

*Having the Mind of Christ*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Christians often have difficulty believing in their identity, that they are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). Satan attacks our identity for one reason: so we will think that God is insufficient or inadequate to direct us and meet our needs.

The believer's identity is based on the fact that we have been accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). As we take on the mind of Christ and begin to understand this reality, we will be transformed into living epistles, and our lives will be constant testimonies to the glory of God.

Satan has a plan to make the mind dull. He tries to infect people with the spirit of criticism. But the Spirit of the living God said through the apostle Paul, "My God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

In these pages we will see that we can have the mind of Christ with "his riches in glory," and

that regardless of what we can see, every pain we endure will result in gain enabling us to reign with Him right now.

*Chapter One*

## OUR IDENTITY AS LIVING EPISTLES

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Corinthians 3:1-2).

In Acts 17:11, the Word of God says that the people in Berea “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things [that Paul preached] were so.” There are always a few people in every church who think that the process described in Acts 17:11 is supposed to go on forever. They will be in a ministry for years, and still quote this verse. It was, however, the first time Paul had ever preached in Berea, so these people were not even believers yet. But verse 12 says that as a result of searching the Scriptures, “many of them believed.” They checked the

Scriptures, found they were true, and got saved.

What Paul was saying to that church in 2 Corinthians 3 is, “You don’t have to check us out any more. Your lives are proof of who we are, and what you reveal proves that God is with you and in you.”

Notice what he said: “You are our epistle written in our hearts.” It would be one thing for them to be epistles, but Paul said, “Ye are *our* epistle written in our hearts.” What did he mean?

When Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, there was a choice group of believers in the church who were the visible representation of categorical doctrine. Paul meant that they were in his heart so that he would know what to teach them, how to pray for them, and how to be precise in the corporate body. Every time he went to the pulpit, God gave Paul a precise message for *that* hour, which would correspond to the needs of those who were hungry and thirsty after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

### ***Lives that Can Be Read***

These Christians were “known and read of all men.” Paul said, “People know your lifestyle, and they read your life by your habits, your lan-

guage, and your actions. Because they don't know the Bible, they *read* who you are by your life. Each one of you, therefore, is a living epistle, an 'open book'."

The way students react toward their teacher determines the way they are known by their teacher. They are known by what they say and how they behave. If it's good, that is wonderful. Sometimes, however, negative behavior is part of a process of growing, and that can be discerned and dealt with. Occasionally they are deliberately bad, and that must be dealt with too. But they are known and read by others. Likewise, a Christian becomes a marked person by what he reveals about himself.

### ***The Attack on Our Identity***

Satan wants us to lose our identity, which was given to us *in Christ* before we were born. In fact, before the foundation of the world, God in His foreknowledge saw us in Christ, knowing we would make a decision in time to be saved. But, until we have the reality of our position as a premise for living in the purpose of God, Satan will be successful at his attempts to rob us of our identity. He does it through people, through unkind circumstances, and through bad decisions.

Beginning in Deuteronomy 28:15, the Lord revealed to Israel the consequences of being lulled away from hearing and obeying His Word. In verse 65, the effects of sin include “sorrow [fainting, languishing] of the mind.” God allowed demons to *attack* the mind, causing it to become dull and tired. We have been given a free volition as our provision, and according to James 4:7, the choice is to submit to God, resist the devil, and be quickened or to suffer the consequences of mental and spiritual fatigue.

In Proverbs 21:27, the devil *infects* the mind. The Hebrew word in the phrase “a wicked mind” is *zimmah*. It means that Satan attacks the mind to infect a person with a spirit of indifference and criticism, giving him a critical soul.

On the other hand, the Spirit-filled believer who has differences with someone will go directly to the source to deal with the problem. Whether the differences are resolved or not, this believer reveals God’s love and walks away as free as he can be.

So, Satan tries to dull the minds of some while he attacks others by infecting them with the spirit of criticism. But *zimmah* can also mean that he infects the emotions so we live according to “feelings” instead of living in our God-given

identity, which is *in Christ*.

