

## Melva's Corner



### You Can Change! Part III

August 20, 2007

**Central Truth: It is impossible to walk vigorously and dynamically in the Spirit without spending time, unhurried time, in fellowship with our Lord in His Word - in prayer and in personal study.**

There are two forces within us that are constantly fighting each other to win control over us and our wishes are never free from their pressures.

All people, no matter how spiritually mature in Christ, experience temptation and have a tendency toward sin. There is a difference, however, between temptation and sin. Temptation is the initial impression to do something contrary to God's will. Such impressions come to all men and women, even as they did to our Lord and are not sin in themselves. Temptation becomes sin when you meditate on the impression and develop a lustful desire which is often followed by the actual act of disobedience.

Yet this conflict is largely resolved when you, by an act of your will, surrender yourself to the control of the Holy Spirit and face these temptations in His power. Galatians 5:16 says:

**"Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."**

How do you do this? For practical daily living you simply recognize whenever you are tempted and ask the Lord to take care of the problem for you. When I am tempted, I often remind the Lord that I belong to Him and need His help. I ask Him to cleanse my mind and thoughts with His blood and control and empower me with the Holy Spirit so I will not yield to any temptation.

Satan is a real foe - let there be no mistake about it - and we need to be prepared for conflict with him - alert to his cunning and subtle ways, as well as his obvious attempts to defeat and destroy us. I Peter 5:8, 9 says:

**"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.**

**Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering."**

A young man shared with me one day, "I am afraid of satan."

I said, "You should be afraid of satan, if you insist on controlling your own life. But if you are willing to let Christ control your life, you have nothing to fear because the Bible says, 'Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.'

"Satan was defeated 2,000 years ago," I explained, "when Christ endured the cross for our sins. Though satan has great power to influence man, he has only that power which God has granted to him. That is why, in the face of great persecution, the disciples could pray to God in His sovereignty and power, 'They won't stop at anything that you in your wise power will let them do'.

This same young man happened to live in a city with one of the largest zoos in the world. I said, "what do you do with lions in your city?"

He replied, "We put them in a cage."

I said, "That's exactly what God has done to satan. Visit the cage in the zoo and watch a lion pacing impatiently back and forth. He cannot hurt you. Even if you go up close to the cage, he still cannot hurt you if you are careful. But get in the cage, and the lion will devour you. You have nothing to fear as long as you stay out of that cage.

Similarly, you have nothing to fear from satan as long as you depend upon Christ and not on your own strength. Remember, satan has no power except that which God in His wisdom allows him to have. And the power you relinquish to him.

**The apostle Paul warns us, "Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand against the strategies and tricks of satan. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies - the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world."**

Although satan and the forces of darkness are dangerous foes, and you must be alert to the way satan works, his tactics and strategies, you need have no fear of him - if your life is surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, if you continue to walk in faith and obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though satan is an expert at deceiving and inducing Christians to disobey God, you need not fear him. Remember, the Scripture says, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." But if you continue to be a worldly Christian, you had better be ready for some real problems in your personal life, your family and your church. There is no more dangerous and vulnerable place a Christian can be than to live outside God's perfect will as a worldly or carnal Christian.

**If you want to walk in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, you need to know your spiritual heritage.** You need to know how to draw upon the inexhaustible resources of God's love, wisdom, power, forgiveness and abundant grace.

It is impossible to walk vigorously and dynamically in the Spirit without spending time, unhurried time, in fellowship with our Lord in His Word - in prayer and in personal study. You must listen attentively to Him for His directions for your daily activities and witness for Christ.

After many years of working with hundreds of Christians, I am convinced that one cannot enjoy the full and abundant life, which is your heritage in Christ, apart from the proper balance between Bible study, prayer and sharing Christ with others out of the overflow of an obedient, Spirit-filled life. God calls you not only to experience this great adventure with Christ for yourself, but also to share this good news with others.

A word of caution is in order at this point. You become spiritual and experience God's power as a result of faith and faith alone. The Bible clearly teaches that "the just shall live by faith," and "without faith it is impossible to please God." The practice of

spiritual discipline and activities is the result of faith. Bible study, prayer, witnessing and obedience are vitally important, but they should be regarded as the result - the overflow - of the life of faith, not as the means of faith, though faith grows as you see the faithfulness of God through an understanding of His Word.

Paul says, "I want to remind you that your strength must come from the Lord's mighty power within you." Jesus Christ, the visible expression of God in whom dwells all of the fullness of the Godhead bodily - to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given - lives in all of us who have become His children through faith in Christ. You do not have any strength in yourself. You must rely totally upon the mighty resurrection strength of our Lord through His Holy Spirit.

As a young woman in college and later in the business world, I was very self-sufficient and proud of what I could accomplish on my own. I believed that people could do just about anything they wanted to do on their own if they were willing to pay the price of hard work and sacrifice and I experienced some degree of success. Then, when I became a Christian, I was introduced to a whole new philosophy of life that was diametrically opposed to my previous philosophy. A life of trusting in God's power replaced by life of trying in my own power.

