Proclaiming
The Gospel of Jesus Christ
(Of both blood and body aspects)

Part 2 - Complementary Issues

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This is not the main study of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but does include many important complementary aspects of the basic study. What has been done so far in the first part of the study completes the basic teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, covering both blood and body effects resulting from the death and resurrection of Christ. In that study we have already covered how our sins are forgiven and how sin is defeated so that we may reign in life. That study is located at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/index-gr.html

However, there are a significant number of related issues that are now addressed, in order to extend and complement the whole study. I realized that it would be necessary to explain some of these, because in part they underpin the understanding of the Gospel itself. Perhaps this document should even be read first. This study will be written in a question and answer format. Please note that most of these explanations are brief, and are not meant to be comprehensive or complete in nature, only addressing the central issues of each question. However, further references will be given in either books or Internet addresses where readers wish to pursue a greater understanding on a particular issue.

Issues related to this study – in question and answer format

Here are the questions to be addressed.

1. What is the nature of man? What differences are there between believers and unbelievers? Do believers have two conflicting natures?

2. How are God and man (now) different given that we were created in His image? Given man’s fall in Eden, how can it be said that man and God can now still have union and communion?

3. How does God provide real guidance to believers? How does such guidance relate to our spirit, soul and body? How do we avoid the confusion that comes from thoughts and feelings in our soul? How are these things related to the rest mentioned in Hebrews 4. What effect does the Holy Spirit and Satan have on the spirit, soul and body of the believer?

4. What is real faith? In what realm does it operate? How can it be learned and implemented? How does one see beyond evil and difficulty?

5. What is sanctification? Is it sometimes described or interpreted incorrectly?

6. What is the role of adversity in life according to God? How is it that a God of love can send or permit suffering, difficulty and persecution and use it as a means of growing faith in us?

7. As the Bibles says that Christians are freed from sin, do they actually sin?
Using Romans 7:14-25, explain how some Bible commentaries can confuse rather than enlighten?

Here is a discussion on each issue – in question and answer format.

1. What is the nature of man? What differences are there between believers and unbelievers? Do believers have two conflicting natures?

Let the reader be reminded that these notes are intentionally brief, just to give guidance as to the general idea of what is being said – a pointer if you like. Further references are given where readers can extend their knowledge of each point by further study.

1.1. What is the nature of man?

Let us start with two scriptures from the New Testament that talk about our nature. The main way the word nature is used in the New Testament is to describe the natural disposition or condition of man. This is the Greek word phusis, Strong’s 5449. In the KJV only two of the thirteen verses that use the word nature actually use an adjective to describe the noun (nature). All the others just refer to being as per man’s general state, as a believer or unbeliever. (There are 4 other Greek words for nature, not here relevant – the meanings of the word nature in these cases is as follows – nature is either a constituted order of God in the natural world, a natural birth or condition, or a kind or species of living creature) So in these two verses we have described for us the two possible natures that a human being can have. Either we are by nature children of wrath (before our regeneration) or children of the divine nature (after our regeneration).

“by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Pet. 1:4 (NKJV)

“among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” Eph. 2:3 (NKJV)

The New Testament does not talk about any other state, or any state in between these two. There is no independent state which man can have, as many would believe. We are either one or the other. Please see the expansion of these ideas below.

1.2 What differences are there between believers and unbelievers?

**Believers**, those referred to as born again or regenerate, have the divine nature. In scripture they are referred to as being temples, vessels, parts of a body, branches, and slaves.

**Temples.** “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Cor. 6:19-20 (NKJV)

**Vessels.** “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,” Rom. 9:22-23 (NKJV)
Parts of a body.  "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Eph. 1:22-23 (NKJV)

Branches. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5 (NKJV)

Slaves. "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Rom. 6:17-18 (NKJV)

Temples need to have the true God as deity living within them, as a permanent resident, give them direction for their lives. (otherwise, in the absence of the Spirit of God, either the independent self of the person, or Satan as an alternative deity, or some combination of both self and Satan will reign)

Vessels need to be filled in order to be useful.
Parts of bodies need a head to control them.
Branches need a vine or trunk to get sustenance.
Slaves need a master to direct them.

So all human beings were designed to be filled with the deity of the Spirit of God. To be filled with the Spirit of that deity, they need that deity to be a head for their body, they need to be connected to a source (trunk) and they need someone to direct them. Human beings are not some independent entity separate from a deity, although this is the way many people unknowingly live. They either belong to the true God, through His Spirit, or they live their live through there own resources of an independent self, even being partly directed by Satan. Believers prior to their regeneration, were children of wrath and sons of disobedience because of the Fall. However, they have been removed from Satan's ownership through having taken the opportunity to be children of the true and living God when they switch from being in control of themselves and Satan, to being in control of the true and living God.

On the other hand, unbelievers are not born again and therefore unregenerate, not having the Holy Spirit of God indwelling them. Satan and their own fleshly appetites are still their master and head, even if they do not know it; they are operating under the spiritual direction of their own soul and the enemy, and as such are sons of disobedience. And they are still subject to God's wrath.

1.3 Do believers have two conflicting natures?

In one sense this question has already been answered. No, they do not have conflicting natures, despite the readiness of much of the Christian church to teach this. They either have one nature or the other, ruled by the true God or themselves and Satan. When born they have the nature which attracts the wrath of God. When saved, born again, or regenerate, (all meaning the same thing ) they are given the divine nature. In order to fully answer this question we will now provide some details on the fact that there are only two sides of the spiritual world and therefore only two natures.

There are in fact only two sides to the spiritual world. Remember that the spiritual world is that part of our world that in effect controls all other physical parts of the world, and is administered by God. These include all things we call nature, all nations, kings and rulers and all spiritual powers and authorities. The spiritual control is also over our own bodies, souls and our spirit. God is over both sides of the spiritual world and Satan is granted temporary and conditional control over parts of it.
It is quite clear that there is no neutral position somewhere in-between where a person can be, not fully committed to either. Either we are on one side or the other. Jesus said this when He remarked:

"He who is not with Me is against Me, ...."  (Mat 12:30)  and:

"For he who is not against us is on our side. (Mark 9:40)

There is no sitting on the fence. Consider the following comparisons. The Bible mentions no middle ground between these extremes.

Every persons life:

* is with God or against Him.    Luke 16:13
* is in the Kingdom of God or of Satan. Acts 26:18
* is in light or darkness. Acts 26:18
* uses the Spirit of truth or spirit of error. John 4:6
* is as slaves of righteousness or of lawlessness. Romans 6:19
* is with sin dwelling in us or free from sin and death. Romans 8:2
* is as a new man or as the old man. Col 3:9-10
* is lived by the Spirit or under the Law. Gal 5:18
* is either everlasting life or a life corrupted. Gal 6:8
* is lived by the power of God or Satan. Acts 26:1
* is as a child of God or a child or wrath. Eph 2:3, Rom 8:16
* is lived as peace or as dead in trespasses. Eph 2:5, Rom 8:6
* is justified or condemned. Romans 5:18
* is lived from God's wisdom or man's wisdom. 1 Cor 2:12-14

1.4.  Relationship to Romans 7

So from what we have looked at here, all people are in a position of either being not of God - or of God. There is no other position or anything in-between the two. Paul, while he was having his Romans 7 experience had been confused about what was happening, until the Holy Spirit gave him the wisdom and knowledge he needed to see the truth. He was really operating back in Satan's realm through the deception of Satan by trying to live by the Law he knew so well. Because he was saved, he could have operated fully within the realm of God, but because he did not know he was fully in that realm already, he allowed his sin to confuse him and make him doubt his true state.

