CLEANING THE
DECEIVING HEART

Healing the UNCONSCIOUS
Decision-Making that Shapes Our Lives

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UNCONSCIOUSLY ROBBING OUR POWER

Faithful Almighty God promises believers in Jesus Christ authority and power to live like He lived on earth, but too often we believers have lived far below His standard. Rarely is the problem a conscious decision to "not do like Jesus would do in my situation". Instead, the times we fail to let Him lead us have usually been set up by previous unconscious decisions by our hearts, so that we miss being ready for God's leading in our current situations.

The loss of our great authority and power historically has been so universal that we should confirm that faithful Almighty God really offers this to us. In this book we examine His promises in reality, so that we clearly see our huge loss. We also consider how God created the human spiritual heart – our true nature that continues into eternity – so that we can clearly see ways that the Bible shows would rob us of our loving life in Christ. This can help each of us to see how we have robbed ourselves, so that we continue to invite God to clean our highly self-protective hearts from *"all unrighteousness"* (1John 1:9) and thereby move into living with His loving, life-giving power.

Especially the New Testament shows us how to live, so that we co-operate with God to clean our hearts and not pull back in our natural self-protective fear. If we fully co-operate with Him, then the devil and his demons are powerless to stop us from doing all that our loving God wants us to do. But our defeated enemy has schemes to manipulate weaknesses in our hearts, because their malicious kingdom depends on this to survive. I discuss how to handle the enemy's schemes in *Destroying Spiritual Strongholds* (also available at www.lulu.com under James Tarter). This can help us live better but complicates an already deceiving issue. Here we focus on how we are to work with God.

CONTENTS

Cleaning the Deceiving Heart

Healing the UNCONSCIOUS Decision-Making that Shapes Our Lives

1. Abiding in Christ 5

2. The Self-Protecting Heart 13

3. Bad Walls in the Heart 25

4. Cleaning My Heart 39

5. How to Freely Forgive 51

6. Significant Attachments 61

7. Hearts to Ask Like Jesus 69

About the Author 73

DEDICATION

to

MY WONDERFUL WIFE NITA

Whose love for the God of truth

has helped her to embrace truth

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I call the New American Standard Bible the NAS. I add boldface to specific words and phrases in Scriptures to add my emphasis for discussion.

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Chapter 1

ABIDING IN CHRIST

Jesus gives His disciples the power and authority to do impossibly great things if we fulfill our part of His promises. For example, Jesus said: *"**If you abide in Me** and **My words abide in you**, **ask whatever you wish**, and **it shall be done** for you"* (John 15:7). This promise from Almighty God shows a boundless ability for Jesus' disciples to get things done by His almighty strength.

Jesus' disciples are not only His 11 Apostles present at that time, but include all of us who continue to truly follow Him. Jesus identifies this key feature of His disciples in John 8:31-32: *"So Jesus was saying to those Jews who **had believed Him**, 'If you **continue in My word**, then you are **truly disciples of Mine**; and you will know the truth, and the **truth will make you free**.'"* I am addressing this book to such disciples of Jesus, which I shall often call "we", "us", or "our".

It is clear that we have often not found this unlimited ability to get things done in practice. But believers in Jesus know that His promises are true. In this book we shall see what causes these limitations and how to correct them, so that we can walk more freely in our abiding fellowship with Jesus and His words, and can ask and receive whatever we wish according to His boundless promises.

We begin with v. 7 (above) and let it introduce us to the crucial issues for our powerful walk in Jesus. This promise clearly provides total authority from Almighty God to all who meet the requirements. It is our failure to meet them that causes us to live so far below what God

offers us disciples in Christ. Let us see that John 15:7 calls us to exercise our unlimited authority according to God's will and words. And let us see that moving outside of His will removes this promise.

Abide means to stay or remain, the *"continue"* in John 8:31. What does "abide in Christ" imply for asking and receiving whatever I wish? 1John 2:6 answers clearly: *"the one who says he **abides in Him** ought himself to **walk in the same manner as He walked**."* The phrase "abides in Christ" includes a duty to walk as Jesus walked, which is described by John 5:19: *"…Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, **unless** it is **something He sees the Father doing**; for **whatever the Father does**, these things **the Son also does in like manner**."* Jesus did only what His Father did and wanted, and so He asked in that way. Therefore "to abide in Christ" includes asking as Jesus would ask, and asking for something else is not a part of abiding in Christ. In order to ask like Him, we need to listen to and obey His words to us, so that we need to stay in close fellowship with God.

Fellowship with Jesus and Father God is different from our Father-child relationship with Him through Jesus, which is firmly established when we receive Him into our hearts and lives, when we first believe in Him. For example, a two-year-old son's anger does not disturb his relationship with good parents, but can disrupt their fellowship until he stops fighting. Fellowship may change greatly within a secure relationship, even to the extent of drying up for a time.

We also need to let Jesus' words abide in us. Either I allow His words to continue to work throughout my whole heart and life, or else I keep them out of some part. If I let them abide in me, then they will direct me and change my selfish, sinful nature: they will transform my heart. This will shape "whatever I wish" – whatever my heart chooses. If I ask for anything outside of His will, His words will correct me. I let

His words produce their Godly results in me, or else I shall find ways to dismiss His words, to not let them stay in me. This part of the promise in John 15:7 tells me to let Him change my heart into desiring His will.

For example, I can wish and ask Almighty God for $1,000,000 now to meet urgent needs of some people I know. I ask for this solution with my limited knowledge and wisdom, but I continue asking for and listening for His wisdom. In this situation, God may tell me to love them in specific ways without His giving this money through me. He may want to provide for the urgent needs of these people in a way that provides for their eternal development, while my way puts me in the center and may work against the best long-term good for both them and me. If I insist on my initial solution, then I am not letting His words stay in me to change my heart and mind.

Jesus needed to change an initial wish: He asked 3 times for an alternative to suffering the cross. When His Father gave none, Jesus chose His greatest wish – doing His Father's will. Paul did likewise.

In Chapter 7 we examine John 14:12-15 about our great authority and power in Christ. There we find that this Scripture leads to the same conclusion as John 15:7: we children and disciples need to learn how to exercise His authority and power according to His will and by His Spirit as we stay in fellowship with Christ. (I call this fellowship in all of v. 7 "abiding in Christ"). We all have so much to learn about God's better ways for us, which provides for people into an eternity we do not see. If we learn, then Almighty God's promises make us almighty for doing all that He calls us to do.

God makes abiding in Christ available to us in practice despite sins and sinfulness, which often interfere with our fellowship with Him. On p. 6 we saw 1John 2:6 about abiding in Christ. 1John 1:3 proclaims that our fellowship is with Jesus and Father God, and 1:7-2:2 shows God's perfect provision for abiding in Him. Consider 1John 1:3-2:2:

*3What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, **so that you may have this fellowship with us**; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ**. 4These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. 5This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is Light**, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6If we say that we have **fellowship with Him** and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7but **if** we **walk in the Light** as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the **blood of Jesus** His Son **cleanses us from all sin**. 8If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9**If** we **confess our sins**, He is **faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**. 10If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and **His word is not in us**. 1My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may **not sin**. And **if** anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 2and He Himself is the **propitiation for our sins**; and not for ours only, but also **for those of the whole world**.* (1John 1:3-2:2)

Rom. 3:23 and all of Old Testament history demonstrate that every person sins and is unable to escape his sinful nature by his own efforts. My own history agrees. Therefore in love God made a just way to save mankind: Jesus' blood sacrifice on the cross. As 1John 2:2 shows, our Creator paid the just penalty for every sin that His creation would ever commit. But only believers in Jesus receive His great sacrifice for our eternal salvation, and few believers make full use of His sacrifice for our close, loving fellowship with God while on earth.

A propitiation fulfills the justice needed to remove God's just penalty from a sinner. Jesus is the innocent Propitiation who suffered the full penalty for all sins, which lets God love everyone freely and justly.

1John 1:9 is vitally important for us. Consider that *"to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness**"* includes purifying our hearts. V. 9 tells us to *"**confess** our sins"* in order to receive His free gift. The Greek word for "confess" means "speak the same thing". I speak the same as God would speak about my part in the real issue. To speak this truth, I

must come to realize the real issue as He sees it: to confess means that I repent – I "change my mind" about it to now agree with God. Charles Simpson (a gifted Bible teacher) said: "God is great at taking us from where we are to where we should be, but He refuses to take us from where we pretend to be to where we should be."

The failure to truly confess sins has caused many people to lose close fellowship with God since the beginning of mankind. The ancestors of us all, Adam and Eve, enjoyed a close fellowship with God until the crafty serpent deceived them into disobeying God's commandment to them (Gen. 3:1-6). Gen. 3:7-13 shows their fatal responses to Him after they sinned:

> *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. Then the* ***Lord God called to the man****, and said to him, "****Where are you?****" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked?* ***Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?****" The man said, "The* ***woman*** *whom* ***You gave*** *to be with me,* ***she gave me*** *from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "****What is this you have done?****" And the woman said, "The* ***serpent deceived me****, and I ate."* (Gen. 3:7-13)

God knew all the answers of the questions He asked, but He was giving Adam and Eve opportunities to speak their own parts in the real issue. They kept speaking truths to God but always avoided the truth that needed to be confessed. When Adam was hiding from God in shame, God merely asked, *"Where are you?"* Adam's sin was causing his actions and clearly was heavy on his heart, but he was not willing to confess. He wanted to hide that truth because he refused to trust God's love or mercy for his fear, guilt, and shame. Then God explicitly asked Adam about his sin, and he again spoke truths to God in order to avoid the key truth. Adam blamed both the woman and God for the

sin: he did not confess his guilt in his “I ate”. He missed his opportunity to confess, and lost his close fellowship with God on earth.

Then Eve missed her opportunity to confess. She accurately blamed the serpent, but avoided her guilt. By refusing to confess, she also lost her close fellowship with God. Then God kept them from eating from the tree of life and thereby living forever (Gen. 3:22-24). This tree of life is the cross of Christ from the foundation of the world.

How do we avoid their error? Consider this illustration. I am tired and frustrated because my plans to do a job did not work. A frustrated co-worker makes a heated comment to me, and I fire back with anger. I really want to shut him up now and keep him from treating me like that in the future, and at this moment deeply hurting him is OK.

What do I confess to God? “I wanted to hurt him without regard for what You wanted.” My heart agrees with God to humble myself before my co-worker and speak the truth that can help him heal: “My comment came from my mess, not an honest assessment of you.” I receive God’s costly sacrifice for my sin, so that by faith I am freely forgiven without earning this myself – I am justly restored to the righteousness of Jesus after my selfish sin. If I try to reduce the guilt of my sin (blaming, excuses, etc.), then I lose my confession and the restoration of my close fellowship with God.

We are like our ancestors Adam and Eve: it is natural for any of us to fail to honestly confess our full guilt and receive His mercy in Jesus by faith for all of our guilt. Since we are so likely to fail, why does our loving God require us to confess honestly? In a brief answer, because <u>lasting health</u> is built on <u>truth</u> instead of efforts to <u>avoid</u> or <u>deny</u> it (or, build a huge building on a solid foundation, not one that will collapse).

With a right heart-attitude, my good confession may be done in a moment. If my heart is <u>not ready</u> to <u>fully agree with God</u> about the real

issue, then I need to work with God on the problems in my heart. God is not looking for a legalistic or long confession, but avoiding the real issue can prevent a real "confession" and growth in the truth.

What do I do about my previous poor confessions? As when I first came to Jesus, I confess to God that my sins are too many to know or list, and I ask Him to straighten me out. Our Father will gladly do this gently over time: *"I* [Paul] *press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God* ***in Christ Jesus****. Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect,* ***have this attitude****; and* ***if in anything you have a different attitude****,* ***God will reveal that also to you****"* (Phil. 3:14-15).

God fully cleanses our hearts while we stay in fellowship with Him – not while we are in the deadly place of staying apart from Him. To keep us close He freely gives us the righteousness of Jesus (Phil. 3:9):

> *9and may be found* ***in Him*** [Christ Jesus our Lord – v. 8]*,* ***not having a righteousness of my own*** *derived from the Law, but that which is through* ***faith in Christ****,* ***the righteousness which comes from God*** *on the basis of faith, 10****that I may know Him****….* (Phil. 3:9-10)

Therefore God does not require the impossible from us. 1John and Phil. 3 show that God calls us and perfectly equips us to live in close fellowship with Him by Jesus' great sacrifice of His blood, even if sins disrupt our fellowship from time to time. At a great cost to Himself, He made it so simple for a believer to get back with God.

What do I conclude? Sinfulness or sins do not necessarily keep us from effectively abiding in Christ. A simple confession quickly restores us by His sacrifice. Therefore God provides a practical way in Jesus for us to stay in a close loving fellowship with Him.