Our identity is in the heavenlies; our identity is that we are accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Yet, Christians often have difficulty believing that we truly are “hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Satan attacks that identity by attempting to break up positive faith toward the promises of God, and he does it for one reason: to make us think that God is inadequate to direct us and insufficient to meet our needs.

### ***The Living Word vs. the Letter***

2 Corinthians 3:3 says, “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ....” Here, Paul was saying, “I’m reading from an epistle. All of the epistles that are written make you *one* epistle because it is the *Person* of Christ that we minister. Therefore, you are the epistle of Christ, because we minister to you.” They were epistles of Christ, “written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

Paul’s point was this: “If the words I have given you were reduced to ‘ink’, you would be most miserable. You would probably end up living in lasciviousness, legalism, arrogance, or self-condemnation.” Rather, Paul wanted his

teaching to be more than just something that was written in ink; he wanted it to be written on their hearts with the Spirit of the living God.

“And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward” (2 Corinthians 3:4). We are trusting Christ through the Father, whose plan is perfect (Psalm 18:30). Then Paul adds, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but *our sufficiency is of God*; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Have you ever tried to counsel Christians who listen to you in the ‘letter’? You tell them, “The Word of God says this...”—and they know it. They *know* what it says. They listen to your counsel in the “letter,” but they have no intention of *doing* anything. What’s more, they will tell you they *can’t* do what you’re telling them because they are not living by the Spirit of the living God.

Don’t be “inky” Christians. Be people who live by the Spirit of the living God, because the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Instead of asking a hundred questions about your situation, accept Christ’s sufficiency.

Satan will tell you, “You’re insufficient. Furthermore, God’s provision for you is insufficient.” But the Spirit of the living God said through the apostle Paul, “My God shall supply *all* of your [present] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Satan whispers “No, He won’t!” and many Christians go around confessing their feelings that come from projections instead of confessing the truth that comes from the Spirit of the living God, and the Bible says that we are “able ministers of the New Covenant.”

## *Chapter Two*

# THE LIE OF INSUFFICIENCY

Consider Satan's attacks on the mind. Ezekiel 38:10 says that things shall "come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought." Satan attacks the mind by bringing in evil thoughts. According to Ezekiel 23:17, when we accept wrong thoughts from people and from the atmosphere, he alienates our minds from truth and from faith obedience.

In Daniel 5:20, King Nebuchadnezzar's mind was hardened by pride. A pastor may counsel a man by saying, "You ought to love your wife and lay down your life for her," but he may reply, "I'm not going to do it. I've made up my mind." His heart has been hardened by pride.

Satan and his demons are always attacking our minds because if they can get at the mind, they can create ungodly emotional 'complexes.' These complexes are structures that are built in the soul when a person continues in a specific

sin. The sin affects other areas or ‘rooms’ of his soul that become attached and reinforced as strongholds, weakening the believer’s resolve.\*

The attack is always on the mind because as a man “thinketh in his heart [mind], so is he” (Proverbs 23:7a). Habakkuk 1:11 says, “Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend.” In Mark 5, a young man who was possessed with demons was ‘out of his mind’. Luke 12:29 addresses the problem of wavering: “Neither be ye of a doubtful mind” because a doubtful mind leads to a double mind (James 1:6-8). Then, in Romans 1:28, those who reject God are given over to a reprobate mind.

Paul understood the law of the mind that came against him to make him captive to his flesh (Romans 7:23). The carnal mind is at enmity against God (Romans 8:7). The unsaved person and the carnal Christian try to fulfill the desires and lusts of their minds (Ephesians 2:3).

We must understand that people who “mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:19) will be shaken in their minds (2 Thessalonians 2:2). The Bible also says in Colossians 1:21 that at one time we were “alienated and enemies in [our] mind.”

