

## Exercise 3: Mind of Christ = Thinking Like Christ

(4) No longer live as unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking because of the deceitful lies of the world [the flesh and Satan] that harden their hearts to God's word. You, instead, by the Holy Spirit, be made new in the attitude of your mind and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness. [2 Cor 5:17; Ga 6:15] I affirm and insist on this in the Lord: No longer live as others in the futility of their minds ... but be renewed in the spirit of your mind and clothe yourself with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. [Eph 4:17,23]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(5) [Therefore, be alert.] No longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. [Eph 4:14] Do not conform any longer to the thinking patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then, you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. [Rom 12:2]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(6) For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets themselves up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make them obedient to Christ. [2 Cor 10:3-5]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 4A: Jesus Good/Evil Begins In One's Thoughts

### Jesus: Good and Evil Begins in the Thoughts of One's Heart

"Out of the thoughts of one's heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings out good from the good stored up in the thoughts of their hearts and the evil person brings out evil from the evil stored up in the thoughts of their hearts. [Mt

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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### Jesus: You will be held account for Idly Talk

Moreover, I tell you that if you speak idly—blabber without thinking—you will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every idle word spoken. By thoughtful words, you will be acquitted, and by thoughtless words, you will be condemned."

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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### Jesus: If your mind is pure, there will be sunshine in your soul.

"If your eye [mind] is pure (filled with thoughts of goodness and purity), there will be sunshine in your soul. But if your eye [mind] is clouded with evil thoughts and desires, you are in deep spiritual darkness. And oh, how deep that darkness can be!" [Mt 6: 22 - LTB]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 4B: Jesus on Repentance

### Jesus on Repent! = Change Totally Your Way of Thinking

Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” = “Totally change your way of thinking, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” [Mt 4:17]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented [totally changed their way of thinking and behaving] at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here! [Lk 11:32]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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Jesus said: “I tell you, \_\_\_\_\_; but unless you repent [radically change the thoughts of your heart], you will all perish as they did.” [Lk 13:2-3]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 5A: All are Tempted + the Path to Victory

(1) Since we have a great high priest—Christ Jesus—let us hold fast to our faith in him. Jesus himself has been tempted and tested. While Jesus has not sinned [given into temptation], Jesus has experienced it all [every sort of temptation] and is [fully aware of our struggles] and compassionately in touch with our reality. Therefore, be confident and draw near to his throne of grace and receive mercy and find help in time of temptation and testing. [Hebrews 4:14-16]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(2) When tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God cannot be tempted, nor does God tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived! [James 1:13-16] [The good news is that ] no temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. So when you are tempted, know that God will provide a way out so that you can endure it. [1 Cor 10:13]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(3) Be alert. Your enemy, the Father of Lies, prowls around looking to deceive you. Fight back by standing firm in the faith; ... These attacks won't last forever. It won't be long before our generous God ... will make you strong, firm and steadfast. God gets the last word; yes, God does. [1 Peter 5: 8-10]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 5B: All are Tempted + the Path to Victory

(5) Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials and temptations of any kind, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work of perfecting you [in Christ]. Blessed is the one who perseveres ..., that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. [James 1:2-4,12]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(6) If you lack wisdom [in facing temptations], ask God, who gives generously to all ... and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. [James 1:5-8]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(7) Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. Run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>fixing</sup> our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Moreover, in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. [He 12:1-4]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 6: Jesus' Response to Satan's Temptations

(1) Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him. [Mt 4:1-10]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(2) "The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of your heart." [Hebrew 4:12]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 7: Satan First Temptation: God is a Liar

(1) Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. [Ge 3:1-6]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you (as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of your knowledge of Christ. [2 Cor 11:1-3]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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No longer live as unbelievers do, in the futility of their thinking because of the deceitful lies of the world [the flesh and Satan] that harden their hearts to God's word. You, instead, by the Spirit, will be made new in the attitude of your mind and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness. [2 Cor 5:17; Ga 6:15]

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## Exercise 8A: God is Pure Goodness

(1) In the beginning ... God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>3</sup>God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.<sup>4</sup> And **God saw that the light was good.** Then God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ... <sup>12</sup>The earth brought forth vegetation: ... And **God saw that it was good.** ... <sup>14</sup> And God said, ... "let there be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. **And God saw that it was good.** <sup>20</sup> And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." **And God saw that it was good.** <sup>24</sup> And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind. ... And it was so. And **God saw that it was good.** <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; <sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And it was so. <sup>31</sup> **God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.** [Genesis 1:1-31]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(2) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. [Jn 3:16]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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(3) "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." [Mt 11: 28-30]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture reading.]