But for Paul this was a temporary state, until the Spirit of God taught him his true position in Christ. Consequently, present day Christians who do not realize the full implications of a wrong interpretation of Romans 7, thinking they are operating in both spiritual realms, can never truly get into the fullness of life offered, that is inherent in a full understanding of the passage. There are several articles explaining Romans 7:14-25 listed at: http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/index-gr.html

We close this section with an apt quotation from Dan Stone, who provides Christians with some advice about the difficulty of seeing these truths.

“Choosing to believe that you are not both good and evil can be difficult. All the external proof, all of the apparent evidence, all of the sight, supports the opposite: that you have two natures. You are good, yes, a little good, but boy, you are still wicked; you are still evil. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to you that you only have one nature, not two. In the core of your being you are NOT both righteous and sinful; you are only righteous.”  (Stone pp 90)
1.5. Why this issue is important

Finally, it might enlighten the reader further if something is said about why a knowledge of the nature of man and the two spiritual realms is important. Without the wisdom of God, both through His Word and through the guidance of the Spirit of God, mankind can and will get everything in life screwed up. That is easy to see. So if we do not realize that there are only two spiritual states in which a man or woman can exist, then our imagination may result in some sort of error into our lives – it is almost inevitable.

If there is one section of scripture that might cause an error like this to occur it is Romans 7:14-25, which on the surface, seem to indicate that Paul did not have control over what he did, as though God was not enough or that Satan was just too much for him. We know that Paul’s life was not like that at all. It was a magnificent victorious life. Readers should refer to articles about Romans 7 listed at [http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/index-gr.html](http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/index-gr.html) Articles such as The Phantom of Romans 7 and Romans 7 – Another Look. They fully explain Paul’s life and how that period of Romans 7 was really Paul reporting on a short period of his life whilst the Holy Spirit taught him the whole truth.

The trouble is that many Christians are still believing from the one section of scripture that Paul did not have control over his life, when all other sections said that he did. So Christians who believe that Paul had trouble with two apparent natures, still believe that we also might experience this same thing today. And we do. But it is only because we have not realized by faith, the full value of the cross, as Paul himself did - as he learned his lesson from the Holy Spirit.

Paul acted as though he was some separate self who could fight against sin and who could do right if he chose to do so. But, as he found out, he could not. But when he found out that he was only a vessel with no power in himself, he said “what a wretched man am I”, realizing that Satan had deceived him into believing that he could live by his own power from this supposed separate state. It was then that he found out the ultimate mystery of God – that the life of Jesus Christ was actually in him and could control his life. He did not have to try to produce life himself. Christ my life, as scripture says. The God that was in Paul was greater than the god who was in the world, as John remarked in his letter,

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” [1 John 4:4](http://www.bible.com/1john.1.4.htm) (NKJV)

Paul did not have to try to produce life. The life of Jesus was already in Him. It was just that he had not fully realized it yet. The Holy Spirit had to set him aside for 3 years in Arabia and Damascus in order to teach him these truths.

Many Christians of my acquaintance (including myself until 1999) still consider themselves to be independent selves and having a human nature of their own. The truth is that we don’t have any nature at all. We only express the nature of the deity which resides in us, and manifest the nature of whatever deity controls us – Satan in our unregenerate state and God in our regenerate state – it’s just that we have not realized it! As we said, there are only two sides to the spiritual realm, one controlled by Satan under God’s supervision and the other entirely controlled by God. Scripture does not provide any other option or alternative. The references given here explain this far better than we can here in this short article. Each of those books are quite brilliant. However, I believe every word I have written here – it is from my heart – not taken from books. It is now hard to see how we could not see this profound truth much earlier in our life, so simple, profound and wonderful as it is.

Many Christians are confused on this whole issue. Readers should consider taking time out to study this and related topics.

Further reading may be done from the following resources.
1. **How are God and man (now) different**, given that we were created in His image? **Given man’s fall in Eden, how can it be said that man and God can now still have union and communion?**

Again, this is intended to be only a brief introduction to this topic – to whet the appetite. Extensive references are supplied for readers to further their understanding from writings with far more depth and breadth than mine.

2.1. **Man was created in God’s image**

The following verses explain the creation of man by God, and in the image of God.

> “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness: let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”  
> “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Gen. 1:26-27 (NKJV)

So there can be little argument that in the beginning, man was fashioned in the image of God. We do know from scripture that if Adam and Eve had not sinned by being deceived by Satan, and utilized their given freedom of choice more wisely, they would have lived forever. However, that was not to be, as it was foreordained by God that they would follow the pathway of sin, and set in motion a vastly different world where Satan, overseen by God, would become the god of this world, until God again reigns in His fullness.

2.2. **How are God and man now different?**

The fall of man changed mankind and the nature of the world forever. Man’s choice of eating from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was being disobedient to God’s directive. God said of this choice,

> “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.”— Gen. 3:22 (NKJV)

In essence, whilst **God is still God** with all His infinite attributes, the state of man drastically changed at that point in history. Man could have continued to trust and rely on God totally and be cared for forever by virtue of his continued obedience, but chose an independent way that would leave him open to the sin and evil that was now evident in the world. Adam’s choice revealed that he did not know that mankind could never be an independent...
self and rely on himself to manage his life, because in that act of disobedience, man moved from being filled with the Spirit of God to being a son of disobedience, because Satan was now his master – as per Paul’s writing to the Ephesians.

“…according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,” Eph. 2:2 (NKJV)

Satan is that prince of the power of the air, who, as the verse says, works in all unbelievers. One very serious aspect of this is that man, influenced by Satan now lives on earth in a self-centered state - the hallmark of Satan’s character. There is no doubt that Satan tricked and deceived Adam and Eve into this changed state. James Fowler said that:

“they (Adam and Eve) had been duped by the humanistic premise of humane self-potential and self-sufficiency.” (Fowler p 32)

As has been written in Part 1 in this study, all mankind are vessels that are either filled with one deity or the other – with Satan or God. Man under God knows this truth (or should know it) but man under Satan has been deceived into believing that he is independent and can act according to his own opinions and decide how to live his life. In effect, all that does is that the man puts himself under the control of Satan. That deception of man is revealed in Paul’s writings of Romans 7:14-25 and explained in several articles at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/index-gr.html

So in summary, God is still God with all his infinite attributes and man has been moved from being under the control of God to under the control of Satan, whilst still under the deception that he controls his own life.

2.3. How can it be said that man and God can now still have union and communion?

Is all then lost for the first sinful man? Is man then under this evil influence forever?

2.3.1 Adam and Eve

Fortunately, there is and was a remedy, even for Adam and Eve. God forgave the sin of Adam and Eve, providing them with a salvation that lasts forever. This is represented and symbolized by the garments he provided to cover them, these garments coming from a blood sacrifice.

“Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”
Gen. 3:21 (NKJV)

In effect God had covered their sin, the equivalent of forgiveness in today’s terms. This salvation God provided gave Adam and Eve an acceptance before Him. Just as any present day person who becomes regenerate and a child of God, Old Testament people such as Adam and Eve, enjoy the same protection from God’s wrath, cleansing from sin and restoration of the previously lost fellowship with God. By the grace of God, Adam and Eve were restored to fellowship with God very soon after their sin. However, they had lost the opportunity to live forever, would eventually experience physical death, but would be resurrected with other saints from both Old Testament, New Testament and present day times – to live forever with God. So for the period of time that Adam and Eve lived they had union and communion restored to them by God, and although this was far more limited than their former perfect state of communion, God was still their God and they were still His children.