But how many of us stay in this fellowship? Where is its fruit for 2000 years? God calls us to receive our life in Jesus and to take His life to others. This should be easy: God gives us the authority and

power to live and produce life in practice, and He is love, seeking what is good for all people with total unselfishness. But most people walk in confusion, darkness, and death, because they cannot receive or believe or perhaps even see the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why can't they see it? Their sin and sin nature distort what they see. Each person in darkness needs to receive the truth that he can see, and God has effective ways to reach each person as all of His people obey Him. But we disciples have not provided God's pure light like we should have, often being confused ourselves and living far below the life that Jesus provides. We are to walk as He did (p. 6): Christ provides *"an example for you* [us] *to follow in His steps"* (1Peter 2:20). Far too often we have not walked anything like Jesus walked.

There is a major source of our confusion beyond our sin. Satan and his demons provide tricks and schemes to tempt us out and keep us out of abiding in Christ: their kingdom's survival completely depends on this. Because of <u>Jesus' great sacrifice</u> on the cross for us, they have <u>no power</u> to stop us <u>unless</u> we <u>choose</u> to <u>not</u> <u>stay in Christ</u> <u>or</u> <u>let His words change our hearts</u> as needed. Our enemy must get us to <u>agree</u> with them against God in order to keep us out of abiding in Christ. To do this effectively and long-term, they build a stronghold – probably the devil's best long-term weapon for stopping Jesus' disciples and all who might become disciples.

I discuss these schemes in *Destroying Spiritual Strongholds*, available at www.lulu.com under "James Tarter". Chapters 1-4 in it are like your book, but in that book we discuss how to remove demonic complications that resist our staying fully with Jesus. But if we fully work with Him as the Bible shows (Chapters 1-4), we will wreck any scheme our enemy devises to rob us of our life and power in Christ.

Chapter 2

THE SELF-PROTECTING HEART

In order to make better unconscious decisions, we need a Biblical meaning of the heart. The one Greek and two Hebrew words for "heart" are used 998 times in the Bible, and very rarely do they refer to a physical heart. From the use of "heart" in all of the Bible, Harris's *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* and Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* conclude that the heart is the whole inner person – the spirit, soul, mind (conscious awareness), will, emotions, personality – everything beyond the visible body that makes a person who he/she is, one's true nature that goes into eternity.

This Biblical meaning of the "heart" reveals two vital truths. God's promise to *"cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness"* (1John 1:9) includes purifying our hearts. Second, a person's heart keeps many beliefs, and some might contradict each other. The heart is what believes: *"For **with the heart** a person **believes**, **resulting in righteousness**"* (Rom. 10:10a). A belief (= faith) in Jesus will result in righteousness. But a part of one's heart might fully agree with God while another part agrees with a demon that contradicts God. For example, a part of his heart can firmly believe that God loves him while another part believes he is unloved from rejection by people. Or a part of his heart can firmly believe that God is faithful while another part does not trust God or anyone or anything (often from an unhealed wound).

How do such parts combine to form a person's nature? The will is the specific component of the heart that chooses or decides what he

actually says or does. The will receives input from every other part of the heart in making his conscious (mental) and unconscious choices. We respond to any command or request with our wills. Father God has a strong will and creates each of us in His image: this includes a will.

A wise, loving parent does not crush or continually dominate his child's will, but cultivates it so that he makes good choices on his own as he continues to grow. As he grows, his will often creates extra problems as a part of learning to make good choices – good decisions – later in his life. This wisdom with our wills is like Father God's, even though it also gives Satan ways to keep us from using now our great strength in Christ. Our almighty loving Father has great eternal plans for each of us, and Satan cannot stop them unless he deceives our hearts to agree with him against God. If he does, then our wills are not with God, which lets us be easily tempted out of fully hearing or obeying Him. Our bad choices might take us out of God's best plans for us or leave our hearts unprepared to work well with Him later.

What can keep us from staying in Christ with full power? Anything that keeps us from following Him, walking as He walked. But if we sin, we can confess it to God and be restored to our walk and fellowship (Chapter 1). However, some sins find a place in our hearts, and other sins keep us away from abiding in Christ with His power. For example, we can stay condemned by a sin without a real confession, stay offended and choose to not forgive others, not know God's great provision for us in Jesus, be confused about God's true nature or other essential truths, open ourselves to lusts that overpower us, etc.

God makes a heart – a person's real nature that goes into eternity – naturally stable and self-protective against change. The heart resists change, but it does change during our lives on earth. God gives us a new heart when we receive Jesus, and He continues to change it in

our lives as we co-operate with Him (Chapter 4). If you received Jesus years ago, then you also know that your heart has changed after that: hasn't it changed as you have grown toward maturity? Experiences or conclusions from them can enter the heart and produce attitudes or actions until the heart changes to disagree with what it has produced (this is the repentance in confession).

The Highly Deceptive Heart

The heart deceives oneself: *"The **heart** is **more deceitful** than all else and is **desperately sick**; **who can understand it**? I, the Lord, **search** the **heart**, I **test** the **mind**, even to give to each man according to **his ways**, according to the results of **his deeds**"* (Jer. 17:9-10).

Notice that the heart and mind produce deeds and ways of living. Luke 6:45 shows that one's heart is the source of his good and evil: *"The good man **out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good**; and the evil man **out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil**; for his **mouth speaks from that which fills the heart**."* Mark 7:20-22 expands on the evil out of evil men, showing the heart as the source of a person's evil desires, thoughts, words, and actions.

As the source of all we do, the heart changes more slowly than the specific thoughts or actions it produces. For example, a double-minded heart does not stop trying to take the person in two conflicting directions, but also does not change as it produces its erratic actions.

These Scriptures also show that what comes out of a heart can reveal what is in it. This is most helpful to us because of its great ability to deceive its owner. But what causes this deceitfulness? Because a heart is a person's true nature, God created it with ways to keep it stable against anything that might change it. The heart regards any potential changer as a danger and naturally protects itself from it by strong fear – a great deceiver. Let us first consider this protection.

The Heart's Defense Mechanisms to Protect Itself

Consider how God designed defense mechanisms to protect us naturally from getting destroyed by potentially dangerous situations. A "defense mechanism" is a God-given temporary way to handle a major danger, problem, or threat until a better long-term solution is received. Examples in nature include the sympathetic-parasympathetic systems and medical shock: both short-term solutions can help us to handle a crisis for a short time, but will become destructive by continuing too long. Medical facts illustrate this vital spiritual design.

Mankind is created to live on the parasympathetic system in usual situations. It helps the heart beat at a normal rate and promotes other normal functioning of the body without any conscious input from the brain. The sympathetic system is stimulated in times of stress, fear, perceived danger, or certain other emotions: it is often called the "fight or flight" part of the autonomic nervous system. The sympathetic system provides increased alertness and strength, reduced sensitivity to pain, and other attributes for helping emergency situations. But this also damages body tissue if activated on a long-term basis: notice the many stress-related diseases that come with "staying on adrenalin". This God-given defense mechanism is good only for limited times.

Medical shock is a state of physiological collapse, a partial shut-down of bodily functions to cope with a devastating trauma to the body. For example, the weak pulse in shock is a great natural response to a life-threatening loss of blood. But the shock reaction itself can become life-threatening if it continues too long.

Likewise, everyone has had great terror, humiliation, etc. You learn how to put it out of your mind (consciousness), or else you could not think well about other issues. You handled a crisis with a defense mechanism: your heart kept the crisis out of your mind. This can help to recover, but can turn into the problem by continuing long afterward.

For example, a victim may unconsciously shut out reminders of a severe abuse – sometimes the whole memory is blocked out of his/her mind. If the heart has decided to avoid this issue, then the conscious mind might never consider it. This may help to get past the trauma and partially recover, but is no substitute for a spiritual and emotional healing that Jesus provides for all who will let Him in to heal.

The wounded heart is still affecting choices. Inappropriate fears, intimidation, condemning shame, unbelief, etc., may ruin the victim's life before a healing, but he or she may want to hide the abuse from oneself and everyone else. The victim wants Jesus and His healing, but he/she also wants to keep everything away from this area. God listens sensitively to His child's heart-cries to stay out of a wound.

Many people avoid thinking about a crushing wound (it might only seem crushing). Many choices are made on a pre-conscious level: a person chooses to avoid something that he relates to the situation before he ever thinks about his choice. If the mind becomes aware of this choice by the heart, then he remembers the wound, not avoids it. The heart does not let us see much of its inner workings. Have you ever been surprised by some anger or other strong feeling that came out of your heart, or by some words that came out of your mouth?

The heart's defense mechanisms often cause a major unconscious input to the will – often deceiving him. If anyone is crushed severely or repeatedly, he normally finds that they help him to avoid thinking about this abuse, condemnation, humiliation, terror, or other assault on him, but these things do not leave his heart and do affect his choices.

The self-protective defense mechanisms for the heart's stability make the heart highly fearful of anything that could damage it. Then anything that could greatly change it is a major possible danger. The work of fearfulness and fear in protecting our hearts is so deceptive and poorly understood that we need to examine this foundationally.

Strong Fear: A God-Given Emotion That Can Become Destructive

We saw (p. 6, John 5:19) that Jesus did only what He saw His Father doing, and that all believers are to walk as He walked (1John 2:6). This means that each of us is to let God lead us at all times.

Feeling fear can interfere with our letting Him lead us. But feeling fear is also a good gift from God to help us handle major possible dangers as a priority. A strong fear takes any perceived danger to be a top priority, so that we can survive by good actions.

The heart initially responds with fear to any perceived danger, no matter if it is real or not. I divide perceived dangers into three kinds: definite, possible, and unreal dangers. Each kind has its own type of good response unless God leads into a different response. I illustrate by a simple example. I am near the door to my house when I see (1) a hungry tiger across my large yard, or (2) a poisonous snake known for its aggressive nature across my large yard, or (3) moving shadows of a tree that create an alarming illusion. A good response is normally (unless God leads differently) to get away from the first danger, to handle the second danger well and keep it monitored until then, and to realize that the third is truly no danger, so that I can ignore it or handle it at the right time with a lower priority.

Unless God tells me to not respond to a disturbing feeling like fear in an upcoming situation, I should let the feeling alert me and then let God lead me into doing well. Depending on the situation, I can do this in a moment or much longer. To walk like Jesus when I feel fear, I turn to God immediately and let Him lead me through the situation and keep me moving ahead in my eternal life. But sin or a demon can easily take a strong fear into responding so urgently that I do not turn to invisible God for a solution which might not protect me like I want.

Let us consider how to handle the feeling of anger, because Eph.

4:26 shows three key wrong ways to handle anger, which also fully applies to handling fear. Anger is like fear: an emotion given by God for our good, but also with an ability to be so strong that it can fight God's work for our good. God's purpose for anger is that it is a strong motivator for action. My good action is to turn to God and let Him lead me to do well as I release the situation and my anger into His hands.

Eph. 4:26-27 says: *"**Be angry**, and yet **do not sin**; and **do not let the sun go down on your anger**, [27]and do not give the devil an opportunity."* I do not fight the emotion of anger and do not let it cause a rash sin. I also do not refuse to forgive an offense after I suppress all rash sins. All are major ways that anger can work against my letting God lead me, and each gives the devil an opportunity against me.

As with anger, I do not fight my feeling of fear; I must not let fear override my priority of letting God lead me; and I must not "stuff" my feeling of fear for too long. If I do, then it will come out in other ways as <u>fear</u> <u>turns into</u> <u>fearfulness</u>: being too timid or driven to take control by unreal dangers. Feeling fear is <u>not</u> <u>sinful fear</u> <u>unless</u> I let the feeling cause me to sin, such as: I panic, so that I do not let God lead me in the situation; I get fearful (too timid or a driven control), so that I do not let God lead me in other situations; or I worry or get anxious, so that I reject God's peace by not trusting Him with the future outcome.

The distinction between feeling fear and sinful fear is good sense. The meanings of "courageous" and "brave" confirm this. A person is not courageous unless he first perceives a danger and then chooses to do what is good regardless of the personal consequences. If I do a right thing but do not realize the danger (realizing it would have caused an initial feeling of fear), then my action was good, but not courageous!

This distinction is important in practice because it helps us to focus on the real issue. Instead of trying to keep from feeling fear – a

good emotion for potential dangers – I check that I am letting God and not my feelings lead me. Trying to avoid my emotions can easily help me to deny, suppress, or stuff a vital truth. And if a person's unhealthy ways to handle fear do not work, the response is often a panic that paralyzes or gets aggressive as he gets very angry at the one who violates his way to protect himself (this is discussed further on p. 34).

The Fearful, Self-Protective Heart

Let us apply the discussion in this chapter to the heart. It often protects itself from a perceived danger without the mind ever becoming aware of the decision. The heart decides to avoid perceived dangers without ever thinking about the reality and nature of the perceived issues. For example, the victim of abuse (p. 16-17) might feel fearful, dirty, unworthy, or guilty, or be easily ashamed or intimidated, or have other attitudes about himself. He might be truly unable to trust God or good people, and tends to pull back from them. Indeed, distorted attitudes about himself go into his life-decisions with no thought about this source of his attitudes. We often remember a faulty conclusion from an awful experience while not thinking about the experience.