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## Exercise 8B: God is Pure Love

The text below is inspired by 1 Corinthians 13 and framed as a personal letter from God to you. It provides insight into who God truly is. Through faith and through the Spirit, hear God speaking directly to you. If a glimpse of God's loving character strikes you, **Stop! Be still and listen!** God is speaking directly to you.

I, your God, am love, pure love. I do love. I always love for it is my nature to love, to be merciful, and to do all in my power to bring you, \_\_\_\_\_, home to me.

As love is patient, I, your God, am patient. My nature is to be kind; I am pure kindness. I am humble and not boastful. I respect your dignity; I confirm your freedom, \_\_\_\_\_, even when you use it to hurt my heart. I am never abrasive, nor sarcastic. I can never be so. Such thoughts and words are against my very nature. Just thinking of the hurt they would cause you, \_\_\_\_\_, would sadden me.

I am never rude. I have never been rude to you, \_\_\_\_\_, my son/daughter, not ever, not even once. And I will never be rude to you, \_\_\_\_\_, never, not even once. I, your God, am always considerate of all your needs.

Even when you hurt me by your sins, I am slow to act upon the hurt I receive. I ponder the pain you cause me, see your own pain and your brokenness, and have great compassion for you, \_\_\_\_\_. I never act off the first impulse of my anger. I keep no record of wrongs. I do not delight in any evil you do or any evil that befalls you, \_\_\_\_\_.

I rejoice with the truth. I rejoice when you, \_\_\_\_\_, know the truth of WHO I AM. That truth will break the chains that tie your heart down. It will free your spirit to fly joyfully to me on eagle's wings. The Spirit is the eagle of joy. By, with, and in the Holy Spirit, soar joyfully to me, \_\_\_\_\_. I am the Truth.

I always protect you, \_\_\_\_\_. I always trust. I always hope that you will come to me with all your heart, and pursue my ways. My ways are filled with love, goodness and truth. And I always persevere in doing good for you, \_\_\_\_\_, and in loving you. There is no end to the pure goodness of my love. That is truth!

**I AM PERFECT LOVE.** That is **WHO I AM.**

Once you truly believe that **I AM WHO I AM**—no matter what you feel—you will love and trust me, even when faithfulness requires enduring effort. Then, my Son, the Spirit, you, \_\_\_\_\_, and I will strive together to bring all relationships into the kind, warm, and tender embrace of my humble, gentle and loving heart. [from Getting to Know God, pp. 4-5.]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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## Exercise 8C: Psalm 22 = Trust of God

By Edward Santana-Grace, PhD

### **“Why Have You Forsaken Me” in Psalm 22 Is a Manifestation of Deep Trust in God**

Some have mistakenly thought that Jesus’ cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” is a sign he had despaired of his Father’s pure goodness. If Jesus had actually given into the temptation to doubt God, the Father’s pure goodness, he would have sinned and hence would not be God incarnate, fully and truly God and fully and truly human, except in sin.

Now, while most Christians would not say that Jesus sinned even once, not a few unaware Christians have used this verse to permit themselves to give into the temptation and to really and truly doubt that is God’s pure goodness. Some actually nurture thoughts that God is cruel and punishing or that God does not love them. They obviously have sinned. To give into the temptation to doubt that God is pure goodness rather than to counter that doubt with belief in the love and pure goodness of the Father even if in that moment it is not apparent. Other Christians actually believe it is good and healthy to doubt God’s pure goodness. Other say it is just being human to doubt God’s pure goodness and they quote Jesus on the cross.

Given this misunderstanding that has lead many to sin and live in darkness, I have set before us Psalm in its entirety as it shows that Jesus “Why have you Forsaken me.” Is actually the first words to profound trust. Psalm is a conversation with God and in it is entirety it one that professes profound trust and ultimate victory over sin and death notwithstanding the apparent and clear horrible death that awaits Jesus on the cross.