2.3.2. New Testament and present day peoples.
Present day peoples not only have the Old Testament experience to learn from, but also the historical evidence that Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people for all time. Present day peoples have the evidence of the New Testament, where the life of Jesus Christ is described in detail, where His life, death and resurrection can still provide the way to eternal life and fullness of life on earth.

However, there is also a choice to be made here for all potential believers. Moreover, it is a choice to be made from a very difficult and confusing state – because mankind without God and under Satan’s control sees himself as an independent being not needing God and wanting none of Him. From this apparently helpless state, God through His Holy Spirit can still draw people to Him, convict them of their sin and save them unto eternal life. Sometimes, the witnessing of Christian believers either with the witness of their life or their words may be the catalyst for this to happen. Mature believers may be called upon by God to stand in the gap as intercessors for those who do not yet believe.

When this process leads an unbeliever to submit themselves to God’s will, confessing their previous disobedience and sin, God can regenerate them, which brings the new life of Jesus Christ into the believer, replacing the old life which is now dead. In this state a new believer then has complete union with God and can therefore communicate with Him through their human spirit on the basis of faith through this new relationship, and bearing in mind all of God’s extensive range of provisions and promises.

So, although man was made in perfection and fell from grace through his sin, restored man is again able to communicate with God through his spirit.

**Further reading**

Further reading for this section that will enhance the readers understanding of this brief introduction, is as follows.


3 How does God provide real guidance to believers? How does such guidance relate to our spirit, soul and body? How do we avoid the confusion that comes from thoughts and feelings in our soul? Relate these things to the rest mentioned in Hebrews 4. What effect does the Holy Spirit and Satan have on the spirit, soul and body of the believer?

Again, this description will be as brief as possible, with references given for further extensive reading on this very interesting and important aspect of faith living.

True guidance from the Holy Spirit is every Christian's dream. To be able to have two way communication with the Spirit of God Himself is not the overtly obvious gifting of every
believer, but yet most desire it and would treasure such guidance if they found this to be possible. So this section is to provide some basic understanding of this issue, covering basic answers to each of the questions above.

We should start by saying that the most common understanding of human beings is that they have a body in which a soul resides and in which a spirit is also resident. The body is what can be seen of our physical body. (including our internal organs) Our soul is generally understood to have three functions, that of intellect (or understanding) emotions and our will, with which we decide to do this or that. (We will see later that this should not be the primary influence guiding us) Then there is our human spirit, which can only receive from the Spirit of God by the process of revelation, which is an action of God’s Spirit. Our human spirit cannot think. It is the doorway by which we communicate with God. The best scripture to confirm that these three elements are in the human form is from Paul’s writings to the Thessalonians.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. 5:22-23 (NKJV)

So, with that brief background, let us go to each issue.

3.1. How does God provide real guidance to believers? How does such guidance relate to our spirit, soul and body?

Simply put, the Spirit of God Himself was and is intended to communicate via the human spirit of man. Information received by our human spirit from the Spirit of God can then be considered intellectually and experienced emotionally in our soul. Then, after considerations are made concerning its relevance a decision can then be made that can be enacted through a decision of the will.

The soul and body are the expressors of the human spirit guided by the Holy Spirit. Although there are scriptural instances where God has audibly spoken to people, his normal method is absolutely quiet as it was with Elijah in 1 Kings 19. To achieve this hearing, a quiet soul that does not interfere with God speaking to us through our spirit is more fertile ground than competing with a noisy or confused soul. That is why the writer to the Hebrews instructed us about the separation of soul and spirit in Hebrews 4.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb. 4:12 (NKJV)

Notice in this verse that it is the Spirit that speaks the Word of God into us acting as the powerful separating agent that divides the soul and spirit of a believer.

This ability to communicate with the Holy Spirit of God is made possible by our being in union with Him – as though one. As Paul reminds us – we are one in spirit with Him

“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” 1 Cor. 6:17 (NKJV)

This of course is based on our regeneration and the receiving of the life of Christ within us in exchange for our old Adamic life. Remember the “Christ in you” of Colossians 1:27. So if the Spirit of Christ is in us, and we are joined together in one spirit, we are in union with Him, just as the branch of the vine is a part of the vine itself.

For further studies on this aspect, read the following.

Dan Stone explains union with Christ in detail in Chapter 7 of The Rest of the Gospel.
3.2. How do we avoid the confusion that comes from thoughts and feelings?

By definition, thoughts and feelings are in our soul, thoughts being a part of our intellect and feelings being our emotions. As we all know, both our thoughts and feelings can be wildly erratic. For example, if we receive the shock of bad news, or as spoken to in rude fashion, or are let down badly by someone, our emotions and then our thought processes can and do easily react in strange ways. We can seem to lose control, become confused or angry and not know what to do. The fortunate thing about all this is that God knows all about this sort of reaction as he made us that way deliberately. One of the reasons for this would be that difficult circumstances are designed by Him to draw us into a deeper faith, so that we get to know God better and rely on Him more than we presently do. That is one of the purposes of Him allowing adversity to visit us - so we look to Him for answers. Although that can be a most difficult process, it does seem to be one of God’s ways of refining us and having us rely more directly on Him.

We can therefore reason that as God knows of our wild fluctuations in our soul, He must expect that in difficult circumstances, or just in the normal rough and tumble of life, that we can still know Him and His peace. There are many scriptural passages that confirm this.

“My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Psa. 73:26 (NKJV)

“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Isa. 41:10 (NKJV)

“And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2 Cor. 12:9 (NKJV)

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27 (NKJV)

To avoid any confusion between our soul and our spirit, so that our spirit can receive revelation from the Spirit of God, we need to know who we are in Christ and what we can expect the Lord to do in our lives, bearing in mind not only the promises of scripture but also the great provisions of the gospel. These provisions of the Gospel are most important, yet seem to be passed over by many in the church. One of the most apt sayings that warns against forgetting these provisions already made at the cross is from Prebendary H.W. Webb Peploe. He said:

“Never turn God’s facts into hopes, or prayers, but simply use them as realities, and you will find them powerful as you believe them.” (Streams in the Desert August 5th)

That is the reason for writing the study called Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the precursor to this study. It can be found at http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthgr-10.html and fully explains why it is useless to pray for or hope for what we already have been given. All we need to do is believe, and God does the rest for us, based on our faith in Him and what He has done through Jesus Christ.

Knowing these doctrinal aspects well and having had the Holy Spirit witness them to us by His Spirit, we can then expect the Lord to speak to us by His quiet voice in our human spirit. Sometimes we may need to cultivate this activity by deliberately taking quiet times to listen
or ask and listen. However, in my experience the Lord is not constrained from speaking during the rough and tumble of everyday life.

One of the difficulties of the Christian life (and not taught often or well) is that many of us, in our relative immaturity and lack of knowledge of these things, can be influenced by our own emotions and our thoughts. I have heard some people even say, “Well, that is how I feel”, as though the emotions being experienced should be the predominate factor in making a decision. They should be a part of it, but unless guided by the Spirit of God, can lead to wrong decisions and actions. Likewise, using thoughts that are based on human wisdom rather than the wisdom of the Lord can also lead to wrong thoughts and actions. A good example of this principle is when George Mueller was travelling the Atlantic ocean and needed to get to Quebec on time to keep an appointment. Here is what happened.

 Mueller said: “Captain I have come to tell you that I must be in Quebec Saturday afternoon.” The Captain said; “It is impossible.” Mueller replied: “Very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement for fifty-seven years. Let us go down into the chart-room and pray.”