In the last days, the ten nations that will make up the United States of Europe will have

*one mind* to give power and strength unto the beast (Revelation 17:13). Titus 1:15 says that those who are defiled and unbelieving have their mind and conscience defiled. The attack, friends, is always against the mind.

### ***Thoughts of Insufficiency***

The purpose of Satan's attack is to make the mind insufficient and unable to deal with the problems of the hour, to alienate the mind, to shake up the mind and make it doubtful, and to cause the mind to entertain questions rather than focusing on God's answers. How many times do we ask foolish questions when we already know that God will provide for our needs? Of course we are to ask for our daily bread, and the purpose for that is to never be familiar with our provision or its Source.

Satan's strategy is to project thoughts of insufficiency. He says to the woman, "You're insufficient for your husband. You need to be a better responder." Then he says to the man, "Your wife is insufficient for your needs." Or she may receive projections that her husband is insufficient for her needs. The whole attack is to project insufficiency.

"You are insufficient for your job," says the

devil. To the teacher he says, “You’re not sufficient for the twenty-seven children in your classroom. Go ahead, try it. But it won’t work!” What is Satan doing? He is coming against the mind and the emotions, using circumstances and sight in his attack.

### ***We Are Complete***

The Word of God makes it crystal clear that Jesus Christ is absolutely complete in everything He’s done and in everything He says to us. The provision for our lives comes from the Finished Work resurrection side of the Cross. Jesus Christ is sufficient, and His provision is perfect. David said “Mercy shall follow me *all* the days of my life” (Psalm 23:6), but Satan projects accusations like “What about *your* situation? Where is your God now?”

I have counseled people who don’t believe that God is merciful. They are godly people, but they accept condemnation. They are not living badly, but they accept accusations from the atmosphere. They have accepted the enemy’s attack on their mind.

God says, “[Your] sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*” (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17); and Satan says, “Maybe God won’t remember your

sins, but I'll make sure that *you* do."

Think of the insecure Christian who reads in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: *but God is faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." That verse comes from Jesus Christ, from the living Spirit, from the royal law of love. But though it comes from God directly, this Christian's emotions and circumstances make him confess, "How will I ever get through this? It's not going to work." His confession implies that the provision of God—who is all and in all—is insufficient for his need.

*\*Read Severing Attachments to Evil by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

### *Chapter Three*

## RESPONSES FOR SUFFERING: REIGNING THROUGH PAIN

Many people have the type of emotional complex that responds improperly when suffering comes.

First of all, I've always put a name on my pain. Secondly, I make sure that the pain becomes gain. Do you understand this? *Pain for us is gain!* Most Christians don't believe it. Oh, it sounds like a good message, but they don't really believe it.

God says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." But we say, "Why did God do this?" "Why is He allowing that?"

The problem is that there is a whole complex of unbelief that has never been defined. It does no good to answer; only God knows. But rather than trying to rationalize the reality of circumstances and events, we have the privilege of entering into the reality of spirituality and allow-

ing the Holy Spirit of the living God to take over.

When we live in a complex of unbelief, we are saying that in a particular area of our lives, the truth has been written in “ink” but the Spirit of the living God has not taken control.

### ***Pain is Gain***

James 1:2 says, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Satan whispers, “Don’t listen to that.” But God is saying, “When you suffer as a Christian, rejoice (See 1 Peter 4:12-16).” Matthew 5:9-12 tells us to be glad when persecution comes for righteousness’ sake. *Pain is gain as long as we look to Jesus Christ.*

Some may ask, “How can you prove that pain is gain?” Consider these verses on suffering: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12a). “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). “For even hereunto were ye called [to suffer]: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). 1 Peter 1:11 reveals that the Spirit testified to the prophets of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” “For unto you it is

given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

We can conclude from these verses that pain is indeed gain for the believer who has an edifice of faith-rest reliance built up in his soul. Suffering produces reigning power when we are focused on the living Spirit of God.