In reading the psalm, let us be mindful that this is a form of direct address to God, that Jesus trusts God completely= that Jesus was a deep and pensive thinker, and that, given the role of memorization in Jesus culture, he probably knew the entire psalm by heart or, at least, the substance of the psalm, before he even began to utter the first words. The psalm begins:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. [PS 22:1-3]

Indeed, moments might have existed when God the Father allowed the Evil One to tempt Jesus into believing that his God had abandoned him on the cross. Granted this psalm that was on Jesus’ lips at the hour of his death (according to the gospel of Matthew and Mark) begins with a cry and a description of distress, but that is not where the psalm ends. As early as the beginning of the third verse, the psalm shifts from despair to victory with the powerful transitional word, >+=- which can also be translated: % "' % -\*+% "'-\*+0% \*(' 3, ' "-4&-\*\$-(' 3&' #%\*(-, ' +, +0-\*+1+\$\$5

**Yet, you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. [Ps 22:3-5]**

The remaining verses of the psalm seesaws back and forth between temptation and trust, between description of plight and description of victory and the ultimate triumphant of God. Note how each description of plight in Psalm 22 mirrors other Scriptural texts about the suffering Messiah. Note how the psalm affords Jesus, the \$/..+0&' #%\$+0, (' -- a response of trust and assurance of ultimate victory. It is as if Jesus', : >%8"3-%: >%8"3%4 \*>%\* (, +%>" /% .''0\$(?+' %) +=%\$ a cry of ultimate trust and final victory; it is as if Jesus has already foreseen the events of the passion, knows they are for our salvation, and sees future generations streaming to God's pure heart because of the cross. Let us listen to this seesaw of thoughts:

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." [Ps 22:6-8]

**Yet >"/%90"/#\*-%) +%"/-%".%\*+%4") 9@>"/%made me trust &' %>"/%+ , +' %(-% ) >%) "-\*+0A\$%90+(\$-5%80") %9&0-\*%7%4 (\$% (\$-%/C"" %>"/%0") % >%) "-\*+0A\$% 4") 9%>"/%\* (, +%9++' %) >%B"35%; "" "-9+% (0%0") %) +=% "0%0"/91+%&\$% +(0% (' 3%\*+0+%&\$% ""'' +% ""\*+1C5%[Ps 22:9-11]**

The Psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, then describes his plight, which seems like the series of events that Jesus sees unfolding before him:

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**But >"/=%1 %J I D; =%9+% "-% (0%''..@1 %) >%K-0+' #-\*=%1") +%L/&! ?1>% ""\*+1C%) +5% ; +1&, +0%) >%1&.+%.0") %-\*+%\$4"03-%) >%C0+!&''/\$%1&.+%.0") %-\*+%C"4+0%'' .%-\*+% 3"#\$5%&D+\$/+%) +%0") %\*+% ) ''/-\*%' .%\*+%&"" \$@%\$ (, +% ) +%0") %\*+%\*''0' \$%' .% -\*+%4&13%'M+' . [Ps 22:19-21]**

At the end of Psalm 22, the Psalmist is so sure of God's help and of God's ultimate triumph that it is easy to understand why Jesus chose to converse with God through this psalm. It proclaims God's ultimate victory: the triumph of God's &' '+0%#1"0> over evil, suffering, and death:

<sup>1</sup> Is 53:5; Ze 12:10; John 19:34, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 15:24; John 19:24

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation, I will praise you. You, who fear the LORD, praise him! **...For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.**

From you, O Lord, comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him--those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. **They will proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn saying that he (the Lord) has done it.** [Ps 22:22-31]

The psalm is not about 3+\$C(@ but God's ultimate ,&!"0>%over all injustices, terrible tribulations, and suffering. It is about an unwavering trust in God in the face of the worst of evil.

Indeed, Jesus' trust in God's pure goodness is guided and informed by the Scriptures, and, in this instance when he on the cross, Psalm 22 is a bold proclamation of Jesus trust in God and in the Father pure goodness and love. Jesus' scripture based knowledge of who God truly is assures the \$/.+0&' #%\$+0, ('-%that his passion has its origins in the compassionate, loving, faithful, and merciful heart of God, his Father. Because of this assurance, Jesus is able not only to overcome the temptation to doubt and despair of God—as we all will be tempted at one time or another. Instead, he is empowered to embrace the cross with equanimity, to scorn its shame, and to receive joy from the knowledge of the saving effects of his sacrifice. [Hebrews 12:1-4]

In other words, because of Jesus' profound conviction of God's C/0+%#"3' +\$\$, he is able to embrace fully the Father's plan and to trust the Father's love-filled wisdom in his death on the cross. In the midst of real physical agony and temptations to believe that his Father has abandoned him, Jesus' heart remains filled with trust in his Father. Jesus so loves and trusts his Father's \*/) 91+-%(--+' -&, +-%C/0+%#"3' +\$\$ that he knows the cross can only reflect his Father's ultimate love of all God's children. Jesus can and does embrace the cross with deep peace, confident of its good and redeeming purposes.