As in the example, unhealed heart-wounds can cause it to avoid God or some people or situations (fear them) when there is no danger. The heart often avoids these unreal but perceived dangers before we think about them, and normally regards anything that could change the heart as a big danger. The heart also tries to avoid changing by denial, blaming, excuses, etc., instead of confession (Chapter 1).

As we saw (Jer. 17:9, Luke 6:45, Mark 7:20-22, p. 15), my own sick heart will easily deceive me, but the desires, thoughts, words, and actions coming out of it can reveal what is in it. We learn what is in it by what comes out of it. My wounded heart can be obvious to those

around me who understand. Highly protective defense mechanisms of the heart cause it to fearfully resist God's work with the heart unless it learns that it can trust His love: that He is not like those who harm me.

Therefore God handles people not with power that created the sun as a speck in His creation, but with the gentleness that is a fruit of His Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). He also wants His people to minister to people with this gentleness, as Gal. 6:1 says:

> *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are **spiritual**, **restore** such a one in a **spirit of gentleness**, each one **looking to yourself**, so that you too will not be tempted.*

Continued gentleness – which can be quite firm when God wants that in His love – gives a person opportunities to learn that he can fully trust God to handle his heart well. Then he can take the awesome step stated in Psalm 56:3: *"When I am **afraid**, I will **put my trust in You**"* [God]. The heart's fear/fearfulness is the key problem to overcome. Our living God is faithful, so that a person can receive the love in 1John 4:19: *"We love, **because He first** loved us."* A person normally needs to receive His love repeatedly before it is enough to cast out the heart's fear: *"**Perfect love casts out fear**"* (1John 4:18a). Then he will entrust his whole heart to Jesus.

Healing a Wounded Heart

Like a young child trying to keep a doctor from touching a really sore wound, I have protected my heart by not thinking about key situations that deeply wounded my heart with great terror, shame, anger, grief, etc. I have walled off everyone from a wound in my heart. Who has not? The awful emotions in an old, unhealed wound are often avoided or denied at a conscious level while being mighty in the heart.

To heal my heart and free me, our gentle Father might want me to remember and/or revisit (not re-live) key situations. The defense

mechanism of denying or suppressing the truth and reality is no longer needed to survive and has become destructive, causing both a cover for spiritual darkness against me and distorted perspectives for my decision-making. God wants to bring the healing truth and reality that lets me live free of the bad input from the wound.

For severe unhealed wounds, it can greatly help to pray with some believers who do let Jesus lead them in facilitating the revisit for His healing while fully avoiding adding anything to a crucial memory. This kind of prayer totally depends on God to be there to do His work.

Consider how this healing works in two imaginary cases. Suppose my angry father called me “stupid” as a young child, and I believed this to be his honest opinion of me. While not thinking about the wound, I interpreted other times when he said nothing or even contradicted this word as politely hiding his real opinion. Notice how this word stayed in my heart and was coming out in situations where this word did not belong – making them a powerful lie.

In the second case, imagine that my wound came from relentless criticism. I had many wounds, but in a few key ones I concluded that God will not help me. This stays in my heart and causes me to first doubt and then forget each time that God faithfully but invisibly helps.

I must stop avoiding the wounding situations that led to a lasting, lying conclusion (= belief). I revisit (not re-live) the situation(s) with Jesus to find God and the truth. My wife and I normally find that God shows up (usually as Jesus) and breaks the power of the original lying (faulty) conclusion that was drawn from the situation.

{Even great parents can cause wounds that later need healing. A child is especially likely to draw a faulty conclusion to a frightening or shameful situation, and then to remember the conclusion while not thinking about the faulty base that led to the conclusion. Such

conclusions are extremely common and can stay strong and active.}

The Intense But Subtle Resistance to Healing/Cleaning Our Hearts

Every heart has some sensitive areas that it wants to leave alone or protect. Also, demons have often built strongholds to resist our choosing to clean our hearts: demons have created areas in our hearts to stay with us and provide their input. Knowing that they cannot stop an abider, they had fortified walls to protect these areas by stimulating issues like we see in Chapter 3: unforgiveness, judging, wrong beliefs, iniquities and sins of pride and fear, deep wounds in the heart that are also kept from healing, etc. The will gets input from every part of the heart when it makes both conscious (the mind realizes the choice) and unconscious choices.

As in a physical heart, healing a heart of active wounds can set up removing other things that should not be working in the heart. They might include idols, demons, and walls against God's word. Let us first see what the Bible shows can or will create barriers or walls to keep God and His word from going where He should go in our hearts. It might surprise many believers to realize that Jesus' parable in Luke 8:5-15 specifically concerns the freedom of God's word to go into all of the heart to produce good fruit.

Chapter 3

BAD WALLS IN THE HEART

Jesus' parable in Luke 8:5-15 features God's word in the heart:

"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell ***beside the road****, and it was trampled under foot and the* ***birds of the air ate it up****. Other seed fell on* ***rocky soil****, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had* ***no moisture****. Other seed fell among the* ***thorns****; and the thorns grew up with it and* ***choked*** *it out. Other seed fell into the* ***good soil****, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* (Luke 8:5-8)

"Now the parable is this: the ***seed*** *is* ***the word of God****. Those beside the road are those who have heard; then* ***the devil*** *comes and* ***takes away the word from their heart****, so that they* ***will not believe*** *and* ***be saved****. Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have* ***no firm root****; they* ***believe for a while****, and* ***in time of temptation fall away****. The seed which fell among thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are* ***choked*** *with* ***worries*** *and* ***riches*** *and* ***pleasures of this life****, and bring* ***no fruit to maturity****. But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an* ***honest and good heart****, and* ***hold it fast****, and* ***bear fruit with perseverance****."* (Luke 8:11-15)

Demons from the devil take the word of God from a person's heart before he believes it and is saved. It can be taken before he becomes a "saved" believer in Christ. Or it can be taken before he believes God's word which would save him from the devil's schemes designed to keep him out of "abiding in Christ".

The rocky soil is a heart hardened against letting God's words go into all of the heart to produce their good changes. This part of the

parable helps us to see how the heart naturally protects a very painful wound to it: form walls and a compartment around it to keep all away from it – including oneself and God (p. 17-21). The "no moisture" is a heart's resistance to the Holy Spirit, who will open up all of the heart to the word if the person permits. If he does not permit deep watering, he falls away in time of temptation, often being unaware of how he fell.

If the word does start growing fruit in the person's heart, demons try to choke the production of ripe fruit with any distraction to living in Christ that a person will accept. In this parable Jesus specified worries, riches, and pleasures of this life. Because they all choke God's work to produce good fruit, they all involve idols: the heart treasures and therefore chooses something incompatible with God or His work in the person's life. Demons are limited to what a person's will allows, but the real issue – our life in Christ – stays mostly at the unconscious level. Walls in the heart allow roots for such distractions or sins.

Jesus brings out three features of the good soil that produces much good fruit: an honest and good heart that holds the word fast and produces fruit with perseverance. A believer grabs Jesus' words and lets them abide in him until they produce their good fruit.

In this Chapter 3 we identify key walls in the heart with a view of removing them. Chapter 4 concerns removing heart-beliefs and idols.

Key Walls Against God's Word Going into All of the Heart

In order to abide in Christ better (and to break the power of long-standing sins, destroy personal strongholds, or receive a lasting deliverance), we need to remove or destroy walls or barriers to God's light, work, and presence in all of the heart: they allow roots for sins and give them power. Inviting Jesus into the front door of "my house" (Rev. 3:20) is very different from inviting Him to come into every room

of my house – especially into rooms or closets that would embarrass me because they are a mess.

In order to remove the walls that keep God or His word out of a part of anyone's heart, he will need to truly agree with God about these walls, so that he wants them out of his heart. Let us briefly discuss a few key walls or barriers now, so that we will remove them.

Unconfessed Sins As a Legal Issue Separating Us from God

Isa. 59:1-2 and other Scriptures show that our sin and iniquity can separate us from God, and 1John 1:9 shows God's solution for us:

> *Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But **your iniquities** have made a **separation between you and your God**, and **your sins** have **hidden His face from you** so that He does not hear.* (Isa. 59:1-2)

> *If we **confess our sins**, He is faithful and righteous to **forgive us** our sins and to **cleanse us** from **all unrighteousness**.* (1John 1:9)

We discussed God's solution of "confessing our sins" on p. 8-11. Confessing a sin (really agreeing with God) includes repenting and all else He says to correct a wrong. Confession is also the key to removing a heart-wall even if it is not built around a sin (Chapter 4).

Unforgiveness As a Legal Source of Darkness

Demons often use our violation of God's just laws to provide a just and legal covering for their activity against us. I briefly explain the examples of unforgiveness, wrong judging, and generational curses.

We have hurt many by our sins and deserve to be punished for them – not be greatly blessed in Christ. But by Jesus' costly sacrifice, God has freely forgiven us of all our sins. And as we have received freely, God justly calls us to give freely. Jesus' parable in Matt. 18:23-35 shows us a man who refused to forgive. This parable is discussed on p. 54-55, but here I simply quote the conclusion in v. 34-35:

*[34]And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over **to the torturers until** he should repay all that was owed him. [35]**So shall My heavenly Father** also **do to you, if** each of you does **not forgive** his brother **from his heart**.*

Who are these torturers? One kind of torturer can be demons: they delight in torturing people when they get an opportunity. If we do not forgive others, demons use justice to stop our authority over them.

In Chapter 5 we see how to freely forgive and stop sinful judging.

Wrong or Legalistic Judging, a Legal Source of Darkness

Our just God made a very painful sacrifice so that He can relate to us with a loving, just grace instead of a legalistic condemnation. He gives His children great mercy as a free gift when we deserve to be condemned. But if I judge a person in order to condemn him (put him down), then I can work against his seeing or experiencing God's mercy on earth by His great sacrifice. Our loving Father has a just universal law about judging that gets His disobedient children in trouble with its penalty: we are judged in the way we judge others and by the standard that we use to judge. He teaches and explains this law in Matt. 7:1-2:

*Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For **in the way you judge**, you will **be judged**; and by **your standard of measure**, it will **be measured to you**.*

If I condemn anyone when God does not, then God justly requires me to live by my condemning or faultfinding standard. Stricter than God's loving grace, my standard for another creates an unnecessary standard for myself – as the unforgiving servant did in Matt. 18.

Generational Iniquity, a Legal Source of Darkness

Consider for yourself: both biological heredity and the way that parents treat their children deeply affect them. Beyond that, Ex. 34:6-7 and other Scriptures show that iniquity (and blessing) is passed from

one generation to later generations. An iniquity is a twist in a person's nature that helps him to do a sin. In this way demons can get a legal start on building walls for a stronghold for a sin from before birth.

{God is perfectly just: He knows each person's unique starting/end points, capacities, opportunities, advantages, and responses to His grace in Jesus; and He requires justice so totally that He suffered great pain to be fully just to all when He generously adds love in Christ.}

A stronghold that starts in infancy or before is usually very hard for you to detect in yourself, because it seems to be a part of "who you are" – it has always been with you. Over years a stronghold develops many defenses – ways to keep unwanted light out of a part of the heart and choking out the fruit from any light that does get in.

For example, Al realized that he was judging others with a critical spirit and was unable to stop it. He had often been criticized as a child – especially by his father, who was passing on what he had received as a child. Al did not realize that he had not forgiven his father, and demons used this to stay with him. Al has a God-given gift of spiritual discernment and sensitivity, but demons occasionally twisted His gift into judging people (as they try to twist all of God's gifts). When he saw a flaw – so easy for him – a spirit of anger would try to turn the opportunity to ask God for His work into condemning the person. Al was freed by forgiving his father and breaking the generational iniquity.

Other examples of iniquities that easily pass through generations include idolatry, pride, abuse, fears, rejection, fear of rejection, rebellion, obsessive need for control, and many more. We discuss the breaking of generational iniquities and curses in Chapter 6.

Crucial Wrong Beliefs about God Disrupting Fellowship with Him

Everyone begins with some wrong beliefs about God, which are

corrected as a believer grows in Christ. The accurate picture of God is given in the Bible. But those who knew the Old Testament well had different beliefs about His nature. Therefore God the Word came to earth as the man Jesus to show us exactly what our unseen God is truly like (John 1:1-18). But even with His perfect picture, our hearts often have distorted images of God's true nature, which allow demons to lie and deceive people out of God's great provisions for us in Jesus. Some wrong beliefs about God thoroughly disrupt our ability to turn to Him or to fellowship with Him. Here are examples and a brief answer.

The hearts of many believers view God as a Faultfinder, a Condemner, a Legalist, or an Authority who ignores sin. But consider John 1:17: *"For the **law** was given through Moses; **grace and truth** were realized through **Jesus Christ**."* God's grace and truth in Christ are contrasted to the Law: Jesus' life on earth manifested God's grace and shatters the image that He is a Legalist, Faultfinder, or Judge who enjoys condemning people. And Jesus' teaching and life upheld truth and the Law as a standard of righteousness. This requires us to find God's solution if we sin by falling short of this standard – in either our actions or our heart-attitudes. (Of course, His solution is in Christ).