### ***Answering the Projections***

Romans 15:20 teaches us to carry the Gospel to places where no missionary has ever been. But Satan says, “You can’t do that! Who do you think you are? Look at your life. You’ve never been anybody. You’re just a follower who can’t even follow properly.”

Do you see the strategy? Satan tries to enforce our insufficiency by making us think that if we step out in an adventure of faith, we will only uncover our own inadequacy. He projects thoughts against God’s provision, that it is inadequate for our great need. Then he attempts to bring feelings of insufficiency into marriage. “Your marriage will not work. You blew it,” he says. He may get one party to admit weaknesses, but the lack of humility is revealed in the confession, “Well, I haven’t been perfect, *but....*”

Stop that confession right there! The truth is that every one of us has an old sin nature, and there is a devil who attacks our minds and tries to recreate in us his own emotional complex.

When trials come up in people's lives, fear often comes in. The countenance begins to look like something that just came out of the pit. Fear comes in because love is not abounding through the Spirit of the living God (Romans 5:5). If I understand 1 Corinthians 13:7 correctly, then I know that love bears all things, and perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). That's the way of the Spirit of the living God.

We need to understand the work of God. Unless a person lives by the Spirit of the living God, then he can't wait for vacation to come. There is nothing wrong with vacations; however, we don't need a vacation because we're worn out or because we have become insufficient for the job. Jesus said, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31a). It is good to "come away" to be refreshed. In fact, we should mentally rest in Him all the time.

Can you see the value of rejecting every projection in a series of thoughts and feelings that come from the one who wants to attack and in-

fect our minds? Don't accept anything that doesn't agree with the Great Provider of your soul. Rest in the mind of Christ.

## *Chapter Four*

# LET THE WORD DWELL RICHLY

There have been successful pastors of large churches who have fallen into the sin of adultery and as a result lost their ministry, family, and friends. One pastor wrote a book describing the satanic attack that ultimately caused him to fail. He admitted, “My downfall was in my mind, and I never really received a victory.” He has truly repented and now has a wonderful life with God. But, do you see why it is so important to let the Word of God dwell richly in your mind and to have the true spirit of praise, according to Colossians 3:16?

The spirit of praise comes from being taught the Word of God. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). “Set your [mind] on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). “Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

This is the point: Your thinking process is going to be attacked. If you are doing reasonably well outwardly, you may attack someone sooner or later, because that is Satan's purpose. Especially if you are living a reasonably clean life and though you may be intellectually prepared for life, you could end up attacking others because of an attack of pride in your thought processes. You may *think* you know more than they do, and you may *think* your ideas are better. Instead of esteeming others as better than yourself (Philippians 2:3), you will consider them to be less than you. But the Word of God tells us to be knit together in the knowledge of love (Colossians 2:2).

God says, "*You are complete in Him* who is the head of all principality and power," but Satan says, "You're incomplete, and you know it! Remember the evil thought you had last night? You were angry yesterday, for just a few seconds, but you did get angry. You are incomplete!"

So you begin thinking, "Yes, I am incomplete." Down goes the self-image. You don't love yourself any more. Your countenance looks terrible. You are ready to ask someone all of the questions that God has already answered time and time again.

## ***God's Answers to Our "Whys"***

"Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1). Do you know what God's answers are to the question "why"? *Have Faith! Trust! Believe! Abide!* Become an epistle of the living Spirit! What more can be said?

When suffering comes, name the pain; make the pain your gain forever, because that is God's monitor of the measure and degree that you will reign with Him. According to Romans 8:18, 2 Timothy 2:12, and Revelation 2:26-28, the measure and degree that you handle pain with the faith-rest of love, abiding in Christ, will determine the measure that you will reign with Him.

May I ask then, what is the problem? Of course, if you don't want to make your pain become gain, then God will do something else. He may allow you to have your portion in this life. You may prosper and have a good marriage (Ecclesiastes 5:18; 9:9). God may even exclude you from suffering and take away pain as much as He can (apart from the process of dying). If you want to pray that He will remove the pain and suffering, then God will probably answer you; but you will also suffer loss of rewards.