The Captain looked at that man of God, and thought to himself, what lunatic asylum can that man have come from? I never heard of such a thing as this. “Mr. Mueller,” I said, “do you know how dense this fog is?” “No,” he replied, “my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life.” He knelt down and prayed one of the most simple prayers, and when he had finished I was going to pray; but he put his hand on my shoulder, and told me not to pray. “First, you do not believe He will answer; and second I BELIEVE HE HAS, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it,” (Streams, August 17th)

The prayer of course had been answered. In this story, Mueller was operating in his human spirit from whence he received God’s assurance. The Captain of the ship, although a devoted Christian, was viewing things from his soul, where his thoughts were experiencing the reality of what he saw, and not the reality of what God was actually doing in the Spirit.

Personally I am still learning these things, and always will be, but the extreme confusions I once experienced from my focus on my thoughts and feelings are now less, as I now am learning to wait in faith and silence for God to reveal His ways. The pain, persecution or anxiety or whatever other negative may still be still felt, but it is felt in the context of God revealing His answers.

An excellent full description of this issue is in The Swing, Chapter 7 of Dan Stone’s book called The Rest of the Gospel.

Norman Grubb also puts it his way in That Soul – Spirit understanding, Chapter 30 of Yes I Am.

3.3. How are these things related to the rest mentioned in Hebrews 4?

The first eleven verses in Hebrews 4 are often overlooked in how they relate to the fullness of life possible through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In these verses the writer looks back to the examples of the rest taken by God after creation and the rest that would have been possible for the Hebrews had they believed in what God had said and had they not been disobedient to His word. Before the point is explained further, please read these verses.

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:
“So I swore in My wrath,  
‘They shall not enter My rest,’”

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest” Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts.”

“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.  

Heb. 4:1-11 (NKJV)

3.3.1 Two things are quite clear.

- Through unbelief and disobedience God’s people of that time did not enter into His rest. God said: “They shall not enter My rest,”

- There remains a rest for the people of God providing there is belief and obedience of and for God’s full provisions in the Gospel. The obedience of faith is a primary requisite. Without faith, belief and obedience, we cannot enter in to that rest for which God has provided.

In addition, God warns against not entering into that rest due to disobedience.

3.3.2. What is this rest that God speaks about here?

It is the nature and character of our life that is lived:

- When we believe God (and what He has said and done for us)
- When we live in the faith (of that believing)
- When we have rested from our own works. (attempting to run our life in our way)
- When we are not disobedient. (to His word)
- When our hearts are not hardened.
- When His word is united in faith to us.
- When we know we can have this rest today.

3.3.2. What else do we need to know to achieve this rest?

We need to know and remember:

- That there is a distinction between soul and spirit and it is the work of God’s Spirit to divide between the two. As and when this is done, we can more easily know when God is speaking to our human spirit and separate out our soul thoughts and feelings. We should expect God to do this work in us so we can live as though He has. This verse explains.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.  

Heb. 4:12 (NKJV)
That having this rest should be the normal state of every believer and not some special super spiritual state.

That having this rest is based on the knowledge that Christ is in us and controlling our lives, if we but let Him. The verses following remind us of this.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Gal. 2:20 (NKJV)

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col. 1:27 (NKJV)

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,” Col. 2:6 (NKJV)

“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Col. 3:4 (NKJV)

That we cannot operate alone or independently without a spirit deity. As someone said to me “we are just clay pots”. (remember that the nature of our humanity is that we are only vessels or a temple or a body filled with a deity, branches attached to a vine, or slaves to the deity we have residing in us) Reminders of these things can be found above in the section on The Nature of Man.

That we only receive according to our faith. Without true biblical faith we get nothing.

“Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” Matt. 9:29 (NKJV)

And if what we do is not based on faith – then it is called sin.

“But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.” Rom. 14:23 (NKJV)

An excellent full explanation of this point can be found in Chapter 25 – Entering God’s Rest – of Dan Stone’s book The Rest of the Gospel.

3.4. What effect does the Holy Spirit and Satan have on the spirit, soul and body of the believer?

It is generally considered that God works from the inside out of a person and that Satan is permitted by God to work from the outside in. In other words, God works by influencing us by His Spirit which then positively affects our soul, which benefits our body. Satan however, influences our body and if given some authority over it as in Job’s case, then can afflict quite seriously. Satan also has the ability of being able to send fiery darts into our mind and emotions to influence us away from God and towards evil or otherwise fleshly pursuits.

Ultimately man’s only protection is from God. The more the man is prone towards evil and the fleshly appetites of man, (thus being disobedient to God) the more Satan is able to attack his body and soul, always of course under the jurisdiction of God. Remember that God’s sovereignty over all things is true in all situations. Conversely, the more the man follows hard after God with faith, trust and obedience, the more his body and soul benefit from the influence that comes through God’s Spirit.
So, despite confusions about doctrines and from thoughts and feelings, we are able to have our soul separated from our human spirit and not only receive guidance, but also the rest that results from belief, obedience and resting from our own works.

Someone once asked me the following question, which forced me to think a little further on the subject. Here is the exchange between us.

**Question.** "I've been thinking about how we actually talk to God. Isn't it our brains/minds/souls that 'talk' to Him? Is it our soul or our spirit? The notes mentioned that the spirit doesn't think. How can it 'communicate' then? Also, God said to Isaiah (1:18) "let us reason together" so it can't be all spirit stuff. ???

**Response.** I tend to think of the human spirit as a doorway. Before conversion the doorway is of little use as the spirit is dead. When alive it provides a two-way access between God and us because the human spirit has been regenerated and is alive. However from that point on we get into the realm of mystery. Perhaps the human spirit has a capacity to give and receive communication without us really knowing how. However, it also could be that the spirit merely acts as a doorway and provides access for God to activate his communications through our spirits into our minds (part of soul) I don't know and I doubt if it matters. I don't have to know how my carburettor works in order to drive a car. Now for the Isaiah bit. God knows that our spirits and soul are integrated in some way and therefore knows that reason is part of intellect (soul) and is therefore a part of the whole communication system. Perhaps God speaks through the human spirit to reach the mind where we can then reason. Also, don't forget that the NT tells us that we have the mind of Christ. I realize my response is incomplete but it may help in some small way. If God wants you to know how it all works He will tell you. Remember trust (and obey) If He doesn't just believe that what He has provided will work anyway.

**4. What is real faith? In what realm does it operate? How can it be learned and implemented? How does one see beyond evil and difficulty into faith?**

For almost the first 20 years of my Christian life in the evangelical church – from around 1979 to 1998 I did not have a true personal faith as I now see and understand faith, although I had thought that I had. During 1998 the Lord began to press me into a study of prayer and then faith. Not a very exciting prospect one would think! However, it has turned out to be just the opposite. It has been one of the most exciting and enlightening trips of my life – and continues to be so.

But first I should hasten to explain, that I was just like most other believers about me, thinking that all the things we used to do as believers was pretty normal. I was pretty keen on prayer, even writing and publishing a prayer diary that proved very popular. I believed I had received good teaching. I thought and acted as a normal every day baptized Bible believing Christian, but when I prayed I now see my prayer as having been more a prayer of hope than a prayer of faith. I had little knowledge of how to walk in faith on everyday issues, nor stand in faith on difficult issues.

Then I happened upon a book on prayer written by Professor Henry Emerson Fosdick, called The Meaning of Prayer. It was published in Australia in 1921. A summary of the book is on my site at [http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthfl-01.html](http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthfl-01.html) It is quite an amazing book, providing some degree of sophistication in prayer, way beyond where I had been. It was the beginning of my change, which still had many stages to come. So the following writing best explains a more realistic view of biblical faith at the time of writing in 2002.

