going up to the temple where a cripple was put every day to beg. This time, instead of passing by, Peter said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!* **Acts 3:1-10**. *All the people who saw him walking, and jumping, and praising God, recognized him* and Peter delivered another great sermon to which about 5,000 people responded, **3:11-4:4**. This resulted in their arrest, testimony to the rulers and elders of the people, and their release, **4:5-21**. They reported these events to the church and prayed together. *After they prayed ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God* [*basic meaning and use of the gift of prophesy in the NT*] **boldly, 4:23-31; cf Religious Practices, p.7-8**.

### DEALING WITH GRIEVANCES

... as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion [**Lk.15:20**;

**Mk.10:21**], kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone [complaint, something you blame them for]. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [Lay down your claim of mistreatment at the foot of the cross.] And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity, Col.3:12-14.

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry [We were not meant to hold grudges. Resolve your differences quickly. Don't hold anger in lest it mature into unforgiveness. Left to fester, even righteous anger eventually morphs into the corrosive ulcer that is bitterness.], and do not give the devil a place [an opportunity to corrupt your heart], Eph.4:26-27; Jas. 1:19-21.

... **God is light.** In him there is no darkness at all [see **Jn.1:4-5, 9; 8:12; Jas.1:17**] ... if we walk in the light, just as he is in the light [**Eph.5:8**], we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins [against him] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ... **1 Jn.1:5-9.** [Absolutely, but this does not square things with people whom **we** have wronged]

### Tier 3: forgiveness and spirituality from God's point of view

**FORGIVENESS INVOLVES A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OFFENSE RATHER THAN A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OFFENDER:** If our initial focus after being offended is on the offender, it's difficult **not** to become angry or bitter. But **if we focus on the offense as God's training tool** and forget for the moment who offended us, we are much better able to look at the offense as a significant aspect to our personal training & character development. Our reactions to offenders and offenses automatically become **our responses to God and his training.**

**FORGIVENESS DEALS WITH OUR EMOTIONAL REACTION TO AN OFFENDER:** It recognizes that **bitterness** is assuming a right we do not have. Only God [and delegated civil authorities, **Rom. 13:1-5**] have the right to punish, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay says the Lord, Rom.12:19*. **A reaction of bitterness** is an instinctive means to get **revenge** on an offender. **Silence toward people can also be a means of punishing them, v.17-21.** **Forgiving someone is clearing his record with us and transferring the responsibility for any penalty to God.** Know that **the offender** has already begun experiencing the consequences for his sins through reproofs of conscience, friends, circumstances, etc. These are sufficient tools for God to emphasize to him his **wrongdoing** and reinforce conviction, **Prov.15:5**. **Forgiving others opens for us the privilege of helping them and makes it possible for us to have the same openness toward them after the offense as before.** A clear conscience results in that inner freedom of spirit and assurance of knowing that you have a **transparency toward everyone**; that no one will be able to point an accusing finger at you for wrongs that you have never made right [kept hidden, swept under the rug], **1 Sam.12:3-5**.

**Hearing the word** involves **tier 2, working through the passage** to get at its meaning, the TRUTH & WHAT to DO or AVOID, & WHY. **Dialog** with the passages, look things up, cross reference them, etc., meditating, clarifying, and teasing out the implications. **Going from hearing to doing is a tier 2 to tier 3 motion** working out the HOW to best proceed. It involves **recognizing**

clues and formulating principles, all of which go toward remembering what I saw in the mirror, **Jas.1:23-25**, and **keeping up the discipline of working out my own salvation, Phil.2:12-13** . [ **Mt.7:24-27**; Self-awareness, **p.3-5** ] This means that we are to apply ourselves to discover, understand, and implement tier 3 knowledge to our culture & situation.

... the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus [his return] ... I pray that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best , and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ ... **Phil.1:6-10** .

Do not be conformed to [passively molded by] this age, but be transformed [transfigured, **Mt.17:2**; **Mk.9:2** ] by [actively] renewing your mind , so that [in the process of spiritual discipline] you may [learn to] discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God, **Rom.12:2** .

OPERATING PRINCIPLE: **Equity** – As a matter of maintaining a good conscience before God, always work out **how to thoughtfully implement** what you know IN YOUR HEART to be right, good, just, or according to God's will, even if you don't have a specific command or directions as to how to proceed and do not let fear prevent you from taking the appropriate course of action, **Gen.18:19**; **1 Pt.3:16-17**; **4:19**; **Gal.6:9-10**; **Jas.4:17**.