Don't misunderstand me—I'm *not* praying for pain. I just know that it's promised in the Book. So when pain comes, you will know that it's given to produce spiritual maturity and growth. This is why it is so crucial to learn, experientially, what God says about *His* sufficiency.

When someone comes to cry on your shoulder, chances are they don't want to hear you say, "My God is able to supply all your needs." That's too simple! Or, if you tell them "You are able to do *all* things through Christ," they probably won't want to hear that either. At that point you must end the conversation by saying, "That's all I've got to say. Let's pray!"

I love that. To say anything else would be to add unto God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. If a Christian can't accept the counsel that comes from the all-knowing, all-powerful God who is everywhere present, then the only thing left to give them is an educated guess. Oh, we could talk, because we both know how to communicate with a good vocabulary. But that wouldn't be giving God's counsel.

"My God shall supply all of your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He may or may not change your circumstances. But I promise you this: God

will supply all of your needs. And I guarantee that He will provide a way of escape so you can bear it. I guarantee that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

If you are married to someone who is unsaved and 1 Corinthians 7:14 comes to you declaring that through your manner of living you can win your mate, then *stay on that promise*. Believe that promise, and don't give up on it! Satan says, "That promise is insufficient." But we declare, "It is sufficient! It came by the Spirit of the living God."

### ***No Excuses***

If not one single promise has ever fallen to the ground (1 Kings 8:56), what is my excuse for not having the mind of Christ? It's funny how when God sends the most basic trials—can't get a house, can't keep a job—some people leave the will of God. Trials didn't drive Job away. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15a). But some people will not confess that. "I've done everything," they say. My answer to that statement is they have done everything but *believe*.

My God will supply your needs in your marriage. He will supply your needs if you are

not married. He will supply your need because He said He would. And, according to the Bible, God cannot lie (see Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18)! And if He cannot lie, we can conclude that His Word is absolutely pure.

Our light affliction is but for a moment in relationship to eternity. Just for a moment, but it “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). That is the benefit of our affliction. Consider what verse 18 says, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen....” What does Satan get people to do through their minds? He gets them to look at the things that they can *see* and *reason with*, so they can *feel* their way through to a reasonable conclusion.

We must do what we can in the objective reality of responsibility; but beyond that, we must not go by sight, because Satan’s purpose is to give us the wrong kind of mind-set. We live by the faith of the Son of God, and what is unseen “works a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory.” This is ‘pain with gain’ instead of feeding on ashes (Isaiah 44:20).

All things do work together for good—God said so! He will go with us all the way, because He said so. I have been forgiven of everything—

because He said so. All of God's promises are yea, and they are never nay (2 Corinthians 1:19-20). God will supply your need. God will bless us in every area of life. And we know we will be perfected some day in heaven *because God said so*. We can respond with, "It is written" in any situation when we have the mind of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

After being tempted in the desert for forty days and forty nights, Jesus was legitimately hungry. Still, with every temptation His response to the devil was always, “*It is written....*” Jesus said, “Though my circumstances have not changed, I will not take the stones and turn them into bread because *it is written* that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God.” These three words can become a mighty power in every Christian’s vocabulary.

“It is written. That is all I have to say to you, Satan.”

“Even in these circumstances?” the devil says.

“Absolutely. And, furthermore, Satan, you’re trying to condemn me because of my pain, but my pain is bringing me gain—a deposit of equity and interest in heaven that will never be taken away from me.”

God won’t allow us to have pain all the time.

It's for a moment, it's for a season—sometimes for a long season.

“It is written....” “I can do all things through Christ....” “God will supply all my needs.” With these promises operating in our minds in simple faith, Satan is defeated because we are equipped with the mind of Christ. We will experience Christ's sufficiency in every situation and trial as living epistles of the written Word of God.