**4.1. What is real Biblical faith?**
The standard definition of faith in the Bible is found in Hebrews.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Heb. 11:1 (NKJV)

However, as A.W. Tozer says, this definition of faith is what it is in operation and not what it is in essence. He then goes on to suggest that faith in essence is “the gaze of a (believing) soul upon a saving God”. (Tozer pp 81-82) In effect it is the believers attitude in looking to God in and for every aspect of his life. With Tozer’s definition in mind I am now going to present a number of different illustrations of faith.

I regularly read Streams in the Desert, the best devotional book one could ever imagine with regards to faith. Six illustrations are provided, some of them being from that book.

4.1.1. Childlike simplicity of faith.
4.1.2. Learning to wait patiently
4.1.3. Learning dependence upon God.
4.1.4. Accepting God’s sovereignty.
4.1.5. Learning reliance on God alone.
4.1.6. The leap of faith.

4.1.1. Child like simplicity of faith.

The devotional on February 18th beautifully demonstrates the simplicity of real faith. Read with me about the childlike faith of a 10 year old named Georgie. It is based on Mark 11:24.

“Have faith that whatever you ask for in prayer is already granted you, and you will find that it will be.”

“When my little son was about ten years of age, his grandmother promised him a stamp album for Christmas. Christmas came, but no stamp album, and no word from Grandmother. The matter, however, was not mentioned; but when his playmates came to see his Christmas presents, I was astonished, after he had named over this and that as gifts received, to hear him add, “And a stamp album from Grandmother.”

I had heard it several times, when I called him to me, and said, "But, Georgie, you did not get an album from your grandmother. Why do you say so? There was a wondering look on his face, as if he thought it strange that I should ask such a question, and he replied, "Well, Mamma, Grandma said, so it is the same as." I could not say a word to check his faith.

A month went by, and nothing was heard about the album. Finally, one day, I said, to test his faith, and really wondering in my heart why the album had not been sent, "Well, Georgie, I think Grandma has forgotten her promise." Oh, no Mamma," he quickly and firmly said, "she hasn’t!" I watched his dear trusting face, which, for a while, looked very sober, as if debating the possibilities I had suggested. Finally a bright light passed over it, and he said, "Mamma, do you think it would do any good if I should write to her thanking her for the album? “
I do not know," I said, "but you might try, it. A rich spiritual truth began to dawn upon me. In a few minutes a letter was prepared and committed to the mail, and he went off whistling his confidence in his grandma. In just a short time a letter came, saying:

"My dear Georgie: I have not forgotten my promise to you, of an album. I tried to get such a book as you desired, but could not get the sort you wanted; so I sent on to New York. It did not get there till after Christmas, and it was still not right, so I sent for another, and as it has not come as yet, I send you three dollars to get one in Chicago. Your loving grandma."

As he read the letter, his face was the face of a victor. "Now, Mamma, didn’t I tell you?" came from the depths of a heart that never doubted, that, "against hope, believed in hope" that the stamp album would come. While he was trusting, Grandma was working, and in due season faith became sight. It is so human to want sight when we step out on the promises of God, but our Saviour said to Thomas, and to the long roll of doubters who have ever since followed him: "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." (Streams Feb 18th)

Comment. So to Georgie, God’s promise of the album was as good as having the album. We need to have the same patience to wait for God to fulfil His promises, believing that the promise is as good as the substance itself.

4.1.2. Learning to wait patiently

One way of explaining this learning to wait patiently comes from Streams in the Desert.

God is never in a hurry but spends years with those He expects to greatly use. He never thinks the days of preparation too long or too dull. The hardest ingredient in suffering is often time. A short, sharp pang is easily borne, but when a sorrow drags its weary way through long, monotonous years, and day after day returns with the same dull routine of hopeless agony, the heart loses its strength, and without the grace of God, is sure to sink into the very sullenness of despair. Joseph’s was a long trial, and God often has to burn His lessons into the depths of our being by the fires of protracted pain. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," but He knows how long, and like a true goldsmith, He stops the fires the moment He sees His image in the glowing metal. We may not see now the outcome of the beautiful plan which God is hiding in the glowing shadows of His hand; it yet may be long concealed; but faith may be sure that He is sitting on the throne, calmly waiting the hour when, with adoring rapture, we shall say, 'All things have worked together for good.' Like Joseph, let us be more careful to
learn all the lessons in the school of sorrow than we are anxious for the hour of deliverance. There is a "need-be" for every lesson, and when we are ready, our deliverance will surely come, and we shall find that we could not have stood in our place of higher service without the very things that were taught us in the ordeal. God is educating us for the future, for higher service and nobler blessings; and if we have the qualities that fit us for a throne, nothing can keep us from it when God's time has come. Don't steal tomorrow out of God's hands. Give God time to speak to you and reveal His will. He is never too late; learn to wait. (Streams March 22nd)

Comment. God sometimes needs to send us long trials in order to prepare us for works of service. We really need to remember Romans 8:28

4.1.3. **Learning dependence upon God.**

Faith means depending on God alone, as per this explanation from Streams in the Desert.

Why should God have to lead us thus and allow the pressure to be so hard and constant? Well, in the first place, it shows His all-sufficient strength and grace much better than if we were exempt from pressure and trial. "The treasure is in earthen vessels, that excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

It makes us more conscious of our dependence upon Him. God is constantly trying to teach us our dependence, to hold us absolutely in His hand and hanging upon His care. This was the place where Jesus Himself stood and where He wants us to stand, not with self-constituted strength, but with a hand ever leaning upon His, and a trust that dare not take one step alone. It teaches us trust.

**There is no way learning faith except by trial.** It is God's school of faith, and it is far better for us to learn trust God than to enjoy life. The lesson of faith once learned, is an everlasting acquisition and an eternal fortune made; and without trust even riches will leave us poor. (Streams March 7th)

Comment. From my observation only a precious few in Christendom seem to know and accept that there is no way of learning faith except by trial and tribulation, even persecution.

4.1.4. **Accepting the sovereignty of God.**

We see God's sovereignty in unexpected ways, when He arranges the situations whereby we learn faith, if we know and accept He is really sovereign, as per this explanation.

Often God seems to place His children in positions of profound difficulty leading them into a wedge from which there is no escape; contriving a situation which no human judgment would have permitted, had it been previously consulted. The very
cloud conducts them thither. You may be thus involved at this very hour. It does seem perplexing and very serious to that degree, but it is perfectly right. The issue will more than justify Him who has brought you hither. It is a platform for the display of His almighty grace and power. He will not only deliver you; but in doing so, He will give you a lesson that you will never forget, and to which, in many a psalm and song, in after days, you will revert. You will never be able to thank God enough for having done just as He has. (Streams March 1st)

Comment. When we do not understand, we should just accept that God is sovereign, and act accordingly, believing that whatever happens, all things work together for good. (for those that love God and are called according to His purpose)

4.1.5. Learning reliance on God alone.

In order that we learn to rely on God alone, He will remove all our supports and props so we have no other means of getting through, as per this explanation.

"Thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons." (2 Kings 4:4)

They were to be alone with God, for they were not dealing with the laws of nature, nor human government, nor the church nor the priesthood, nor even with the great prophet of God, but they must needs be isolated from all creatures, from all leaning circumstance, from all props of human reason, and swung off, as it were, into vast blue interstellar space, hanging on God alone, in touch with the fountain of miracles. Here is a part in the program of God's dealings, a secret chamber of isolation in prayer and faith which every soul must enter that is very fruitful.