Now I realize how totally incapable I am of living the Christian life - how weak I am in my own strength and yet how strong I am in Christ. As Paul said, "I can do everything through him (Christ) who gives me strength."

In John 15:4, 5, the Lord stresses the importance of drawing your strength from him:

**"Take care to live in me, and let me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me.**

**Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit. For apart from me, you can't do a thing."**

In your own strength you are helpless, spiritually impotent and fruitless; you are like a branch cut off from the vine if you try to live your own life. But if you abide in Christ, and His Word

abides in you, it is His life-giving power that is expressed through you and enables you to live and witness for Him.

Jesus explained the importance of a fruitful witness in John 15:8 "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

All that God expects of you is your availability, your trust and your obedience. Success in witnessing is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. Paul writes:

"I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him. It is that same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven, far, far above any other king, ruler, dictator, or leader.

Yes, his honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else either in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under his feet and made him the supreme Head of the church - which is his body, filled with himself, the Author and Giver of everything everywhere."

The Lord Jesus commissioned the disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, with the promise that He would always be with them. Jesus didn't say to them, "Go into all the world, and good luck." He said, "Be sure of this - that I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Our living Savior, the One whom you serve, is the omnipotent God! He is the One whom the Bible says:

". . . is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, Christ Himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can't; the spirit world and its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory . . .

For God wanted all of himself to be in his Son . . . In him lie hidden all the mighty untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge . . . Don't let others spoil your faith and joy with their philosophies, their wrong and shallow answers built on men's thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said.

**For in Christ there is all of God in a human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power."**

**If you have Christ, you have everything you need, for, as Paul writes to the church in Colosse, you are complete in Him. Do you need love? Our Lord Jesus Christ is the incarnation of love. Do you need joy? He is joy. Do you need peace? Christ is peace. Do you need patience? Christ is patience. Do you need wisdom? Christ is wisdom.**

**Do you need material possessions so that you can better serve Christ? They are available in Him. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and I would remind you of His promise to supply the needs of all who trust Him. Christianity is Christ, and you are complete in Him. HE will provide all you need.**

**A careful study of the Book of Romans, especially the first eight chapters, can have a revolutionary impact on the life of any sincere seeker after truth. Romans 6 especially reminds us of four truths:**

**1. We are no longer under sin's control**

**Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with Him; that part of you that loves to sin was crushed and fatally wounded, so that your sin-loving body is no longer under sin's control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin; for when you are deadened to sin you are freed from its allure and its power over you.**

**2. We are alive to God**

**So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin, and instead be alive to God.**

**3. We must give ourselves completely to God**

**Do not let any part of your bodies become tools of wickedness to be used for sinning; but give yourselves completely to God - every part of you - for you are back from death, and you want to be tools in the hands of God to be used for his good purposes.**

**4. We must obey God**

Don't you realize that you can choose your own master? You can choose sin (with death) or else obedience (with acquittal). The one to whom you offer yourself - he will take you and be your master, and you will be his servant.

**Walking in the Spirit means living a life of faith.** God created us with a capacity for experiencing a broad range of feelings. Thank God you have them. Valid emotions are simply the byproduct, the result, of faith and obedience. While feelings have their place in our lives, God did not intend for them to be emphasized above our faith in His Word. To seek an emotional experience repudiates the command to walk by faith. Let emotions find their proper place in your relationship with Christ for they are extremely important, especially during the meditation process.

John 14:21 indicates that the most valid way to have an emotional experience is to be obedient to Christ. One of the greatest acts of obedience is to share Christ with others in the power of the Holy Spirit. Since He came to seek and to save the lost and has commissioned you to witness for Him, nothing could please the Savior more. If you want a valid, vital, exciting awareness of Christ in your experience, begin to share Christ with others as a way of life.

To walk in the Spirit, you must live according to God's promise, trusting in the integrity of God Himself. Faith must have an object, and the object of your faith is God, made known through His Word. God has proven Himself to be worthy of your trust. There are thousands of promises for you contained in God's word, and no Christian has ever found any one of them to be untrue. When God says something, you can stake your life on it - you can know that He will not fail you.

**In Romans 8:28 Paul writes, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Do you believe this promise of God's Word? If so, you logically acknowledge the reasonableness of the command of God in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

Have you learned to say, "Thank You, Lord," when your heart is broken because of the loss of a loved one? Do you thank God when your body is wracked with pain? When you receive a

letter terminating a love relationship? When you have financial reverses? When you fail an exam? When you are unemployed? Do you thank God when you are discriminated against personally, religiously, or racially?

You may say that only an idiot would give thanks to God under such circumstances. Oh, not if you know "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." If God has commanded you to give thanks, there is a reason for it. This is one of the most exciting lessons I have ever learned - the lesson of saying "Thank You" even when things 'seem' to go wrong.

Before I made this discovery I used to lose my patience when things went contrary to my wishes. Closed doors would often be forced open, if necessary. If they did not open before me, I tried to break them down, I was often tense inside and impatient with others. Then I discovered how foolish I was. Tragically we injure our brothers and sisters with our impatience, our criticism, our thoughtlessness. When Christians act this way, the entire Body of Christians suffers.

