

God's Way of Escape

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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

When we find ourselves in uncomfortable situations, whether we created them ourselves or not, instead of trying to adjust and to work with the conditions, we will usually look for a way out.

Fortunately for Christians, we have a Savior who was tempted in every way that we are tempted. No temptation common to man was withheld from Jesus. Loneliness, rejection, hunger, thirst, He experienced it all.

As this booklet will show, God is faithful to make a way for us to escape. That way is revealed when we receive His Word through the Holy Spirit and allow it to be added to us through a divine transfer of God's power into our human spirits.

Chapter One

THE OBJECTIVE: GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

“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” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Often I have counseled people who were going through difficult times and have heard them make statements such as this: “If only I could get out of this! If only I could escape.” I understand what they mean. They really want to run away from their old sin nature and escape into something brand new.

What is this amazing way that God prepares for us so we can escape? That is the question we all want answered. When we know what it is, we can bear anything.

The answer is having that which is of God's Holy Spirit become part of our human spirit.* Once we have heard the Word of God, it is transferred into the soul to be processed and applied. But unless what we hear goes through the Cross and is transferred through the human spirit by the energizing power of the Holy Spirit (*energeia*) (Hebrews 4:12), then it is just knowledge that puffs up. It may be good knowledge, but it lacks an eternal perspective.

If we neglect to have the mind of Christ in the operation of life, particularly in a marriage, then we have no way to escape our sins, our weaknesses, or our personal problems. When we are born again, we are born of the Spirit, not of the flesh. Therefore, we must tend to the spirit man.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Before a person is saved or when, as believers, we grieve the Holy Spirit, everything that enters into the perceptive lobe of the brain goes straight into the five parts of the soul: the conscience, self-conscience; emotions, free volition, and mind. Because that knowledge bypassed the filter of Calvary's Blood, the light of truth falls in the street. As a result, a man is left to his own limited ability to make sense of what he sees, hears, and feels. But when the spirit is separated from the soul, the human spirit is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, and God-consciousness and our capacity for God become the supreme premise for a divine experience in an objective reality. We were saved by grace through a personal or subjective faith, conscious only of our own need for a way of escape. But now, we need to grow in grace and knowledge objectively, through the spirit-man, having heaven's viewpoint for a lost and dying world.

The Triune Life

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his

Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

By the spirit of man that is in him, a man begins to know the things of a man. These things make men do what they do, say what they say, become what they become, and live the way that they live.

A saved man is a trichotomous being, having a body, soul, and spirit. Having a place for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit to indwell, he is now “triune” in his personal subjective experience. Through the indwelling Spirit and the Word of God, he is liberated and, objectively speaking, very free indeed. When it comes to the Word of God, he now has a hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). The hunger and thirst is there as a result of his subjective experience of regeneration.

Categorical Objectivity

Oh, I love the Word of God in all of its purity (Proverbs 30:5)! This Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). A preacher who preaches the whole counsel of God does so line upon line, precept upon precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10). He studies a passage until he is weary (1 Timothy 5:17) before he dares to get up and preach on it.

People will start to hear a message that they think they know and immediately turn off the message. That is sin. It is crucial that we receive what the Holy Spirit has to say today and let every subject become a brand-new object in our subjective experience of faith in the categorical truth of God's Word.

**For more about the function of the soul and the value of having a divine perspective, be sure to read The Hearing Heart, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two
FROM DEATH TO BURIAL
TO RESURRECTION

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

“For he that is dead is freed from sin.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him” (Romans 6:6-8).

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

It is so important that we realize that we have been crucified with Christ. Our old man is crucified, dead, and buried. The body of sin is destroyed and therefore we should not serve sin. We have been freed from it.

All the things that trouble us, all the sin and weaknesses passed down genetically through

the old sin nature from our great-great-grandparents, all of those things that seem to so easily beset us—all of it has been dealt with at Calvary, once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). With one tremendous blow, we experienced that crucifixion and were made free from sin.

I am crucified with Christ. *I am*. I am dead and that is it. Whatever is alive in me now is alive by my faith in the Son of God.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Thank God for the amazing provision of our co-crucifixion with Christ. To lust, pornography, adultery, criticism, gossip, slander, envy, jealousy, fear, insecurity—to all of these things we are dead forever. The declaration of God through the Cross is that old things have passed away. We are indeed dead. This is a precious, holy, sacred declaration from the pen of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of men.

Co-crucifixion is God’s way of escape from our past. Henceforth, we are quickened (Psalm 119:154), and it is the Word that quickens us, separating the spirit from the soul.

Don’t Dig Up What’s Been Buried

“Therefore we are buried with him by bap-

tism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Romans 6:4-5).

Now, what if all of our loved ones were dead and we just placed the bodies around inside the homes? In every house, we would find dead bodies because there was no burial. At this house, there’s a body in the basement. In that home, there’s a body in the backyard. Of course that is ridiculous, because what is dead needs to be buried.

Where is our sin? It is buried in the deepest, deepest sea, never to be seen, never to be discussed (Micah 7:19). We are no longer under the Law, because the Law was fulfilled in Christ, at Calvary. Remember, the wages of sin is death. And now, because He paid our debt, we are under grace, hid with Christ in God.

But, think of an unsaved husband and wife: two unbelievers living in the old sin nature, and all they have to counsel them is the Law. The Law comes in and the husband in his old sin nature says, “She’s not doing what she’s supposed to be doing.” The unbelieving wife answers, “He

is not doing what he is supposed to be doing.” This little bit of leaven grows into more leaven and then the argument gets more and more heated. An antagonistic spirit works its way through the whole marriage. Neither one is free, because they are both being counseled by the Law, and they cannot measure up.