There are times and places where God will form a mysterious wall around us, and cut away all props, and all the ordinary ways of doing things, and shut us up to something divine, which is utterly new and unexpected, something that old circumstances do not fit into, where we do not know just what will happen, where God is cutting the cloth of our lives on a new pattern, where He makes us look to Himself.

Most religious people live in a sort of treadmill life, where they can calculate almost everything that will happen, but the souls that God leads out into immediate and special dealings, He shuts in where all they know is that God has hold of them, and is dealing with them, and their expectation is from Him alone. Like this widow, we must be detached from outward things and attacked inwardly to the Lord alone in order to see His wonders. (Streams April 5)
Comment. Finding oneself alone with God is one of the first steps in learning to rely on God alone and, although it can be somewhat frightening, it cannot be learned but by hanging onto God as if there was no one else but God. (ultimately there isn’t)

4.1.6. The leap of faith.

These are two private emails (used with permission) demonstrating the nature of the leap of faith we must take.

Dear D

After I have chewed on something for a while, I usually write it down. Here is the beginnings of what I have been meditating . . . Your input is always appreciated. Love, T

In my vision, my husband and I stood at the edge of a cliff that overlooked a canyon. We knew we were supposed to get to the other side. There we saw people laughing, eating, sharing, and enjoying fellowship with one another. We had tried everything we knew to get across, but nothing worked. After realizing that we could not get over to the other side by any means we had tried, the Lord spoke and said to jump into the canyon. Insane? Perhaps. But it was the word of the Lord. At the time, I did not understand the fullness of jumping into the canyon. I had 'head knowledge', but wasn't ready to see the depth of it yet. That was a vision the Lord gave me in 1998. Much suffering has past since that day which the Lord has used to prepare me to receive revelation. I have pondered many times about that vision, and today I call jumping into the canyon the 'leap of faith'. Scripture teaches that the "just shall live by faith" and I seriously believe that most Christians have NO clue what that REALLY means. It's that leap of faith. It is total trust in Jesus to fulfil His will. HE will perform it; we simply watch Him do it through us. Many Jews asked Jesus what they should do to do the works of God. Jesus responded by telling them to 'believe'. Most folks plug that into one's initial salvation experience, but that is not the context. The people asked about doing works for God, not about how to get saved. Believe. . . in the original language believe means to trust in, cling to, adhere to - like two pieces of velcro; it is jumping into that canyon, being totally helpless and completely dependent on God; it is absolute confidence in God to fulfil His will in this world, His Corporate Christ, and within us individually. It is THE Life. Does the 'leap of faith' mean we sit idly by twiddling our thumbs? Perhaps. Maybe that's just what God may need of us. And perhaps not. We don't need a formula. It is the place of rest, knowing the God is in control and He will fulfill all that He has chosen to do since before the beginning. We only need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. I don't really know at this point in my life if I really do understand all that I have written here. Have I really jumped yet, or am I just standing on the edge contemplating all of
this? Or maybe I've jumped and am in process of falling down, down, down. . . Nobody can answer that for me.

Dearest T,

This is MARVELOUS! It is the leap into what Kierkegaard calls 60,000 fathoms and not knowing if anything will catch you. But SOMEONE does! It is really the leap into ANOTHER’S life in/as us .which is really the truth all the while. It is the leap from our false independence into the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Christ as our life. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me losing our life to find it. The pearl of great price, it costs us all.

It is the "dare to believe" that He is you in every breath, movement, thought, action, reaction, desire. a-nothing-apart-from-Him-you! It is a great leap of faith – and you have taken it!

Much, much love,
D

Comment. I like the reply of D. But SOMEONE does! (catch us) It is really the leap into ANOTHER’S life.

4.2. In what realm does faith operate?

A good verse with which to examine the realm in which faith operates are these two verses. The first one tells us that we must walk, not by things in sight, but by faith in what is beyond sight.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Cor. 5:7 (NKJV)

The second verse expands the definition to include descriptions of the realms in which we live. Paul tells us here that the realm in which we actually can see things visibly is the temporary realm, whereas the realm where things are not easily seen (except by spiritually discerning eyes) is the eternal realm. Notice that Paul teaches that we should look at the unseen realm and not the seen realm.

“while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4:18 (NKJV)

Because we are humans in this world, we need to know that both realms exist together, even though the unseen realm cannot be seen with human eye, but this is the actual realm where faith operates.

Dan Stone in his book The Rest of the Gospel, has a useful way of relating these two realms. He draws a horizontal line between the two realms and refers to the temporary realm as below the line and the eternal realm as above the line. Dan further suggests that God has designed us so we can find fulfillment only in the unseen and eternal realm. He says that the seen and temporal realm offers many pleasures that God has provided but none of them ultimately satisfy. Nothing below the line equals life. Everything above the line equals life. (Stone pp 27-31)
So faith is only meant to operate in the (above the line) eternal realm, as faith cannot apply in the seen temporary realm. So if in our lives we focus on things that are seen then we are not operating out of faith. It is therefore easy to see where our focus should be – towards God in the eternal or heavenly unseen realms. A further point to note is that our soul (intellect, emotions and will) primarily operates in the temporal realm, whereas our human spirit operates in the spiritual, eternal realm. Consequently, communication with God through our spirit is only in the eternal or unseen realm. Our souls and all that goes on within them needs to be subject to our human spirits controlled by the Holy Spirit of God.


4.3. How can it be learned and implemented?

Despite the simplicity of faith, learning it is quite a profound experience. These two scriptures provide parameters which show we only get from God according to the faith we have.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11:6 (NKJV)

“Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” Matt. 9:29 (NKJV)

What follows is a prayer communication to the Lord that I had with the Lord recently. It demonstrates something of the nature of faith and what one must go through to learn real scriptural faith.

March, 2002,

“Dear Lord, Yesterday I just may have caught something more from You about the operation of faith in my life. I have long accepted that you have my life in your hands, but that realization has never been enough for me to operate in full faith, although faith has been growing constantly. It has meant that I can live by faith sometimes, indeed a lot of the time, but at other times I wonder where I am and nothing seems to comfort me.

At such times I always go to scripture or readings like Streams in the Desert. That devotional is the best source of inspiration to faith that I know. When I read yesterday for example, I found several devotions that set me in the right direction by bringing some peace to my heart. However, they also grabbed my attention as to how faith may be extended. I can now see that there is no other way of learning faith except through trial in its various forms.

A writer in Streams in the Desert (CHP - 21st July) says "there are degrees to faith. One basic stage is when we need some sign or profound feeling. Although this is true faith, it is imperfect. A second stage is trusting God without signs or feelings, without any emotion. A third form of faith believes God and His Word when circumstances, emotions,
appearances, people and human reason all urge to the contrary.”

As I am experiencing more and more times when circumstances, emotions, appearances, people and human reason all urge me to not believe, it can only be that You Lord are allowing / sending these things for me to develop this level of faith. There are times in my life when everything seems impossible, when tragic ends seem to threaten everywhere, where emotions run so high as to bring seizure to rational thinking and I begin to believe I must be the most hopeless and out of touch Christian in the world. Such experiences are so desperate, but then, desperation is far preferred to despair, as desperation means I am holding on in faith rather than losing the plot in despair or self-pity. I cannot yet count these things as ‘all joy” as James advocates we should do. But when one is at rather infantile stages of learning faith, what else can I expect?

At those times all I can do is somewhat blindly believe that You Lord are there anyway, despite all signs to the contrary, whilst allowing the emotions to run rife. To settle them I need to read of Your methods of learning faith and gain comfort from the fact that I am experiencing exactly what you want me to experience in order to learn real faith that believes nothing is impossible. In fact, when things are impossible, that is just the very time that faith is best learned. Not only is this to learn faith, but the circumstances are designed by You to bring forth faith from me. The circumstances need to be seen as a gift of love from You to me, as without them I would never develop real faith.