Demons work hard to produce a severely distorted image of God, because that disrupts fellowship so well. The devil has successfully tried to give mankind a badly twisted view of God since our beginning with Adam and Eve. Notice what the temptation in Gen. 3:4-5 implied about God's nature: *"The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.'"*

Satan's lie implied that God is a liar who tried to keep them from good because He was afraid they would become like Him – rivals to the Creator of everything! And hearts of believers today accept wild

slanders of God that give demons opportunities to move believers out of mighty fellowship with Him and to create walls between them. These walls interfere with a believer's hearing all that God says to him.

One very common distortion of God's true nature is for a person to assume that it is his earthly father's nature. Every father falls short of being a perfect model of God's nature, and many fathers are passive, absent, or quite demonic. But a person's heart naturally mixes the two together, and this often creates major walls in his relating to God the Father until the difference is brought to the light throughout his heart.

We discuss how to change wrong heart-beliefs in Chapter 4.

Walls from Pride, Inferiority, or Other Wrong Beliefs about Oneself

Wrong beliefs about oneself also give demons opportunities to work against us powerful believers to create walls between us and God. For example, pride helps me to misinterpret God's grace toward me. And condemnation or shame lets a lying demon steal what God gives me.

*"**God** is **opposed to the proud**, but **gives grace** to the **humble**"* (James 4:6b, 1Peter 5:5b). What a powerful statement! What does it mean? Many other Scriptures show that God was for me – not against me – even when I was much prouder than I am now. I see how this Scripture has worked out in my life: in order for my Father to provide eternal good for me, He must oppose my doing some good and great things until I confess my lying pride. When I get rid of it, He is free to give me the grace to do these things without ruining me, His child.

This pride exalts oneself over others and rejects the *"sound judgment"* of Rom. 12:3. In practice, this pride often extends to my family, my team, my location, my nation, my race, etc. 1Cor. 4:7 asks a question to bring us back to the truth: *"What do you have that you did not receive?"* Before I did anything that could be used to justify my

gifts, God – our Creator – gave me the capacity to develop in the way that I have developed, and this includes giving me all that was needed (perseverance, etc.) to develop the desirable features. Pride is a lie.

I was too proud to see my pride as a sin. It is also easy to justify my pride. It served good purposes at crucial times in my past, helping me to avoid some shameful sins. Likewise, pride surely helped all of the disciples to make many good decisions to continue with Jesus, but it was also a source of their many disputes about who was the greatest disciple. A time came when their pride had to be replaced by realizing the truth that God's loving grace kept them with Jesus. God broke their pride as they were scattered during Jesus' crucifixion, so that He could bless them later by working more freely in them and through them.

Many other wrong beliefs come from deeply rooted feelings of being rejected, a self-centered world, and arrogance. Arrogance is an exaggerated sense of self-importance that results in rebellion or a disregard of God and His word – a highly toxic spiritual poison. It often arises out of a person's strong feelings of rejection or inferiority along with realizing that he has some special skills and abilities. Feelings of rejection or inferiority often come from repeatedly feeling condemned or ignored by parents or other key people, or from fearfulness (p. 34).

A healed heart – not put-downs – stops arrogance, which handles unwanted opinions but lacks the sound judgment of Rom. 12:3.

A Wall from Shame and Condemnation

Let us see the key difference between guilt and shame, and conviction and condemnation. On p. 47-49 we shall see how God shows us to remove condemnation with its shame from our hearts.

A conscience is a gift from God <u>to help our discernment</u> of what is right and wrong. The perverting devil tries to mix up true <u>guilt</u> (sensing

wrong in the conscience) with false guilt (feeling guilty from his lying or twisted accusations) and with condemnation and its shame. Shame is a wrong belief about God and oneself ("I am a disgrace") that creates a wall against relating to God and makes one want to hide fearfully.

Let us understand how conviction and condemnation are different. In order to live in close fellowship with God, I need to be sensitive to His conviction of any sin that I have committed (including not doing the right thing). God's heart-attitude is that of a loving, patient Father teaching His child (me) something that I need to learn deeply when a sin shows my lack of full understanding. His "tone of voice" is loving, with truth and direction instead of a put-down. Conviction draws me to agree with God about the real issues, to do what He wants me to do with Him to clean the mess created by my sin, and to receive His provisions to make my heart less vulnerable to sinning again like that. This sets up my real confession and receiving of God's forgiveness and righteousness by the blood of Jesus, so that I am justly separated from this sin and quickly restored to abiding in Christ.

To keep us from being restored to this mighty fellowship, demons from the devil try to twist conviction into condemnation. Condemnation seals the sin onto the believer, attacking him personally by telling him that God rejects him because he is unfaithful, unworthy of good, is not getting better, and will never get better. This hinders his turning to and hearing rightly from God, who wants to build him up – not destroy him.

What is the truth? Everyone is guilty and worthy of condemnation. But there is more truth. Believers are justly saved from condemnation by our Savior: *"There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are **in Christ Jesus**"* (Rom. 8:1). But the devil desperately needs to create a great wall in the heart in order to block God's good work there and the believer's abiding in Christ.

Fearfulness and a Need to Control

A common wrong view of oneself is a subconscious fearfulness, which mixes with other attitudes about oneself (pride, etc.) to produce much self-deception. Human development causes fearfulness to be so common. All of us are born completely helpless, which is followed by being surrounded by older people who do almost anything better than we can. Most of us find a better balance later, but during highly formative years, our subconscious learns lessons that may stay deep within our hearts and surface later in well-disguised forms.

An underlying fearfulness can manifest as timidity, cowardliness, shyness, or self-depreciation, or the opposite: a need to control that causes strong drives to dominate, succeed, or be aggressive ("the best defense is a good offense"). For example, when a person becomes fearful, he (she) might quickly become very aggressive, even like a cornered wild animal with no escape. In such situations, fear is the dominant factor even while he might not feel fear: a strongly-driven, aggressive panic shuts out a consideration of future issues (this often looks like being fearless); adrenalin in the "fight or flight" response (p. 16) helps to remove a feeling of fear; and any long-term feeling sets its standard and only changes are easily noticed. Many highly fearful people do not sense their fear nor easily recognize it if it is pointed out.

The good balance to the early human development of fearfulness is the sound judgment of Rom. 12:3. This receives truth from God about oneself and does not try to answer thoughts of inferiority with pride or arrogance. Without this balance, this fearfulness – a wrong belief about oneself – often creates wrong beliefs about God, unbelief, or other walls to a healthy relationship with God. These walls in the unconscious part of the heart might automatically dismiss God's words about His love or calling of us as impossible (as in "unbelief").

Unbelief

The next key wall between God and man that we discuss is unbelief. Rom. 10:10a (p. 13) shows that belief is a heart issue: *"For **with the heart** a person **believes**, **resulting in righteousness**."* As we see now, sinful unbelief is a heart hardened against the true God.

Everyone should have unbelief or doubt about a word before he discerns if it truly is from God (1Thes. 5:20-21, 1Cor. 14:29). But sinful unbelief never gets resolved and causes a person to not fully obey or follow Jesus, because it is deeply rooted in a hardened heart: he refuses to address a distrustful, bitter, or otherwise negative heart-attitude against God. This unbelief simply accepts a distorted perspective of God and events, which demons always try to give us.

For example, a part of a person's heart may distrust God because it equates Him with his earthly father, who was consistently rejecting, unfaithful, and unloving. This deep association gives credibility to some lies from demons and may provoke a convincing unbelief against faith.

For another example, a person may experience a very painful loss and refuse to ever believe that God has plans to more than redeem it, even after a full opportunity to go through the grief process. The truth is that God has plans to work all things together for good for those who continue to love Him and fit into His plans (Rom. 8:28). But typically we cannot see how He will produce any great good out of a personal disaster, and this provides room for temptation into unbelief.

Heb. 3:7-19 relates unbelief to hardening the heart against God's voice. Both v. 7-8 and v. 15 warn: *"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts…"* V. 12 explicitly identifies the problem as *"an evil, unbelieving heart"*, and v. 19 calls this problem *"unbelief"*.

Therefore this sinful unbelief is not a temporary doubt, but a hard heart that keeps choosing to not open up to our loving God or the truth.

Wounds that Need "Inner Healing" – Healing the Heart

*"For **with the heart** a person **believes**"* (Rom, 10:10a). If a person has a persistent wrong belief, then we must provide what the heart needs. As sinful unbelief indicates a heart hardened against God, a persistent belief in a lie despite evidence against it indicates a heart wound (a few lies or wrong beliefs are on p. 30-35). Remember (p. 32) that a healed heart – not mighty put-downs from other people – brings repenting from arrogance (and from many other sins). All of this reality illustrates how many sins receive their power from wounds.

If a sin or belief continues in a believer after real efforts to repent with God's power in Christ, then that sin or belief is often rooted in a wounded or damaged heart. It needs to be healed to stop producing its spiritual poison: this is an "inner healing" by really wanting God in all of the heart (p. 21-23). Demons work to keep a wound walled off, active, and unable to heal, because it provides their cover and roots for sins.

As we saw in Chapter 2, God makes the heart – a person's real nature that goes into eternity – naturally stable and self-protective. God equips a heart with natural defense mechanisms that naturally and fearfully avoid possible dangers to it. Until it learns better, the heart regards even God's work with it as a possible danger to avoid. If your heart has a wound that needs God's healing, then make sure you get it. With Jesus' sacrifice for us, God will faithfully do His part as we do our part to receive His healing (1John 1:7-2:2, p. 8).

Conclusions about Bad Walls in the Heart

These brief explanations of a partial list of walls should help us understand any other wall against God's work in the heart. Such walls keep God's life-giving light out of a dark area in our hearts. God's light may get into one part of the heart but be kept out of other parts. I can

learn and firmly believe God's love for me in my mind, but not let anyone approach or touch a terrifying, painful, or humiliating wound in my heart. Our Father normally does not overpower firm decisions by the will in the heart to keep Him out of a part of it (p. 13-14).

The Bible clearly shows sins and issues that interfere with our life in Christ Jesus: they become walls in the heart that keep us from receiving His grace and words into every part of our hearts and lives. These walls empower sins to stay in our lives: in this way the walls are roots to support continued sins and sinfulness. These walls do not simply disappear as time goes on, but will continue to be built stronger if we do not destroy them, because they provide a cover that allows demons to work in our hearts – including our minds (Chapter 6). In contrast, if a believer continues (or abides) in Jesus' word, then he will know the truth and be set free (John 8:31-32, p. 5).

Remembering the Wonderful Truth

Now that we have seen the nature of unnatural walls in our hearts, let us see how this fits into the wonderful truth of Chapter 1. God's promise in John 15:7 gives all who "abide in Christ" (p. 5-7 explain why all of v. 7 fits into this term) an unlimited authority and power to live like Jesus in our own situations on earth: He set His heart on fully hearing and obeying His Father. Moreover, if we truly confess our sins, then Jesus' sacrifice restores us wonderfully to our close fellowship with God. Therefore any believer in Jesus can become a great danger to the devil's murderous kingdom of darkness. And therefore the devil and his demons use schemes and tricks on our flesh to tempt us out and keep us out of abiding in Christ and traps to make it hard to return. This is what these highly fortified walls are built to do: give a sin the power to stay and give our enemy room to keep working in the heart.

Because of Jesus' great sacrifice on the cross for us, our enemy is unable to stop us unless we let a demon tempt us out of staying in Christ or letting His words change our hearts as needed. Our enemy must reach the will in our hearts to do this: a demon must get me to agree with it against God in order to keep me out of abiding in Christ. The strength of the devil or any number of demons is not a concern except for their ability to influence the will in my heart, to get me to choose to disobey or not fully listen to God. Jesus made an extremely powerful statement in John 14:30: *"…the ruler of the world is coming, and* ***he has nothing in Me****."*

Our enemy demonstrates finding some things in believers like me, who have come short of Jesus' standard of doing only what our Father is doing and all that He wants us to do. Chapter 4 shows what I can do to work well with God to purify my heart – to be increasingly like Jesus – when my heart tries hard to protect itself from being changed. We shall see New Testament ways to go beyond natural desires and instinct that would limit God's good eternal work in our lives. All of these solutions for the heart are built on 1John 4:18-19 and Biblical confession: helping the heart to trust God enough to open itself up to Him, to confess honestly to our loving Father instead of trying to protect itself or an idol in it because of things like fear, pride, shame, wounds, or wrong beliefs.

Chapter 4

CLEANING MY HEART

In Chapters 2-3 we saw why our fearful hearts naturally seek to avoid getting changed – even getting healed. I have seen this feature in myself and in all whom I know well enough to see it. But if my real problem is a wounded heart, then its healing provides for my eternal life better than any alternative way to cope with my issues.