Then, suddenly, the husband gets saved and dies to himself, and the old sin nature is instantly crucified. The wife gets saved, too; and now, they have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as their counselors.

The husband becomes the born-again Christian who develops into his wife’s spiritual leader. The wife, now born-again, develops into a beautiful responder. Both are married to Jesus Christ, who indeed was raised from the dead. As individuals, each one personally establishes himself in a brand-new marriage before God. They offer themselves as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1-2). Because of that, they become objects of specific promises revealed by the Holy Spirit, and He takes care of them.

“So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off” (Proverbs 24:14).

This verse speaks of the application of precise truth. Truth goes into the soul by way of the human spirit. It gives life to the soul, revives the body, quickens the heart, and makes the soul new. We enter into a very beautiful relationship of His new creation as members of His body, His flesh, and His bones. We are a very special part of Him and we are one spirit with Him (Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17).

Chapter Three

MAINTAINING A FRESH CAPACITY

Every single thing about us must pass through death. Did you get your feelings hurt? Then they have not passed through death. Resurrection revives only that which has passed through death.

This is particularly true in marriages. For us to have beautiful marriages, we need to have brand-new counselors: the Holy Spirit and the Word. Because we are married to Christ, we can function in Kingdom marriages.

Kingdom marriages are free and liberated in their communication of what Christ does. These marriages are unusual and unique. They are so real, and they represent people who are going forward in the plan of God.

For this reason, I plead with couples to attend three church services a week. It is crucial for families to come out and support their local

assemblies, to fellowship with the Body of Christ, and to receive the Word of God.

What makes a marriage a Kingdom marriage?

First, there has to be a burial. Everything has to be buried so that it can be resurrected. So many marriages end in divorce because failures are never buried.

I say to couples, "Stop nagging your spouse. Don't keep saying those little critical things. Let your husband be your husband, let your wife be your wife." Couples need to understand that when they were married they became one flesh (Mark 10:8).

In marriage, we go from one heart to one soul, to one spirit, to one flesh (Acts 4:32; Ephesians 5:31). God gives sex for married couples as a beautiful expression of divine love and divine connection. When husbands and wives see themselves as members of one another, the sexual experience becomes magnificent in its beauty, glorious in its feelings, and wonderful in its activity. It truly is making love, a beautiful consummation of two people who now share one spirit, one soul, one heart, and one flesh.

New Wine, New Bottles

“And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

“But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

“No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better” (Luke 5:36-39).

New wine must not go into old bottles that are made of animal skins. The skin bottles will expand but then burst because they deteriorate with use; and the wine, which is developed over time, will be wasted. The new must go into the new. In other words, our capacities for the Word of God must be reestablished moment by moment.

Every time we gather in our local assemblies, God is doing something new. When you listen to your pastor-teacher, have a fresh capacity. He will give you what you may have heard,

but still don't know. Personally, I know nothing as I ought to know it (see 1 Corinthians 8:2). When I study and preach, I learn a little more, I come to understand a little bit better, yet I still don't know any thing as I ought.

So we sit hearing the messages, allowing new wine to go into new bottles. Faith rest is our attitude. We don't have to exercise effort because we are in the New Creation. There is no need to flounder around and get caught up in the dreariness and weariness of trying, striving, stretching, and straining. We simply go forward by the grace of God, receiving what the preacher preaches.

We enjoyed a great marriage seminar recently. The testimonies of some of the couples were so precious to me. Every one of them was about new wine going into a new bottle. The things they said were fresh and real, and they expanded my capacity. The husbands and wives in these marriages have become steppingstones for each other, not stumbling stones.

An Hundredfold Blessing

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the

poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

“And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s,

“But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

“But many that are first shall be last; and the last first” (Mark 10:21, 29-31).

The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the adult, grownup children of God. When we are operating in the Holy Spirit, we can receive strong words without being offended. The rich man asked Jesus a question, and Jesus told him, “Sell all that you have and give to the poor.” As a pastor, I can say there is a temptation to excuse this passage. It has a far different meaning from what we take it to mean. The principle Jesus is emphasizing is that we are to let go mentally and emotionally of all that we really value as possessions and be ready to give it to another.

That is the way of escape. The beautiful

thing is that God never takes anything from us that He will not restore to us “an hundredfold.” He is trying to convince us to surrender some of our serious possessions. In some cases, these are things that we literally need. At times, God will desire that we give up what we desperately need. He does it to give our hearts a brand-new revolutionary expression and divine experience with our spirits and the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

“Listen,” God is saying. “Are you willing to give up those treasured and prized possessions? If you are, then I am going to give you an hundredfold back, and I will do it in this lifetime.”

CONCLUSION

My wife and I were talking recently and we were rejoicing at how much God has blessed us. We began to weep together. I cannot understand all that He is doing for me. But through everything, God has made a way of escape. The Holy Spirit has established a capacity in my human spirit through the Word of God.

God has restored everything to us an hundredfold. Right in front of my eyes, the Lord has blessed me with friends and with a beautiful church. This is the kind of church I always dreamed of pastoring. It is a church that is full three times a week. God has given me great people—one of the great modern miracles, seeing that we are packed out twice every Sunday and again on Wednesday night. Scores of churches get big crowds on Sunday morning, but we are packed out at all three services.

I am deeply grateful to God for what we have. If it were all taken away from us tomor-

row, there is so much precious fruit that remains, that can never be taken away. Again and again He has given us a way of escape, and He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will always be the truth, the life, and the way.