As I thought about it, I noticed that there are considerable scriptural encouragements in going through such experiences. of faith building. They provide opportunity to:

- build dependence on You alone, and not rely on ourselves not brood over sorrows, but walk in faith and get on with life.
- stand in stillness and silence as You work for us, without our contriving and self-vindication operating.
- let You order our day and our life as we wait patiently and trust in You.
- accept the things I cannot understand, knowing that You are still there.
- experience the fellowship of Your sufferings and to be conformed to the likeness of Your son.
- enter into Your kingdom through tribulation.
- trust You rather than enjoy life.
- believe your word more than our own feelings and experience.
• know You are there even though we cannot see You, feel You or sometimes even hear You.
• look to Your finished work on the cross, as the beginning of the answers to every issue of life.
• know that in every difficulty of life, there is Your answer, either directly to our spirit, or resolutions or deliverance by Your own power.
• to get to be able to rely on the belief that, “You are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”
• experience worldly or human loss as a condition of getting to know You.

I am absolutely convinced that our development of faith by You Lord has only one end purpose, that is to be used of You to extend the kingdom by drawing others into fullness of faith, to encourage believers from low levels of faith, and to have unbelievers see your life in us, so that they will pursue You for themselves, to gain what we have.

I am also absolutely convinced that such faith can never occur until we fully embrace the “Christ in you” and related scriptures that ensure us that Your life does indeed live in us for the purposes of You doing Your work in us and through us.”

4.4. How can we see beyond evil or difficulty into faith?

Believing for good to happen in the face of evil or difficulty can be hard to do, as it is all to easy to see only the evil in the situation, perhaps focusing on it more than we should. To see and be concerned about the evil or difficulty in a situation, rather than have faith in what God might be able to do, is a fairly natural human response. However, there are a number of ways in which we might be able to learn to look at such situations, so that faith dominates over fear, and what we see in the temporal realm is less important than what might be possible through God in the unseen realm, if we have faith that God will help us or answer our prayer.

This issue is best described from three different perspectives

• By looking with a single eye and not an evil eye.
• By looking beyond the seen realm into the unseen realm
• By looking beyond Satan and the demonic realm to God.

4.4.1. By looking with a single eye and not an evil eye.

Scripture has a guide for every situation and this one is no exception, as we may learn from Jesus in both Matthew and Luke. Jesus, in the following scriptures talks about the relationship between a good eye and light (seeing single), comparing it with a bad eye and darkness. (seeing double)

On this issue we have to go to the King James Version to get either Matthew and Luke’s words as other modern versions do not convey the correct meaning, by not including the word “single” in the verse. These other versions, by using good, healthy or clear, convey
the wrong meaning. As will be seen, the word single has special meaning in the Greek, which these other words do not convey.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Matt. 6:22-23 (KJV)

“The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” Luke 11:33-36 (KJV)

The word “single” in Greek is Strong’s 573 haploos. It means singleness and is used of the (spiritual) eye not seeing double as when it is diseased. It means single, sincere and without duplicity, without deception and without evil. Such seeing involves prudence in knowing how to deal with fellow humans in the circumstances of life and in seeing the good in any situation.

Notice what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is saying that an eye that is not single is evil (or is seeing double) In other words an evil eye, an eye that is not single, is seeing both good and evil. He also says that the eye that is single will have a body that is full of light, but if the eye is also seeing the evil in a situation, then the whole body will be full of darkness. So if we want to have our body full of light, we need to have an eye that sees single and not double or evil. All this is another way of saying that our faith with regards to a particular matter will be tainted by the darkness of unbelief if we see at all with a double or evil eye at the bad or evil in the situation.

So this issue becomes a vital factor in having our issues of faith being brought forth into victory. In any situation therefore, we need to see beyond any evil relating to the situation and focus only on God, in full faith without any unbelief, that God’s purpose will come from it. (If we focus on the negative, or see both - with a double eye - light and good cannot be the result) It is perhaps another way of saying that even when things are bad, we need to see the good or possible good that can come out of that situation – as per this scripture.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Rom. 8:28 (KJV)

Pastor Dan Stone, from whom I have taken some parts of his teaching for this section, says of this issue.

“We need a single eye. Which means what? We don’t consider what we see and think – external appearances and our human evaluation of them – as absolute in themselves. Granted, we have to initially see a situation or person based on appearances. That’s how external information comes to us. But we take that information into us, and inside us is a union where God is all. In that spirit union, things have their source and their being in God regardless of how they appear. (Stone pp 133)

So seeing the good in an otherwise evil or difficult situation is a step in applying faith in God to that situation.

4.4.2. By looking beyond the seen realm into the unseen realm

We observed in 4.2 above that faith operates in the spiritual or unseen realm, in the realm where our human spirit has communication with the Holy Spirit of God. We learnt there that
if we focus in the visible (or seen) realm of any situation, if that is all we see, then we will be functioning in the realm of our soul, which is not the realm in which faith operates. Be reminded:

“while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4:18 (NKJV)

In the temporal (or seen) realm we can observe both good and evil and can see things as pleasant and unpleasant. This is looking with the evil or double eye Jesus spoke about and cannot be considered total reality, as it excludes the invisible spiritual realm. However, looking beyond both the good and the evil in this temporal realm we can see God in the invisible realm, through faith. We all know it is easy to look and see God when things are good or pleasant, but we need to cultivate that same habit when things are evil or bad by looking within the unseen realm with a single eye. In the temporal realm, life might seem to be difficult or even virtually impossible. By looking there alone there are no answers. But God may well have His answers only available through the invisible spiritual realm, so we have to learn how to operate in that realm.

4.4.3.  By looking beyond Satan and the demonic realm to God.

Another way of looking at this is to consider how we might see God and Satan in the issues of life.

4.4.3.1.  God is supreme over all other powers.

We should note firstly that God is the highest power and that He ordains all other powers in the world below Him, including Satan.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Rom. 13:1 (KJV)

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Matt. 28:18 (NKJV)

It is instructive to recall that God showed His control over Satan in the first two chapters of Job, where God told Satan what he could and could not do with Job. That case also demonstrates that God is the only ultimate power in the universe. All other authorities are subject to God and receive their power and limitations from Him. God was always the highest power.

4.4.3.2.  God has already defeated Satan

Moreover God has proved through Jesus that He has defeated Satan.

“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphant over them in it.” Col. 2:15 (NKJV)

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Heb. 2:14 (NKJV)

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8 (NKJV)
We can see therefore that so far in this discussion, God is not only the supreme authority but He has also defeated the enemy we call Satan.

4.4.3.3. How then should believers view Satan?

Now we come to an interesting part of this discussion. What does the Bible say about the attitude that believers should take towards Satan? For example.

- What should we all do about his warring attitudes towards us?
- Can we fight against Satan – or just defend ourselves?
- What weapons do we have to use against him?
- What role does God play in our protection?

In an overall sense we should use the weapons of warfare provided.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God (NIV says divine power) for pulling down strongholds, 2 Cor. 10:4 (NKJV)

Under the general heading of the above scripture, God’s word then describes the various aspects of what the believers’ attitude towards Satan should be using these weapons of warfare.