We saw (p. 23) that healing active wounds in the heart can set up removing other things that should not be in it: things like idols, demons, and walls of unforgiveness, wrong beliefs, etc. Therefore this healing is often a part of God's cleansing from all unrighteousness in 1John 1:9: *"If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us** from **all unrighteousness**."*

In this Chapter 4 we discuss how to move into trusting God with cleansing or healing our hearts. First let us see the great benefits and need for cleaning them, because a heart fears and resists its cleaning.

The Great Need/Benefits of Cleaning/Healing Our Hearts

Jesus repeatedly shows that we need to go beyond cleaning our actions into also purifying our hearts. This is our real nature that goes into eternity. And on earth, our hearts greatly affect what we see as God: *"With the kind You show Yourself kind; with the blameless You show Yourself blameless; **with the pure** You show Yourself **pure**, and with the crooked You show Yourself twisted"* (Psalm 18:25-26, literal NAS). All with a pure heart shall see God: *"Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall **see God**"* (Matt. 5:8).

With a pure heart I can see God well. I can also remove ways for demons to stay with me and tempt me into sin, so that I can stay in a close, powerful fellowship with God in Christ – abiding in Him. And I increase faith for this fellowship by removing sources of doubt from my heart (purifying it) – not by better efforts to believe (which is the flesh).

Therefore I need a pure heart. But my best efforts to clean it might fail. In my early years as a believer in Jesus, I found that my heart had been cleaned in major ways, but the thoughts coming out of my heart showed that it was still impure and not getting consistently better. I could not find how to clean my heart in books or from other believers, but I knew to turn to our loving God in truth and with honest confession and a desire to change. During this time I eagerly looked for what the Bible says about cleaning hearts. I found that God gives me the responsibility to have a clean heart, but I cannot clean it by myself. David asked God: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me"* (Psalm 51:10). Prov. 20:9 asks: *"Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?"*

My experience was telling me, "Not me", but God also let me know that He was doing a work beyond what I could see then. With Biblical truths and 40+ years of perspective, I can see now that He was wisely cleaning my heart in many ways through my inconsistent progress. He eventually produced progress in the areas where I had often stumbled, but along the way I was also humbled and delivered from pride and self-righteousness, which hurt others in long-lasting relationships.

Cleaning My Heart by Confessing and Continued Inviting

I need to work with God's power in my life beyond healing heart wounds. *"If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us** from **all unrighteousness**"* (1John 1:9). To clean my heart from all unrighteousness, I confess and let God

clean my heart. My fearful heart will stop resisting His cleaning if it has received and is assured of His love enough to trust Him: "***Perfect love casts out fear****….We love, because* ***He first*** *loved us*" (1John 4:18-19).

To confess is to say honestly what God says about the issue that must be addressed, to truly agree with Him about the "real issue". P. 8-11 are a good start about "confession", but understanding the heart better enables us to learn more about this key to freedom in Christ.

My heart feeds my will, which chooses what to say or not say. As Jesus says, *"his mouth speaks from that which fills the heart"* (Luke 6:45, p. 15). When I confess to God, enough of my heart agrees with God about all that I realize (my consciousness) in the real issues, so that my will chooses to speak this truth. I can really agree with God only about what I realize, so that I cannot confess anything in my heart which is beyond what I realize. But I can get to know God so well that I trust/want Him in all of my heart, and then I will keep inviting Him to cleanse me of all that is not right in every part of it (1John 1:9, again).

Cleaning my heart from all unrighteousness requires agreeing with God beyond a sin and into truly inviting Him to clean my heart of the roots that give a sin room and power in my life. Then even with a fear of being changed, the will in my trusting heart continues to choose to invite Him into all areas of my heart – specifically into areas that I previously avoided (such as severe abuse, rejection, terror, shame, or something that I have avoided "without feeling anything" about it). When I continue to invite Jesus into these previously dark areas of my heart that were well protected by walls (Chapter 3) and defense mechanisms (p. 16-20), He cleans the mess that I could never clean.

Cleaning My Heart by Trusting Obedience in My Life

God's cleaning is a process that must be worked out in our lives. Much of His cleaning comes as I choose to walk obediently by faith in

my life on earth. Eph. 2:10 says: *"For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which **God prepared beforehand**, that we should **walk** in them."* As I walk in the ways that God prepared for me, He continues to shape my heart – my true nature – through my experiences, so that I am His workmanship on my way to further expressing His ongoing work in my heart. By choosing to obey Him when I see a tempting alternative, I co-operate with His work to clean my heart: the tempting way will not clean it.

In contrast, disobeying God in any way freshly exposes problems in my heart for me to confess. If I am unable or unwilling to fully agree with His word of truth, then I need to learn His real nature better – give my heart good spiritual food – so that I trust Him more and give Him more room in my heart to clean it.

Building Trust in God by Cultivating a Thankful Heart and by Praise

I can help my heart trust God more by cultivating a thankful heart. How? God has done many good things for each of us, but we often do not notice them – not receive His love. In an analogy, if my arm hurts badly and no other part of the body hurts, then I naturally focus on my arm and not notice that the healthy parts are blessed. In another analogy, I am not thankful for something that I think I am entitled ("I am only getting what I deserve"), and I easily get angry if I do not receive it for any reason. For example, consider our attitudes toward a vending machine that does or does not work as expected: never thankful, and easy to get angry if it does not deliver what I think I should get.

I cultivate a thankful heart by noticing good things that God has given me – by grace and not by my earning any of them! Receiving His love, I can soon speak my thanksgiving from my heart, which can inform or teach parts of my heart that do not know the wonderful truth of God's love for me (p. 47-49).

Praise further builds trust in God by considering His nature beyond being thankful for what He has already provided. Therefore His nature of being loving, faithful, mighty, wise, etc., helps me to trust Him fully.

Good Food to Help My Heart Treasure God and His Values

I can praise my young child (or anyone) for having a good quality while believing that I also have it. Worship goes further than praise in that I regard the one I worship as far greater than I am: I really can dedicate myself to him. Worshipping God helps me to embrace His values, wisdom, and ways as far better than my own – I treasure them!

Thanking, praising, and worshipping God give my heart good food: truths about God like His love for me, or His values and wisdom being better than my own. God's values are for my good – helping me to relate well to Him and other people for eternity, and conforming me into being like Christ Jesus. His values provide for me eternally (now and later combined) far better than my values that differ from His.

Our hearts do get changed by the food we feed it. Choosing good food for the heart is a way to work with God to clean the heart while it strives to protect itself from being changed. Jesus commands:

> *[19]**Do not store** up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20]But **store** up **for yourselves** treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; [21]for **where your treasure is**, **there your heart will be also**.* (Matt. 6:19-21)

Jesus' commands in v. 19-20 tell me to choose what I treasure (I value most). I cannot store junk in heaven. I choose either what God values (a treasure that I can store in heaven) or a bait (a treasure on earth) that my enemy uses to appeal to my flesh and tempt me away from God's way for me. Then my choice takes my heart with it (v. 21).

How does this choice take my heart with it? Consider: when I see or find anything that fits into or adds to my treasure, I want to feed this

thing and I will make it a priority in my life and make room for it to grow in my heart. This thing will increase in my heart, which gets more attached to it, embracing it. And I notice what I treasure far better than things of little value to me. If I find something that does not fit into what I treasure, then I can easily ignore or reject it in my life.

For example, if I treasure money, then I focus on it and fill my heart and life with spiritually useless things that are related to getting money or using it, so that my heart does not get good spiritual food. If I treasure God with His unseen things, then I focus on them and fill my heart with them, so that I can notice and appreciate His faithful works and values, which go into and become a part of my heart. V. 24b (3 verses later) shows that our hearts are unable to treasure both God and money: *"You **cannot** serve God and wealth* [money or mammon]*."*

Notice how I choose to embrace, ignore, or reject potential treasures. Then my heart goes after the treasures I embrace: they will grow in my heart and will be given room for further growth.

Cleaning My Heart by Trusting and Treasuring What God Values

As discussed in Chapter 2, our hearts are highly self-protective. I will not keep inviting God to clean my heart unless I treasure what He values. If I go for "what I want now", then I will stop inviting Him to clean sensitive, well-protected areas of my heart as He touches them.

If I choose to treasure what He values over what I want now, then my heart will notice enough good fruit to keep inviting Him to do all that my heart needs to get clean. Fully trusting God includes trusting what He values, so that I will grow to treasure whatever He values. Seeing His faithful, gentle love to me increases my trust, which helps me to increasingly co-operate with Him in His work for my heart. And He has already proven to each of us that He can be trusted: notice how He has honored our "I don't want to think about it" cries from our hearts.

In the Bible idolatry is a huge problem, and its real issue is what to treasure. If a thing is an idol in my heart – a lust for money, success, security, sex, fame, my comfort or convenience, my control, protecting my heart, etc. – then I have chosen my treasure and will feed it and give room for it to increase in my heart. My desire for God may try to keep the idol out of my special time with Him and out of other areas in my life, but the treasure of my heart will not stay confined. My time with Him becomes a job and my trusting relationship with Him is not fed adequately even while I do some right actions because of duty.

A "natural" idol for any of us is to protect the heart – it treasures this. Good food about God's true nature helps me to receive Him and His love (and other fruit of His Spirit). Then I get to know Him well enough to want Him more in my heart and to trust Him with my heart. As 1John 4:18-19 shows, my heart will stop protecting itself from Him: ***"Perfect love casts out fear****….****We love, because He first loved us."***

If I confess to God my idolatry and my heart-desire to be with Him, then He will work wisely in my life to help me stop treasuring the idol. This long-term process includes the "renewing the mind" in Rom. 12:2 and Eph. 4:22-24. The mind (our conscious awareness) is a battlefield in cleaning our heart, but is only part of the issue. Let us consider this 3-step process in v. 22-24 more closely.

Renewing the Mind as a Part of Cleaning the Heart

Consider these excerpts from Eph. 4:22-24: *"22…****lay aside the old self****… 23…****be renewed in the spirit of your mind****, 24and* ***put on the new self****, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."* V. 23 is renewing my mind in God, so that I embrace His values and perspective. This empowers me to release my heart's fear of change in order to move ahead with God's cleaning of my heart and His other great provisions in Christ. V.

24 is embracing the changed heart that produces its Godly actions.

V. 22-24 apply to my decision at any moment, but also if renewing my mind takes much longer. In the Greek text, the verb form of "renew" shows a repeated or continuous action (Greek present tense), while "lay aside" and "put on" both show a one-time action (the Greek aorist tense): in each time or situation when I need to do that action.

In the long-term renewing of the mind, the conscious part of the heart decides the truth and informs the will, which then sets the mind to hold the truth until it goes into all of the heart (*"be transformed"* in Rom. 12:2) and comes out in our actions (choosing to put on the new self that has been created in the likeness of God in Eph. 4:24).

Removing an Idol from My Heart by Building Trust in God

In removing an idol from my heart – including its fearful desire to protect itself from God or any other potential changer – this renewal of my mind in God rejects the idol at each moment and also gives no room to the idol in my life. To reject or cast down an idol is far better (allowing more progress and less pain) than to get shaken free of it.

But we often cling to idols, and they cling to us. If my heart keeps treasuring my values over God's, what can I do? If my heart keeps trying to protect itself more than wanting God to touch and change sensitive areas and active wounds, then what can I do to really live?

By Jesus I can draw near to God (*"draw near to God, and He will draw near to you* [me]*"* – James 4:8) and feed myself the good food of truths about His nature and all else that helps my heart to fully entrust itself to Him. Good food includes thanking, praising, and worshipping God, examining Jesus and the Bible, and trusting and obeying Him. Being in truthful fellowship with other believers can cut through much delusion and self-deception, which often prevent a full cleansing.

The process of helping my heart open itself up to God, to stop

protecting itself from Him, can be put into a series of reasonable steps:

learn God's nature better (good food) → trust Him more in my life → obey and see His faithful love for me → treasure what He values → see more of His faithful, gentle love for me → trust Him still more → give Him more room to work in my heart

I might need to repeat a step or group of steps to move ahead. Or if any step is deep enough, then I can skip steps or go to the goal:

learn God's nature better → give Him more room to work in my heart

Like many other believers, I went for the goal – opened my heart to God – soon after I learned His nature and faithful love for me. But this is not a one-time choice: my heart will resume its self-protective nature as new situations reveal my heart's need to change. Then my heart can trust God anew or be given what it needs to open itself again to Him.

Good Long-Term Spiritual Food for Good Spiritual Health

Good food for the body normally produces its physical health after a long time of good nutrition instead of after a few meals. Only a few improvements available from better nutrition come quickly (supplying a key missing nutrient might produce results quickly). Likewise, the spiritual food in the previous five sections will produce and maintain a healthy spiritual heart when spiritual nutrition is long-term, and will <u>not</u> produce most of the needed changes <u>quickly</u>. Getting and maintaining a healthy spiritual heart requires good <u>long-term</u> spiritual nutrition that includes rejecting spiritual junk-food: food that looks spiritual, but really works against a trusting fellowship with Jesus in truth (works against spiritual health).