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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## Exercise 9: A Powerful Vaccine Against Temptations

(1) Do not worry about your life, or what you will eat, drink, or wear. Can you by worrying add a single hour to your life? O you of little faith. Do not worry. Your heavenly Father knows your needs. **Instead, set your mind on God’s kingdom and what is right in God’s eyes.** Then, all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow. Each day has challenges enough and I will help you get through them. [Mt 6:24-34]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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### **My Daily Bread – Link to MDB Guided by the Coach**

(2) “A new command I give you, as I have loved you so you must love others.” [Jn 13:34]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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(3) “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be a true child of your Father in heaven. Be, therefore, boundless in goodness [toward your enemy], as your heavenly Father’s goodness is boundless [toward you]. [Mt 5:43-45, 48]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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(4) “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>or</sup> rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” [1 Cor 13:4-8]

[Write down what the Holy Spirit has convicted you of during the Scripture paraphrasing.]

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## Romans 7: Torn Between One Way and Another

<sup>1-3</sup> You shouldn't have any trouble understanding this, friends, for you know all the ins and outs of the law—how it works and how its power touches only the living. For instance, a wife is legally tied to her husband while he lives, but if he dies, she's free. If she lives with another man while her husband is living, she's obviously an adulteress. But if he dies, she is quite free to marry another man in good conscience, with no one's disapproval.

<sup>4-6</sup> So, my friends, this is something like what has taken place with you. When Christ died he took that entire rule-dominated way of life down with him and left it in the tomb, leaving you free to "marry" a resurrection life and bear "offspring" of faith for God. For as long as we lived that old way of life, doing whatever we felt we could get away with, sin was calling most of the shots as the old law code hemmed us in. And this made us all the more rebellious. In the end, all we had to show for it was miscarriages and stillbirths. But now that we're no longer shackled to that domineering mate of sin, and out from under all those oppressive regulations and fine print, we're free to live a new life in the freedom of God.

<sup>7</sup> But I can hear you say, "If the law code was as bad as all that, it's no better than sin itself." That's certainly not true. The law code had a perfectly legitimate function. Without its clear guidelines for right and wrong, moral behavior would be mostly guesswork. Apart from the succinct, surgical command, "You shall not covet," I could have dressed covetousness up to look like a virtue and ruined my life with it.

<sup>8-12</sup> Don't you remember how it was? I do, perfectly well. The law code started out as an excellent piece of work. What happened, though, was that sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of "forbidden fruit" out of it. The law code, instead of being used to guide me, was used to seduce me. Without all the paraphernalia of the law code, sin looked pretty dull and lifeless, and I went along without paying much attention to it. But once sin got its hands on the law code and decked itself out in all that finery, I was fooled, and fell for it. The very command that was supposed to guide me into life was cleverly used to trip me up, throwing me headlong. So sin was plenty alive, and I was stone dead. But the law code itself is God's good and common sense, each command sane and holy counsel.

<sup>13</sup> I can already hear your next question: "Does that mean I can't even trust what is good [that is, the law]? Is good just as dangerous as evil?" No again! Sin simply did what sin is so famous for doing: using the good as a cover to tempt me to do what would finally destroy me. By hiding within God's good commandment, sin did far more mischief than it could ever have accomplished on its own.

<sup>14-16</sup> I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I

act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

<sup>17-20</sup> But I need something ) "0+! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't 3" it. I decide to do good, but I don't 0+ (11> do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

<sup>21-23</sup> It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

<sup>24</sup> I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

<sup>25</sup> The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. [MSG Romans 7:1-25

## A Personal Experience of Romans 7 Conflict and Victor in Christ at Age 19



## Romans 8 Describes Life When Christ is Chosen in Response to Sin

<sup>1-2</sup> With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

<sup>3-4</sup> God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was ..., could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for—but we couldn't deliver—is accomplished [in Christ], we, instead of redoubling our own efforts [trying ever harder to lift ourselves up by our own boot straps], simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

<sup>5-8</sup> Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what God is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

<sup>9-11</sup> But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!

<sup>12-14</sup> So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

<sup>15-17</sup> This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

<sup>18-21</sup> That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

<sup>22-25</sup> All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's ~~4&\*&'~~ us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

<sup>26-28</sup> Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

<sup>29-30</sup> God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.

<sup>31-39</sup> So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely '""-\*&' # can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us. [Romans 8:1-39 MSG]