### Warnings

the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will desert the faith and occupy themselves with deceiving spirits and demonic teachings, influenced by the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared ... By pointing out such things to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, having nourished yourself on the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed . But reject those myths fit only for the godless and gullible, and train yourself for godliness ... which is valuable in every way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come ... we work hard and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God , who is the Savior of all people, especially of believers, **1 Tim.4:1-10** .

On this topic [preceding discussion about Jesus' obedience and suffering] we have much [more] to say [but] it is difficult to explain [ie, for you to understand], since you have become dull [instead of progressing in the Christian life through **working out their salvation**, they had become spiritually sluggish and mentally lazy] in hearing [hearing & doing are like faith & works – they belong together as two sides of the same coin. **Jas.1:21-25**; **Mt.7:24-27**; **GT#6, p.3-4**]. For though you should in fact be teachers by this time [you haven't progressed to that point in your understanding], you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God's utterances [ **Heb.6:1-2** , all over again!].

You have gone back [ *Don't think you can coast very long without losing ground.<sup>h</sup>* ] to [the point where you once again] need milk, [instead of] solid food [because your spiritual growth has been stunted]. For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant [not capable of handling it]. But **solid food is for the mature**, whose perceptions are trained by [practicing righteousness] to discern both good and evil [& distinguish appropriate from inappropriate approaches, **NLP, The Lord's Work in the Lord's way**], **Heb.5:11-14**.

-----

**h.** Once you stop training at **anything requiring a high-performance skill-level**, your ability to compete will naturally decline. Skill to ride a bicycle is completely different than competitive trick riding. High performance disciplines require constant work **to maintain skill levels, conditioning, & a creative edge**.

**The Most Important Consideration** - that your name stands written in heaven

*... we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness **for the fulfillment of your hope until the end**, so that you may ... be imitators of those who **through faith and perseverance inherit the promises** ... by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise [of many descendants], **Heb.6:11-15**.*

In the **Parable of the Sower**, Jesus taught about the qualification for entering the kingdom of God. The seeds a farmer was broadcasting **represent** the spreading of God's word in the world. The four different places seeds landed represent people that heard it and what happened. **(1)** Some seeds fell **along the path** where it were trampled on and the birds came and ate it up. This represents people who hear the word, then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **(2)** Other seeds fell **on rocky places**. This represents those who receive the word with joy. The plants sprang up quickly, but when the sun came up, they withered because because the soil was shallow. When these people were **[tested by]** trouble or persecution they quickly fall away. **(3)** Others, like seed sown **among thorns**, **hear the word, [but fail to devote proper attention to it]** <sup>i</sup> so the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and desire for other things come in **[lure them away]** and choke the word making it unfruitful. **(4)** Still others, represented by the **good soil** are those with a noble and good heart, **who hear the word, retain it and [by continuing to stay focused on developing their salvation]** produce a valuable crop at harvest time [each of these outcomes **represents the final state of people, GT#6, p.19-20**]. **Mk.4:1-20; Mt.13:1-23; Lk.8:4-15**. [Here there is a principle laid out - **One's Final Estate** (legal position or status) **is What Matters**.] *All these people were **still living by faith** when they died [GT#6, p.19-20]. They did not receive the things [ultimately] promised [during their earthly lives], **Heb.11:13**. Jesus refers to this principle in the parable of the two sons, **Mt.21:28-29, 31**.*

*... all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win. Each competitor must exercise self-control in everything ... **we do it to receive an imperishable crown**. So I do not run uncertainly or box like one who hits only air. Instead I subdue my body and make it my slave, so that after preaching to others I myself will not be disqualified, **1 Cor.9:24-27**.*

-----

**i.** *... a woman named Martha welcomed Jesus as a guest. She had a sister named **Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he said**. But Martha was distracted [lit, pulled away] with all the preparations she had to make, so she came up to him and said, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed. **Mary has chosen the best [good or better] part [course]** that will not be taken away from her, **Lk.10:38-42**.*

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then **because of joy** he sold all that he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When **he found a pearl of great value**, he sold everything he had and bought it, **Mt.13:44-46**.

### You & Your Service

**Rom.11:32** in speaking of all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, says *God enclosed all in disobedience in order that He may show mercy to all*. God shows us mercy by taking pity on us instead of treating us as we deserve. **12:1** continues *Therefore brothers, I urge you through the compassions of God [the inward feelings that move Him to show mercy] to present [same word translated yield, cf *The Finished Work of Christ*, p.160; 169; 172; 177] your bodies a living holy sacrifice well-pleasing to God, your reasonable service*. This is speaking of what is the logical offering we bring as part of our worship as Christians. Naturally going along with this, **and stop being conformed** [active passivity, cf *True Spirituality*, p.44; 52 ; 57-58; 86-87; 119 - pres,mid/pass,imp] to [molded to fit] this age, but instead **be transformed**<sup>j</sup> [pres,mid/pass,imp, changed from within] by the renewal of the mind<sup>k</sup> so that you may approve [validate, confirm] what the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God is. We who began as disobedient and unappreciative of God are to undergo change so we come to approve His will as *good, well-pleasing, and perfect*.