How to Teach a Truth to All of My Heart

The mind is the conscious part of the heart. As a source of the

thoughts in the mind, the whole heart learns very slowly. But it also forgets very slowly. The mind learns quickly and forgets quickly. But my mind does have its input into my will and can help me to hold fast to something that I realize is true. If my mind learns and keeps a truth – for years in some of my issues – then my mind can teach this truth to any part of my heart that believes an opposing lie. As I teach my heart, I also open up to Jesus the lie that seems true to a part of my heart. I confess that a part of my heart believes the lie with a real invitation for Him to clean up all that empowers the lie (early in this chapter).

For example, consider how I can teach my heart to not condemn myself. First, read p. 32-33 if needed: this shows the difference between conviction and condemnation with its shame from the devil. I mention only one key Scripture from there: *"There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are **in Christ Jesus**"* (Rom. 8:1).

After we become believers, we need to receive the Holy Spirit's conviction so that we repent from real sins (change the perception and mind about them). But we also need to reject condemnation, which takes us away from Jesus and from our restoration to God in Him. Notice how to handle our hearts' condemning us when God does not – the false guilt when our hearts falsely condemn us:

> [19]*We shall know by this* [our obedience to love in deed and truth in v. 18] *that we are of the truth, and shall **assure our heart before Him**,* [20]*in whatever **our heart condemns us**; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things*. (1John 3:19-20)

Notice the solution. I realize the truth in Christ Jesus and confirm that it applies to me in my situation (v. 18-19). Then I hold fast to the truth and assure my heart as long as a part of it believes a lie: I answer lying beliefs with the truth as long as my impure heart has wrong ideas. Here my mind decides what is truth and informs my will, and then my will sets my mind to hold the truth for when my heart needs it.

As I proceed, I should also ask God to reveal and clean (heal) all that makes the lie seem to be truth to a part of my heart, such as repeated condemnation from a parent, unhealed wounds from painful rejection, or a condemning theology or teaching that reinforces milder experiences of condemnation or feeling unworthy or inferior. I need to teach the truth to my heart as long as a part of it believes the lie.

In this solution I need to remember that my heart is a slow-learner (God's word of truth might have many places to go in my heart), so that I will be patient with my slow-learner, realizing that it will not easily let go of this truth when it is really learned. God's perfect provision for us in Christ to clean our hearts in an issue may be quick or take nearly a lifetime: how long depends on our co-operation with Him (often we can improve this) and on what is best for our eternal development (we might be unable to "help" this). No matter how long, we reject condemnation and fully receive God's conviction.

This "mind-teaching-the-heart" process is "renewing the mind" in Eph. 4:22-24 and Rom. 12:2 (p. 45-46). Many lies that seemed true to a believer can be replaced with a corresponding truth by this process. It is not a good way to replace a lie that is being empowered by an unhealed wound to the heart. A lie that stays strong for too long reveals a wound that needs God's "inner healing" (Chapter 2). If a lie stays more convincing than the truth after actively answering the lie for a month, then probably inner healing is the key to get the heart that is "cleaned from all unrighteousness" and that lets us be so mighty in Christ (as in John 15:7 in Chapter 1 and the end of Chapter 3).

Cleaning Our Resistant Hearts of Wrong Beliefs, Idols, and More

In this chapter we have seen God's simple solution for cleaning a person's heart: to open his whole heart to God in honest confession, and to keep inviting Him to do all that He wants. Receiving God's love

builds the trust in Him that casts fear out of the heart, so that a person increasingly opens up to God. The person will agree with God, who will work with him to clean his heart from all unrighteousness by God's grace in Jesus – including all healing.

I call this confession and continued invitation to God a "full confession". The repentance in a full confession lets me perceive a key sin well enough to speak my agreement with God that everything in my heart must stop supporting or holding on to the sin – my heart must change! Then even if I stumble in some situations on the way to getting clean, I will return to inviting Him to do all that is needed.

In fact, we have seen how the heart greatly resists its cleaning or any other change, so that we Christians have rarely lived in full power. For example, the heart-walls that protect a persistent wrong belief demonstrate their great resistance to being changed. We often stop inviting God to do a key cleaning. Our hearts do avoid some issues, which really are not as awful as our hearts perceive them (we did get through even the worst situations). These issues could often keep us from doing the best thing (God's will) without our realizing their input.

A key wall in most hearts is built by sinful judging. For believers in Jesus, it often manifests itself in heart-attitudes of unforgiveness and legalism. Each gives our enemy ways to get a believer to leave God's totally just ways for his good. In Chapter 5 we see how to remove this wall from our hearts.

Chapter 5

FORGIVING FREELY, NOT JUDGING

We saw (p. 27-28) that believers need to forgive freely and not judge others sinfully. Wrong ideas about both abound. We shall soon see that not forgiving really is judging sinfully and ignorantly.

God is totally just and warns us about total justice in our judging:

> *[1]Do not judge so that you will not be judged. [2]For **in the way you judge, you will be judged**; and by **your standard** of measure, it will be measured to you.* (Matt. 7:1-2)

Because of evil men and deceivers (Matt. 22:18, 2Thes. 3:2, 2Tim. 3:13), we must often judge, and God gives many examples in the Bible that show how such judging is necessary and good. What does v. 1 mean? V. 2 answers: if I create a way or standard to judge (put down or condemn) anyone, then I also create it for myself. Judging can tie me up when I could have been free. Jesus made a very painful sacrifice in order to be justly able to love us freely with grace and no condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2), but judging can ruin this. His warning shows His desire for His children to "give Him permission" to be generous to others as He makes righteous judgments. He shows this clearly in Matt. 20:15: *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye **envious** because **I am generous**?"*

Rom. 2:4-6 shows that God will justly judge everyone within his/her eternity for his/her deeds:

> *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and **unrepentant***

***heart** you are **storing up wrath** for yourself **in the day** of wrath and revelation of **the righteous judgment of God**, who **will render** to **each person** according to **his deeds**.* (Rom. 2:4-6)

If God were merely just to us, then we would not qualify for the great eternity that He provides for us with Him and other loving people. God is totally just or justly generous in Jesus to each person over his entire eternal existence, which allows temporary injustices before all is made right. Mankind misunderstands God's justice by trying to create justice "now" (at this time!) or without knowing relevant facts. We all need His generous mercy and need to let Him give it to others.

Unforgiveness and legalism are major ways to judge wrongly.

Freely Forgiving by Understanding Forgiveness

My forgiving returns to God the position that I grabbed as the just judge of the offender. He is the just and loving Judge who knows the offense and every other relevant fact and feature of the offender. If I forgive him, I ask God: "Do not hold back blessing him because he hurt me (or my loved one)." If I refuse to let God be generous to the offender for reasons that I do not know or might not understand or approve, then I put myself under an unnecessarily strict just judgment that will condemn me. Notice my way to judge the offender: I consider some wrongs and little else about him (God considers everything), and I judge that nothing – not even God's mercy in Christ – should keep him from getting punished…. I cause my own offenses to be judged in that way (Matt. 7:2 on p. 51).

We can see much about the meaning of forgiving or not in an example of a very hard case to forgive: my child whom I dearly love is badly hurt by an offender, maybe death or damage that cannot be restored on earth (without a miracle). God tells me to forgive him: to let God judge him, and with Jesus He can be generous while being just

and righteous, even as He has been for me.

What are some wrong ideas about the meaning of forgiveness? Forgiving him does not keep me from forcefully stopping an offense and does not make my child (if alive) vulnerable again. Forgiving him does not stop me from telling the truth in court, which God delegated as an authority for the earth and could be a part of His justice or His protection of other people who could be innocent victims. Forgiving him does not keep me from calling on God to work fully in any situation or to judge him justly – if I also let God be generous to him (but if I call on God with a "Get him, Lord" attitude, then I have already judged him and am opposing God's judgment if it is far more generous than mine).

True forgiveness does not mean never feeling anger or pain again. A year after forgiving him, a reminder sets off a sudden surge of anger. In this case, I was totally free that year – living my life with the real release of forgiveness – but now I must handle my anger well: I do as Eph. 4:26-27 shows (Chapter 2). As I turn to God and release the offender and situation to Him, I let Him lead me into whatever I should do, and I let Jesus heal my wounds (which might hide some stuffed issues for forgiveness). When I really do release the offender to God, I do not stay feeling angry and shall not get bitter.

True forgiveness does not erase events from my memory, so that forgiving does not mean forgetting an offense. (But repeatedly raising it to the offender is a "missing the mark" sin, whether from unforgiveness or to manipulate). Forgiveness is a command, which means that I choose to obey or not. I cannot choose to forget an offense: choosing to forget it reminds me of it. (Trying to forget it for a long time is trying to shut out or stuff my feeling. It will show up in ways that trick me to allow it, thereby deceiving myself). But <u>by trusting our loving God to judge well</u>, I can forgive: I can <u>choose to release the offender to God</u>

for His justice and mercy until feelings like anger go out, so that I can move on freely with peace and handle future feelings if they arise.

A sign of true forgiveness is increased compassion for the offender: I can see beyond the offense into regarding the offender as a person. Another sign is my freedom to use or not use the situation according to what is good for a hearer, and not from my drive to hide or use the situation. My freedom to use it or not indicates my healing and moving ahead, and my use is a part of God's redemption of what was a bad situation in some ways, as Paul did in 2Cor. 1:4. Forgetting it would have lost this blessed part of God's redemption.

Jesus' parable in Matt. 18:23-35 vividly shows us what we have discussed. A slave owed an impossibly large debt to a king, who represents God. He wished to settle accounts with his slaves, and this slave was brought before him. Because the slave had no means to repay this huge debt, his lord commanded that the slave and all his family and possessions be sold and repayment made. The slave fell down, begged for patience, and promised to repay. His lord felt compassion and released him and his debt – forgave him and it.

Then the slave went out and found a fellow slave who owed him 100 denarii, which was 100 days wages for a laborer. This is a large debt between people and hard to repay, but the lord had freely forgiven the slave of over 100 thousand years of labor at those wages. (I might think that my labor for that long is not a just penalty for my sins, but this great labor is not enough to buy the great eternal future that God gives me for free in Christ). The first slave seized, choked, and demanded the other slave to repay. He begged for patience and promised to repay, just as the first slave did to his lord. But this forgiven slave was unwilling to have mercy like his lord had for him, and threw the debtor into prison until he paid back what he owed.

Fellow slaves saw this injustice and reported it to the lord, who brought the unforgiving slave before him again and told him:

> *"You wicked slave, I forgave you of all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave,* ***in the same way that I had mercy on you****?" And his lord, moved with anger,* ***handed him over to the torturers*** *until he should repay all that was owed him.* [35]*My heavenly Father will also* ***do the same to you, if*** *each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.* (Matt. 18:32b-35)

Notice that God justly calls us to give only what He first freely gave us. Who are these torturers? One kind of torturer can be demons: they delight in torturing people if they get an opportunity. Depression is a torturer, with or without a demon. And God makes v. 35 a promise.

Then how do I forgive those who delight in badly hurting me or my loved one? Surely they deserve a severe punishment. The account of Joseph in Gen. 37-50 gives wonderful insights. Briefly, with great hatred Joseph's jealous brothers sold him into slavery. As a result, he was either a slave or in a dungeon from age 17 to age 30. God eventually released him and made him a mighty ruler, and his brothers feared his revenge after their father died. Joseph revealed how he was able to forgive their costly and hateful evil deed: *"Do not be afraid, for* ***am I in God's place?*** *As for you, you meant evil against me, but* ***God meant it for good*** *in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."* (Gen. 50:19b-20)

If I trust God to work all things together for good as I continue to fit in His plans, then I can release my judgment of a hateful offender to God for His sure just judgment, and I can be content with His generous treatment of me.

To conclude, I forgive by releasing the offender to our just God, so that I do not ask God to make him pay a just penalty for offenses. If I

realize God's generosity to me and that His knowledge and wisdom for His sure justice are far better than mine, then I will gladly forgive by letting Him be the just Judge – and He will justly judge all (Rom. 2:4-6)!

Stopping My Legalistic Judging that Hurts Others and Ruins Me

In another application of "judging" on p. 51-52, if I use the letter of the Law to judge a person for guilt without mercy, then I cause myself to be judged in the same way with the standard of the letter of the whole Law. James 2:10-13 makes this clear, explaining that failing at any point makes me guilty of the whole law (v. 10), and adding: *"For **judgment** will be **merciless to one** who has **shown no mercy**; mercy triumphs over judgment"* (v. 13). If I judge others without mercy, then I need to fix what is wrong in my heart that caused this legalistic judging.