But God has given you a better plan. You can relax. You can say "Thank You" when the whole world 'appears' to be crumbling around you because your God is sovereign and omnipotent. You can trust Him, He loves you. And He promises to fight for you.

He has commanded you to cast all of your cares upon Him because He cares for you. He personally visited this world and took your sins upon Himself, and He is waiting to bless and use you. But He can not bless and use you if you are worried and unbelieving. He can not bless and use you if you complain and criticize and find fault.

Some time ago, a young woman came to me for counseling. Through her tears she shared how her dearest friend had been killed in an accident. They were coming home from an engagement party and an oncoming automobile crossed the center line, forcing her off the road into a telephone pole.

The tragedy was compounded by the guilt she felt because she had been driving the car. Her heart was broken.

"What shall I do?" she pleaded.

Months had passed and she had gone to psychologists, ministers and many others seeking counsel. She said, "If you can't help me, I fear for my sanity."

I asked her if she was a Christian, and after some discussion she said, "Yes."

We read Romans 8:28 and I asked her, "So you believe that all things work for good?"

She said, "Yes, I believe that."

We turned to I Thessalonians 5:18. She read it aloud: "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

I said to her, "Have you thanked God since the loss of your friend?" She was shocked and could hardly believe she heard me correctly. Looking at me in disbelief, she said, "How can I thank God when I have experienced such a tragic loss?"

"You do not trust God, do you?" I asked.

"Yes, I trust God," she insisted.

"Then why not show Him that you do?" I asked, "I know it will be difficult and may seem ridiculous at first, but will you pray and tell God that you trust Him and give thanks in everything even though your heart is breaking?"

As we prayed together, she prayed through her tears, "God I don't understand why my dearest friend was killed, but I know I can trust You; and I do say, 'Thank You.'"

When she said, "Thank You," she was saying to God, "I will trust You." The Bible says that without faith you cannot please God and the best way to demonstrate faith is to say, "Thank You." You may think that you hate God because you have lost a loved one, your inheritance, your money, your business or your health. You may ask, "Why did God do this to me?" First of all, God did not do it to you. And secondly, He says, "Give thanks in all circumstances."

That young lady called me the next morning literally bubbling with joy. She said, "Last night I slept without medication for the first time since the accident. And this morning when I

awakened, my heart was filled with praise and thanksgiving to God. I just cannot understand it, but I know that it has something to do with what you taught me about saying 'Thank You' to God."

I could share hundreds of similar stories about Christians whose lives have been transformed by learning the simple lesson of saying "Thank You" in all things.

The greatest privilege of life is to learn to trust God, learn how to walk by faith. I am still learning and am confident that one day I shall be able to trust God for infinitely greater things than those for which I am now able to trust Him. What a great opportunity is ours to walk with the King of kings every moment of every day of our lives, from the time that we awaken in the morning until we go to bed at night.

For many years it has been my practice to begin my day the night before by reading God's Word, meditating upon the attributes and trustworthiness of our wonderful Lord before I go to sleep at night. Then throughout the night, when my subconscious mind takes over, I continue thinking about Christ. When I awaken in the morning, my first thoughts are of Him.

I usually awaken with a psalm of praise on my lips and with an attitude of thanksgiving: "Oh, Lord, I thank You that I belong to You. I thank You that You live within me, and I thank You that You have forgiven my sins. I thank You that I am Your child.

Now, as I begin this day, and as I continue throughout the day, I invite You to walk around in my body, love with my heart, speak with my lips and think with my mind. I thank You that You promised to do greater things through me than You did when You were here on the earth. By faith, I acknowledge Your greatness, Your power, Your authority in my life, and I invite you to do anything You wish in and through me today." Although the words of my daily prayer may differ, my commitment remains the same.

I begin each day in prayer as a formal act of acknowledging His lordship. I seek to begin the day walking in the fullness of His power. What an adventure awaits those who trust the Lord!

In summary, may I remind you that if you desire to walk moment by moment, day by day, in the fullness and power of God's Spirit, you must:

1. Be sure that you are filled with the Spirit, by faith - on the basis of God's command to be filled and by claiming His promise that, if you ask according to His will, He will hear and answer.
2. Be prepared for spiritual conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil.
3. Know your resources as a child of God. Your strength must come from the Lord. You must abide in Him.
4. Live by faith, drawing daily upon the strength of our Lord, upon his wisdom, upon His power and His love, giving thanks in all circumstances.

Why should a Christian desire to walk in the fullness and control of the Holy Spirit moment by moment? There are several important reasons: to please and honor the Lord, who delights to have fellowship with His children; to enjoy a fuller, richer, more exciting life with our Savior and with others; and to be more fruitful in our witness for our Savior.

Sharing Christ with others as an expression of gratitude and as an act of obedience to the Lord is the natural result of walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Since every Christian is commanded to be a witness for our Lord, not to be involved and committed is to disobey Him and would indicate that you are not walking in the control of the Holy Spirit.

Right now, you can become a member of the great multitude of fruitful disciples whom God is raising up around the world to work, to plan, to pray and to witness for Christ - to help fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord in this generation.

### **Scriptural References:**

**"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)**