-----

**j.** The same word [transliterated *metamorphose* in Eng, *transmogrified*] is used to describe the revelation of Christ's glory on the mount of transfiguration in **Mk.9:2. V.3** says *His clothes became radiant, dazzling white ...* The parallel passage at **Mt.17:2** reads ... *his appearance was changed [lit, he was transfigured , aor,pass]. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became [aor] as white as the light*. In **Lk.9:29** the correct translation is *the appearance of his face became qualitatively different, and his clothes became dazzling white, [cf *True Spirituality* p.47-49; *No Little People* p.193-203]*.

**k.** Commands in the passive voice naming the instrument, agency, or means by which their corresponding required actions are accomplished in us.

### The Great Separation, Mt.25:

<sup>31</sup>**When the Son of Man comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup>**All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another** ... <sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup>**Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.** <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. <sup>37</sup> ... **whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**

<sup>41</sup>**Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels** ... <sup>44</sup> ... **whatever you did not do for one of the least of these,**

you did not do for me. <sup>46</sup>Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

#### 4- Beyond Maintenance - Finishing Well The Christian Life

##### Compare Gal.5:22-23 with 2 Pt.1:3-11<sup>1</sup>

But I say, **live** [lit. walk, idiom] **by the Spirit** and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. For the flesh ... and the Spirit ... are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law . Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you ... Those who practice such things **will not** inherit the kingdom of God!

But **the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ... [prerequisite] Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires . If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit ... **Gal.5:16-25** .

[Salvation = the gift of faith, v.1] ... God's divine power has bestowed on us **everything necessary for [spiritual] life and godliness** through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. Through these things he has bestowed on us **his precious and most magnificent promises** , so that by means of [ **faith in** ] what was promised, you may become partakers of the divine nature [ **holiness** ] , after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire [lust, desiring things that are not rightfully ours] .

For this very reason, make every effort to add to [ supplement your **faith with** ] excellence [virtue] , to excellence, knowledge; to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance [steadfastness, stick-to-it-iveness] ; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. For **if these things are really yours and are continually increasing** [not just a matter of maintaining your salvation, but of excelling > maturing in it] , they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately . But concerning **the one who lacks such things ... he is nearsighted, since he has forgotten about the cleansing of his past sins [ Heb.5:11-6:2 ]** . Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to [ensure] make sure of [confirm, certify] your calling and election . For **by doing** [focusing on, prioritizing] **these** [carefully working at, on, & out your salvation] **you will never stumble into sin** [emphatic language] . For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided [fut. pass.] for you , **2 Pt.1:3-11** .

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away [by spiritual inattention to working on our salvation] ... how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? ... See to it ... that none of you has an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes the living God. But exhort one another each day ... that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception. For we have become sharers with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence firm until the end ... Heb.2:1-3; 3:12-14; 2 Pt.2:20-22.

Have done with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept

the message that God has [supernaturally] sown in your hearts and which can save your souls ... The man who simply hears and **does nothing about it** [lets it lapse] is like a man catching his reflection ... in a mirror ... he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of person he saw there. But **the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God's law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and makes a habit of so doing**, does not see and then forget. **He puts that law into practice [obeys God] and will be blessed in what he does, Jas.1:21-25 (Phillips).**

-----

**I. Gal.5:22-23 and 2 Pt.1:3-11** - both describe the necessary development of godly character in a believer's life, though they emphasize different aspects of the same process: the inner **fruit** produced by the Spirit (**Gal.**) and the **active cultivation** of virtue by the believer (**2 Pt.**). Both passages serve as indicators of spiritual maturity and the reality of salvation. Both agree that **this character is not generated by human willpower alone**. Galatians emphasizes the fruit of the Spirit, while **2 Pt.1:3** states that God's divine power has *given us everything we need for a godly life*.

**Gal.5:22-23** presents godly character as fruit (sing.)—an organic out-come of the Spirit living within the believer. **2 Pt.1:5-7** uses more active language, urging believers to make every effort to add these virtues to their faith. **Gal.5** highlights that spiritual fruit is a byproduct of the Spirit's activity, while **2 Pt.1** emphasizes that the believer must diligently work with that Spirit to develop such character. Together, they show that salvation leads to a transformed life.

**God Bless**