We consider three heart-problems that breed legalistic judging. One is my heart's failure to understand God's true nature and His non-critical love for us. Jesus' life and death on earth reveals God's true nature and His non-critical love, and to receive this truth we open up our hearts to Him. The discussion on p. 30-33 helps one see that God is not a condemner or faultfinding critic, and Chapter 4 explains how His faithful love can help us to increasingly open our hearts to Him.

Second, people often judge legalistically without realizing their error because the naturally fearful heart deceives its owner about its real goal: the heart is trying to justify itself and thereby protect itself from changing. Webster's Dictionary (1943) shows the real goal of legalism in its definition: a strict conforming to a law or code of deeds and observances as a means of justification (the goal).

Legalism creates a wrong mindset about what God wants or accepts, usually reducing this code to manageable rules and formulas. Often a part of the Law is used for the code, and Galatians was written

to warn believers against this deadly trap. In Gal. 5, some people had taught the Galatian believers to use circumcision as God's way to be right with Him – to be justified – but this caused all who did to receive no benefit in Christ. Notice their awesome loss in Gal. 5:2-4:

> *2Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision,* ***Christ will be of no benefit to you****. 3And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is* ***under obligation to keep the whole Law****. 4You have been* ***severed from Christ****, you who are* ***seeking to be justified by law****; you* ***have fallen from grace****.*

Legalism uses a law to justify oneself but totally fails, severing him from Christ and putting him under the whole Law (as in James 2). I cannot pick parts of the Law that I do well to justify myself. Further, Christians today often try to justify themselves by a provision in God's salvation by Jesus: I can pervert "my denomination" or "my faith" or "faith in our doctrine" into being a way to justify myself when I condemn others who "do what I do" or "do what I hide in my heart". The fearful heart is trying to justify itself as it judges others, but is doing the opposite. Rom. 2:1-3 shows how legalistic judging condemns oneself:

> *1Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you* ***judge another****, you* ***condemn yourself****; for* ***you who judge practice the same things****. 2And we know that the* ***judgment of God rightly falls*** *upon those who* ***practice*** *such things. 3But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?* (Rom. 2:1-3)

I can judge others, but eventually I find myself doing some things for which I have condemned people. Pride and fear push me to try to justify myself when I have condemned some other people who have sinned like me. To exalt or justify myself, I exalt parts of the Law or other good things that I do well and use them legalistically to judge others. This is a "log in the eye" (Matt. 7:3-5, the continuation of v. 1-2

on p. 51) that keeps me from seeing well enough to operate on the other person.

I must face the truth that some of my deeds condemn me as unfit for God's eternal Kingdom. Faith in Christ justifies me (Rom 3:24-28): a need to add anything is refusing to put faith in Him. Do I reject my pride and accept this scary truth of God's pure gift of righteousness for unfit me? Or does my heart create or accept a lie to help me feel approved? Do you have this issue? You can find God's opinion about you and this issue in Rom. 3.

Any such lie serves a strong desire of not feeling condemned. If I embrace such a lie, then I will try hard to defend it as God's truth, and my defense of the accepted religious practices is characteristically fearful: brittle or rigid and with threats or intimidation against those who would question the validity of the "code" that I use to justify myself. But God rejects all of these ways and accepts only faith in Jesus alone.

Therefore legalistic judging is a way that my fearful, deceitful heart tries to justify itself in order to avoid changing (which it perceives as a danger). By realizing the real issue of my heart, I can receive Jesus' provision for all of us and move into my life-giving fellowship with Him.

A third key cause of legalistic judging is my heart's failure to understand that God sets us in Christ free from the letter of the Law. People who are trapped in a legalistic mindset need to see from the Bible that it is deadly and that God wants us free from it. Consider:

> *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* ***has set you free from*** *the* ***law of sin and of death****"* (Rom. 8:2).

Notice that the law of sin and of death is the letter of the Law:

> *Who* [God] *also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the* ***letter kills, but the Spirit gives life****. But if the* ***ministry of death, in letters*** *engraved on*

*stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the **ministry of condemnation** has glory, much more does the **ministry of righteousness** abound in glory.* (2Cor. 3:6-9)

*"But we know that **the Law is good, if** one **uses it lawfully**"* (1Tim. 1:8). God's Law is good, but a legalist does not use it lawfully: he is using it to try to justify himself when his deeds condemn himself, or for another purpose against God's design for His Law. Gal. 3:19-26 and Rom. 7:4-6 explain how it is used well: to lead us to Christ!

*19"**Why the Law** then? It was **added because of transgressions**.... 21Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For **if** a law had been given which was **able to impart life**, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were **kept in custody under the Law**, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore **the Law has become our tutor*** [personal teacher] ***to lead us to Christ**, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are **no longer under a tutor**. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* (Gal. 3:19-26)

*4**Therefore**, my brethren, you also were made to **die to the Law** through the body of Christ, **so that you might be joined to** another, to **Him who was raised** from the dead, **in order that we might bear fruit for God**. 5For while we were **in the flesh**, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to **bear fruit for death**. 6But **now we have been released from the Law**, having died to that by which we were bound, so that **we serve in newness of the Spirit** and **not in oldness of the letter**.* (Rom. 7:4-6).

(These and other Scriptures are discussed further in Chapter 8 of *Our Foundation in Christ Jesus*: its PDF file is free under James Tarter at www.lulu.com).

God has a different way for His children to live than with a legalistic mindset that uses the letter of the Law to exalt or justify oneself or to

judge (put down) people. If your heart has believed the lie of legalism that does not justify anyone, then you can stand on the truth that *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death"* (Rom. 8:2, p. 58). God is not a faultfinder who looks for ways to condemn a person. Instead, God has paid a huge price to reconcile us to Him justly and to relate to us freely. And Jesus will free all who do continue with Him (John 8:31-32, p. 5).

Avoiding Sinful Judging

In this chapter we have seen how unforgiveness and legalism are two common ways that believers judge others wrongly. This produces the just penalty of receiving judgment in the way and standard of measure that was used to judge others. Rom. 14:4 also advises against judging: *"Who are you to **judge the servant of another**? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."* Rom. 14:10 confirms: *"But you, why do you **judge your brother**? Or you again, why do you **regard your brother with contempt**? For **we will all stand before the judgment seat of God**."*

God will judge everyone justly, but He also wants to be justly generous in Christ – including to you. And He wants His children to co-operate with Him by letting Him be the wise, just Judge of all. We must judge well in order to do His will, and we should do this <u>with His judgment</u>. But we also must not judge others for purposes like putting them down, exalting ourselves above them, or justifying ourselves.

Chapter 6

SIGNIFICANT ATTACHMENTS

We have discussed cleaning our hearts with God's power in Jesus to remove things from our hearts that should not be there: healing unhealed wounds and removing bad walls or barriers, wrong beliefs, idols, entitlement, unforgiveness, and legalistic judging. Demonic influence and generational curses also should not be attached to our hearts because of Jesus' perfect provision for us, but often we have not realized their presence nor used Jesus' provision for us.

In this chapter we see two Scriptures which show how our enemy works in thoughts that seem to be our own, but are not. We must realize this truth, or else our enemy gets more freedom to work against us than he should. We also see why normally people must stand on Jesus' sacrifice to get free from generational iniquity or curses. Finally, we see how to stand simply on His work for us against such attacks.

Demons Giving Us Thoughts That Seem to Be Ours

A demon does not tell me, "this is a demon", before planting its idea. Instead, <u>it poses as me</u> ("I'm tired") in order to suggest distorted perspectives and to try to get me to focus on the wrong things. In Matt. 16:21-23 notice how Satan worked within Peter's heart and mind to give him the perspective that Satan wanted him to have, and then to speak the temptation to Jesus:

> *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes; and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*

*Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He **turned** and **said to Peter**, "Get behind Me, **Satan**! You are a stumbling block to Me; for **you** are **not setting your mind on God's interests**, but man's."*

Jesus' first statement was to Satan, and then Jesus told Peter how Satan was able to deceive him into saying the temptation. By setting his mind on man's interests instead of God's, Peter agreed with Satan and became his instrument, letting him speak his temptation to Jesus. This idea was planted so craftily that Peter surely thought he was speaking for himself until Jesus spoke to both of them.

Likewise, the devil did not identify himself in the wilderness, but simply gave his temptations to Jesus. In Luke 4, God had twice shown Jesus how to live in light of the temptation by saying, *"It is written"*, and then quoting a Scripture. Now notice the devil's crafty imitation of God in the third temptation:

*And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for **it is written**, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You **to guard You**,' and, 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "**It is said**, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* (Luke 4:9-12)

The devil imitated God by saying, *"It is written"*, and then craftily distorting a Scripture. The devil "spoke" in a way to make it seem like God spoke. God often "speaks" to us in what could be regarded as our thoughts: it would be useless for the devil to imitate like this if he was visible or had an audible voice – exposing the speaker. This imitation makes sense if the devil spoke in Jesus' thoughts. And this is how we are usually tempted: how many conversations have you had with a visible or audible demon or devil?

I can be truly tired and think it. But I can also not be too tired when I should do a good thing, and a demon says in my thoughts: "I'm tired".

Removing Demonic Attachment to Our Hearts

The Epistles rarely discuss demonic work against us, and this book follows that lead. If we fully handle our heart issues, then demons will not stop us. However, as explained in Chapter 1 and confirmed in Chapter 7, the historical record shows that demons have hindered us a lot. Therefore almost all believers have not fully handled our heart issues, and demonic influence has been a key contributor.

In order to remove attached demons or their inappropriate input into our hearts, we need to see how a defeated enemy of mankind has grabbed so much influence. Doing this well would greatly enlarge this book. I have written a book, *Destroying Spiritual Strongholds*, that discusses the heart like your book, but also discusses demonic activity and removing it. A PDF download and its preview contain the whole book and is free at www.lulu.com under "James Tarter".

It can greatly help to remove demonic input into our hearts and lives with God's provision in Jesus. But realizing that demons subtly give us thoughts (the previous section) is vital – not merely helpful.

Why We Must Stand On Jesus' Work for Generational Iniquity/Curses

First, realize that a generational iniquity is one kind of curse. In Hebrew, a curse is a reversal or absence of a rightful or blessed state. An iniquity is a twist or a bent in a person's nature that makes it easier or more natural to sin, which can produce a just curse.

<u>We need to</u> <u>stand on</u> what <u>God has given us in Jesus</u> in order to <u>truly realize</u> how much He has given us. This is a part of <u>receiving</u> God's loving forgiveness, the key for us to <u>grow in love</u> (1John 4:19 with Luke 7:47). Otherwise, it really is too easy for us descendants of Adam and Eve to deny that sins or iniquities of our ancestors are "my issue" – to dismiss this mess as "not really mine" and thereby dismiss

His loving sacrifice for it. Consider how natural it is to blame or make excuses – to deny full guilt or justify myself. How much easier is it to ignore my nature to enslave people when a practical reason (slavery is punished now) kept me from enslaving anyone? But if an ancestor did enslave and his iniquity was not fully resolved, then his unresolved iniquity continues through generations:

> *Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious,* ***slow to anger****, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who* ***forgives iniquity, transgression and sin****; yet He will* ***by no means leave*** *the* ***guilty unpunished****,* ***visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations****."* (Ex. 34:6-7)

God's just judgment does pass through generations, giving people in them an opportunity to live and repent before bringing a full just judgment if a sin does stay unresolved. (All children of Adam and Eve were born after their sin and before they died from their sin. Likewise, if God held some of my other ancestors fully accountable for deadly sins soon after they were committed, then surely their early deaths would have prevented my birth.) Heb. 7:9-10 shows clearly a descendant's coupling with and participation in a deed of an ancestor:

> *And, so to speak, through Abraham even* ***Levi****, who received tithes,* ***paid tithes****, for* ***he was still in the loins of his father*** [Abraham, three generations earlier] *when Melchizedek met him*. (Heb. 7:9-10)

Ex. 34:6-7 and Heb. 7 show generational blessings as much as generational iniquities. Often a blessing is hidden or corrupted by the curses until they are removed (how to remove them is on p. 67).

In Matt 23:29-36 Jesus shows the scribes' and Pharisees' denial of their own iniquity from their ancestors and "fathers", which resulted in their own sins and the consequent awful judgment:

*[29]Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, [30]and say, "**If we had been living** in the days of our fathers, **we would not have been partners with them** in shedding the blood of the prophets." [31]So **you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets**. [32]Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. [33]You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the **sentence of hell**? [34]Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them **you will kill and crucify**, and some of them **you** will **scourge** in your synagogues, and **persecute** from city to city, [35]**so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood** shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, **whom you murdered** between the temple and the altar. [36]Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.* (Matt 23:29-36)

In John 8:37-44 Jesus shows that we become sons of the one we truly follow (in John 8, it was the devil). We inherit blessings and curses from those we truly follow (parents by adoption) as well as from physical parents. This generation personally did not murder Abel or Zechariah, but had joined the murderers of the righteous in their heart-attitude and thereby had their iniquity while also denying the truth of having it. In fact, Cain personally murdered Abel, a sin set up by Cain's refusal to handle his iniquity:

*[6]Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you **angry**? And why has your countenance fallen? [7]"**If you do well**, will not your countenance be lifted up? And **if you do not do well**, **sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it**." [8]Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and **killed him**.* (Gen 4:6-8)

What a description (v. 7) of Cain's iniquity that led to his sin! V. 7 also vividly describes the iniquity of "*this generation*" (Matt. 23:36) that led to their sin like Cain's. By denying and refusing to resolve their own iniquity, it eventually manifested in them and caused their punishment for their own sins. As we saw from 1John 2:2 on p. 8-10, Jesus paid

the just penalty for the sins of the whole world, so that we can fully resolve them for ourselves and our descendants:

> *[1]My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, **Jesus Christ** the righteous; [2]and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the **whole world**.*

People ask, "How is God just to all if He judges people for iniquity or sin that they did not commit?" First, Rom. 2:4-6 (p. 51-52) shows that God judges each one's deeds – not iniquity, which gives a twist in one's nature that merely directs him toward doing a sin (therefore we should resolve an iniquity without delay). The rest of the answer is given on p. 28-29: God knows every person perfectly, including his/her unique starting and end points, capacities, opportunities, advantages, and responses to His grace in Jesus. And it is God's nature to be totally just within each person's eternity: He is so just that He suffered great pain to be fully just to all when He adds love generously in Christ. In fact, all of Chapter 5 is an example of God's total justice with mercy.

With the background of this section, consider this question again: "Why do people normally need to stand firmly on Jesus' work for us in order to receive our full freedom in Him?" Like other people, I do not realize the depth of my iniquity and the enormous sacrifice needed to save me justly. Confessing (therefore not denying) and standing on this truth make it real to me, His child. Jesus did pay an enormous just penalty for me (and for anyone else) for the sins of my ancestors.

How to Stand On Jesus' Work for Generational Iniquity/Curses

When I first discover an iniquity of an ancestor at work in my life, I confess his/her sin and my iniquity or sin and stand on Jesus' paying the full just penalty for all sins (1John 2:2, above). Knowing the sins of ancestors can help me recognize an iniquity and how it got attached to

me, but is not needed to get free in Christ. I know that my ancestors did sin (Rom. 3) and that Jesus paid the just penalty for all of their sins, so that I and my descendants are freed from paying it. Our enemy will try any lie that I accept to attach the iniquity again (for example, "that is just who I am"), but I stand firm on what Jesus did for us. Scriptures in Eph. 6 and James 4 can show us how to stand firm.

In the context of putting on the full armor of God, Eph. 6:11-14 tells us three times to *"stand firm"*. James 4:7 adds: *"**Submit** therefore to **God**. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you."* The Greek in *"resist the devil"* gives a picture of "standing up in place of letting the devil stand". If I do not stand, then the devil will stand; but if I stand firm, then the devil cannot and therefore will flee.

More precisely, if I stand by myself, then the devil has no reason to be intimidated. But if I stand up firmly with Jesus (who is with me), then the devil knows that he has lost this temptation and must retreat until he can set up another opportune situation. It is very important to be with Jesus in my battles instead of trying to fight, resist, or stand without Him. My knowing His presence – even without feeling it – really cuts through a temptation or scheme of our enemy.

Notice two Scriptures that we can stand on to handle any curse, which includes any generational iniquity:

> *…**a curse without cause** does not alight.* (Prov. 26:2)

> ***Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law**, having **become a curse for us**…**in order that in Christ** Jesus **the blessing of Abraham might come** to the Gentiles, so that we would **receive the promise of the Spirit through faith**.* (Gal 3:13-14)

In Christ we have the authority and power and right to reject any curse without a legal cause. And Jesus took upon Himself any curse that is legally justified, so that we can receive the blessings in Christ

without paying the just penalty for justifiable curses. But rarely can we comprehend His great sacrifice for us without some time of missing its full provisions. To help His children appreciate the truth, Father God requires us to stand firmly with Jesus on His sacrifice in order to keep the full freedom from all curses that He paid so dearly for us.

Another Example of Generational Blessings and Iniquities

The progression of an iniquity from David to his son Solomon is an example of unresolved iniquity getting passed from one generation to the next. King David was a man after God's heart and also with a sin and a weakness or iniquity: he took many wives for himself despite God's explicit law telling kings to not do that (Deut. 17:17). Then David saw Bathsheba and sinned with her. As you know, he repented later.

King Solomon began his reign with a heart for God and God's people, and God gave him great wisdom and knowledge (1Kings 3:3-14). But late in his life, he developed a stronghold that turned him away from God and His ways without repentance. Solomon disobeyed God by marrying idolatrous women, let them entice his heart away from God, supported their idolatry, and steadfastly refused His correction (1Kings 11:1-12). Solomon also lost his heart for God's people (1Kings 12:4, 10-11). This sin had become a mighty stronghold despite Solomon's wisdom and previous heart for God and His people.

This example illustrates basic points that we recently discussed. For example, David's iniquity was not Solomon's terrible sin, but was a moral weakness that grew into Solomon's sin because Solomon had refused to resolve his iniquity until it manifested as his own sin. He had inherited blessings and also this iniquity that he needed to resolve.

Chapter 7

HEARTS TO ASK LIKE JESUS

John 15:7 introduced God's great calling for us believers in Chapter 1, so that we could see how much we believers have come short for 2000 years. Now that we have seen how our hearts have taken us out of so much of God's great provisions for us in Jesus, we should see God's amazing calling for us from a fresh perspective, so that we will live like we should. For v. 7 you can read Chapter 1 again. Here we discuss Jesus' stunning promise to His disciples in John 14:

> [12]*Truly, truly, I say to you,* ***he*** *who* ***believes in Me****, the* ***works that I do****, he will* ***do also****; and* ***greater works*** *than these he will do;* ***because I go to the Father****.* [13]***Whatever*** *you* ***ask*** ***in My name****, that will* ***I do****, so that the Father may be* ***glorified*** *in the Son.* [14]*If you* ***ask Me anything*** ***in My name****,* ***I will do it****.* [15]***If*** *you* ***love Me****,* ***you will keep My commandments****.* (John 14:12-15)

In the Bible and in many other situations, a name of anything often comes from its nature or character and helps us to know the thing. The many names of God bring out specific qualities of His character or nature and help us to know Him better, as do the many names of Jesus and the many names of Satan. Moreover, Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17: *"I have manifested Your name"* (v. 6), and *"I have made Your name known to them* [to all believers]*"* (v. 26). The book of John shows repeatedly that Jesus manifested (openly revealed to others) and made known His Father's poorly seen character and nature, and no hidden "name" except for His nature of being a father.

Therefore if I ask in Jesus' name, I ask in His nature: I ask as He

would ask in my situation. John 5:19 reveals a key feature of His nature: *"…Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He* ***sees the Father doing****; for* ***whatever the Father does****, these things* ***the Son also does in like manner****."*

Jesus would do only what He saw His Father doing. In order to ask like Jesus, I should see what our Father is doing in general actions – such as healing and delivering people – and I should also see what He is doing in a specific person and situation.

John 5:19 explains unanswered prayers that I once thought were in Jesus' name: they did not fit into what the Father was doing in those situations. For example, I have asked for a quick healing that would have hurt what God was doing: a less obvious, more important change in the person's nature, his heart. Jesus would have done the greater good His Father wanted. This promise for asking in Jesus' name in v. 13-14 is for unlimited power to do all that God wants us to do, to ask and receive as Jesus would ask and receive in our situations.

Furthermore, asking in Jesus' name will produce the goal stated in John 14:13: to glorify the Father in the Son. Glory is a common word and everyone knows its main idea, but we should realize the precise meaning of glory: the visible manifestation of internal qualities – openly revealing the characteristics or features of whoever is being glorified!

Glory always has its manifestation for others to experience and recognize, and Biblical glory always comes from internal qualities: real substance. In every Scripture we examine, the internal qualities come from a special presence of God, which the world cannot see directly.

I call it "Hollywood glory" if the visible differs from the inside. People respond much more to visible manifestations than to internal qualities. God emphasizes the internal – the substance, the source of the visible.

An example helps us understand our own calling to glorify God. Notice how Jesus glorified His Father and the Father glorified Jesus. Jesus showed people what His invisible Father is truly like, manifesting His poorly seen nature and qualities (John 1:18, 5:19, 14:9). The Father gave Jesus works to do that manifested Jesus' true nature to the world: they revealed Jesus' deity (John 1:1-3, 5:36, 10:36-38).

In John 14:13 Jesus will do whatever we ask in His nature so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. When we ask like Jesus would ask in our own situations, He will do it, so that the presence, character, and nature of our invisible Father are manifested in the Son and in us.

Why is *"If you **love Me**, you will **keep** My commandments"* (v. 15) a part of His promise in v. 13-14? Consistently doing His will is a part of manifesting the Father's and Son's nature, whereas sinning or asking selfishly is not a part of Their nature and makes it harder to see. This asking in Jesus' name includes loving Him and glorifying Him and doing what He says – actions consistent with the good requests.

How does loving Jesus produce obedience? If I love Him, then I want to fulfill what He wants. Then I ask for things to help do His good purposes, and I want to remove those things that work against His will.

The verb form for "believe" in v. 12 shows an "ongoing believing". This is the continued believing of disciples who will be set free by the truth (John 8:31-32, p. 5), and not a great belief for a single situation. This is the continued believing in Jesus that destroys strongholds.

What is a work I have done that is greater than Jesus' works (v. 12)? Consider this analogy. It is a little work for me to move a chair across a room, but if an ant does that, it is a great work. When Jesus manifested His Father's nature, it was also Jesus' nature. How much greater work is it when I manifest my Father's nature and character in a tough situation when my nature is screaming for me to serve myself?

And if I heal in Jesus' name, then it is a great work!

Let us not attach man's superficial idea onto God's truth in v. 12. Man naturally looks for bigger as greater, but God wants a heart set on doing His will for good no matter how many see it. The key to being like Jesus is letting God lead us, not in the size of our works.

Jesus' other promises about asking in John lead to the same conclusions as John 14:12-15. Here I add that the authority God gives to believers in Christ in Spirit-led praying in Ephesians leads to these same conclusions. Ephesians and these promises in John are discussed in Chapter 10 and Apx. 1-3 of *Destroying Spiritual Strongholds* (the PDF file and the preview of the whole book are free at www.lulu.com under James Tarter).

Jesus' promises in John are often misinterpreted as invitations to ask for anything we want, but they really refer to asking as Jesus would ask, which is asking according to His will (1John 5:14-15) and according to what the Father is doing in general and in specific people and situations. These Spirit-led prayers include a lifestyle of being led by the Spirit and actions consistent with these prayers.

Jesus' promises are unlimited for doing all that God wants us to do. Each believer can do wonderfully. After praying to the Father, Jesus fed over 5000 people with a few loaves and fishes, and if more people were there, He would have produced more food. Sometimes Jesus healed all who came to Him with all kinds of diseases. Believers will do the same works and greater, because He has gone to the Father to intercede for us (John 14:12) – but remember to use a good meaning of "greater", as we discussed in this chapter. God gives all believers in Jesus awesome authority and power, and He calls us to use it in our living situations with His wisdom and leading. When we let Him do His full good work in our hearts, we shall live in this reality.

About the Author (Jim Tarter)

I met God in 1972 when I was 27, a Ph.D. physicist and an agnostic. He quickly started showing me that Jesus authentically represented God, and that the Bible was His word. I started reading the Bible thinking that it was full of contradictions, but I got surprised. The Bible's contents provided much evidence to show that the Lord had inspired and then protected these contents to say precisely what He wanted them to say.

Having missed God so completely in my life and in the world, I read the Bible with a deep hunger to learn more about this One who knew my thoughts and who numbers the hairs on each person's head. I also joined a church in Pittsburgh, PA. The pastor was Joseph Garlington, who provided a rich spiritual foundation. This congregation had many other believers who had met Jesus and sought to put His word into practice. When I moved to Roanoke, VA, in 1978, I actively participated in another congregation that was "alive in Jesus". Such experiences helped me to learn more about God and His ways, and have provided many perspectives about His calling for the Church in the Bible, what we have done in reality, and what we need to do to fulfill His word concerning us.

I am an elder at Grace Covenant Church in Roanoke and taught in public schools in 1976-2009. I wrote two books in the 1990s: *God's Word to the United States* (especially from Obadiah) and *Why, God?* (from the book of Job). Updates of both books plus 16 other books about the Bible are available at www.lulu.com (you can type "James Tarter" in the "search" space on the web page).

In summers my wife Nita and I have taken extensive trips to South Sudan, the Congo, and elsewhere. Her heart for Jesus and sensitivity to His leadings have blessed me mightily and equipped me to go further in Christ Jesus and effective spiritual warfare.

Years after I first met God through Jesus, He started opening up whole books of the Bible, which provide life-giving perspectives that the vast majority of the Church has not yet appreciated. This book about our hearts is not from one book of the Bible, but provides a perspective that I believe can help many people now.