We should resist Satan

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” James 4:7 (NKJV)

“Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” 1 Pet. 5:9 (NKJV)

We should be covered with God’s armour

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Eph. 6:11 (NKJV) (The components of this armour are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, sword of Spirit – God’s word)

We should not allow unconfessed sin to remain

“Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Eph. 4:26-27 (NKJV)

We should forgive others

“Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. 2 Cor. 2:10-11 (NKJV)

We should watch and pray

“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matt. 26:41 (NKJV)

We should maintain faith.

“But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin. Rom. 14:23 (NKJV)
We should remove wrong arguments and take captive our wrong thoughts.

“casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” 2 Cor. 10:6 (NKJV)

Finally and most importantly, we should rely on God Himself (some typical scriptures)

“The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name. Ex. 15:3 (NKJV)

“With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 2 Chr. 32:8 (NKJV)

“The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. Psa. 34:7 (NKJV)

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” 2 Chr. 16:9 (NKJV)

Analysis of these weapons.

It is difficult to analyse these weapons categorically, but what I believe is presented here, has them as primarily preparatory in nature, in anticipation of their use in a passive or defensive way.

Confession of sin, forgiveness, watching and praying, maintaining faith, being covered with God’s armour are all preparatory in nature and utilized in a passive defensive way. Bringing thoughts in captivity to the obedience of God is a very strong activity, but is still not aggressive against Satan. It is still primarily defensive as an old time Lord of the Manor would be in repairing weak spots in his wall and ensuring that the moat had adequate water in it. Resisting Satan is about as aggressive as we are meant to get. The rest of our protection and keeping is solely in trusting God to do whatever needs to be done.

After these preparations the main weapons seem to be:

- to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.
- resist Satan after we have drawn near to God, using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God - as we -
- trust in and rely on the power of God.

Having worshipped in Pentecostal and charismatic circles for some time, I am aware that their practices would suggest that there are other forms of offensive ways of relating to Satan in attempts to control his activity. However, having given them due trial over time and then going to scripture for God’s ways, I believe what I have presented here are God’s ways for all believers. So, providing we are suitably prepared and are acting in accord with God’s word we can look beyond Satan and the demonic realm to God.

This analysis of the weapons of warfare used in scripture, and in relation to how we believers relate to the demonic realm and to God is a vital component of the use of true biblical faith.

This next and last section provides some extra weight for what has just been said.
4.4.3.4. Satan is God’s convenient servant.

What is the relationship between God and Satan? We already know that God has defeated Satan and that God is in charge of everything, so what does Satan do in relation to God? Here are two examples to show how God uses Satanic evil to bring about God’s own will.

* When God allowed Joseph’s brothers to persecute him, did God know what He was doing? Yes he did – as Joseph informed his brothers long after his persecution and long after Joseph had been honored by God and had helped his family with food and land. He said:

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” Gen. 50:20 (NKJV)

So God not only permitted these things to happen to Joseph and allowed the evil against Him, but used it for His own purposes to refine Joseph so he would be equipped to do great things for Him.

* When God allowed Satan a lot of unusual access to Job, so that Job’s losses in life would be huge and his suffering incredible, was God making a mistake? When this happened Job’s faith held, for he knew that God was still in charge. He did not consider Satan’s role at all.

“And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” Job 1:21-22 (NKJV)

Notice that Satan is not mentioned by Job in this verse. Finally when God had taught Job more about Himself, Job honored God with these words, showing that the persecution he had suffered had been intended by God for His purposes.

Then Job answered the LORD and said: “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, ‘I will question you, and you shall answer Me.’ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.” Job 42:1-5 (NKJV)

In both these cases and many more in the Word of God, God could not have achieved His purposes in His people without employing Satan’s evil ways to afflict his servants in such a way that they would learn the wonders of His will, just as Jesus did in enduring the cross. Although the whole passion of Jesus on the Cross and His resurrection could be seen as being orchestrated by Satan and his underlings, It was all orchestrated by God before the beginning of time, to serve His overall redemptive purposes.

In Chapter 5 of his book Yes I Am, Norman Grubb explains this matter very well.

“God deliberately planned that man should be confronted by (the author of) evil in the midst of the garden in which all was called very good. This is our first evidence, which appears later all through scriptures and experience, that Satan… is in fact God’s convenient agent, always doing precisely what God determines he should do. This makes a great difference in our attitude toward our handling of Satan and of all situations and people by whom he is operating; for we then start not negatively – looking at his lying, bluffing appearance as independent power – but positively, by always recognizing that he is merely God’s servant, unwittingly fulfilling God’s purposed will in his activities.” (Grubb, Yes I Am pp. 26-27)
Reader, does this help you to see, that God uses Satan for His purposes, so why should we (unscriptually) bother doing anything in the way of fighting with any supposed attacking weapons, but rather use the scriptural weapons listed above, of which proper spiritual preparation and resistance are primary.

So, when trial and tribulation come, look beyond Satan and his evil acts towards you and look toward the God of Joseph, Job and Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion.**

We can now see that real faith, is like approaching God with a childlike simplicity, learning to wait patiently, learning dependence and reliance upon God, accepting His sovereignty and knowing something of the leap of faith we must take.

We have learned that faith operates in the spiritual unseen realm where communication takes place with God, in the realm of our spirit, and not our soul and body.

Our learning of faith is a profound activity and experience and is learned in experience with God as He is given control over our lives.

We can see beyond evil and difficulty into true faith by looking with a single eye and not an evil eye, by looking beyond the seen realm into the unseen eternal realm, by knowing that God has already defeated Satan and by realizing that scripture indicates that Satan is God’s convenient servant.

5  What is sanctification? Is sanctification sometimes described or interpreted incorrectly?

**What is sanctification?**

Sanctification is when we were set apart to God, and we are living out that dedication to God in holiness. In this short article, several different supporting explanations are given to show the true nature of sanctification, as both an event at regeneration and as a continuing process as we walk in faith to become more holy.

The word sanctification (**Strong’s 38 hagiasmos**) has two related meanings. Sometimes it is translated “holiness” and sometimes “separated unto God”. Holiness is the resultant state intended by God of those who are separated unto God. Sanctification is not only the state of being set apart, but should also lead to holiness if we surrender our lives to God and allow Him full access into them. That is necessary when we set apart for God’s purposes. Further explanation is needed on these two meanings of sanctification in order that the word is used appropriately in the Christian life.

In the first sense, sanctification should be viewed as an event, being one of those events that happen at the time of God’s work of regeneration. When sanctified as such, we are fully acceptable to God, just as when one is fully justified at regeneration. In this sense, sanctification is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in setting man apart for the God to use in His way. In a second sense, sanctification has another important meaning. In this second meaning, sanctification has to do with the process of making a believer more holy. So sanctification can be said to both redeem both the sinner and his character.

The apparent contradiction here between sanctification as an event and also as a process, is resolved by reference to Dan Stone’s description and relevance of the spiritual and temporal realms in Chapter 2 of his book **The Rest of the Gospel**. Based on 2 Corinthians 4:18, he places the Eternal, Unseen Realm above an imaginary line and the Seen, Temporal Realm below the line. The eternal realm is the realm of the spirit where we have been perfected at the time of our regeneration, where we are considered by God to be fully
sanctified. The temporal realm is the realm of the soul and body, the visible temporal realm, where sanctification is the ongoing process of furthering holiness.

To add to this explanation I also provide James Fowler’s explanation of sanctification in his book Man as God Intended – Chapter 10 – The Sanctification of Man. He says on page 200 that:

“Sanctification finds its meaning in the holy character of God. In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament the root word qds meant “to cut off” or “to separate.” Throughout the Old Testament qados is translated “holy” and qodes is translated as “holiness. In the Greek language hagos is an adjective that is translated as “holy.” Hagiotes and hagiosune are translated “holiness,” and hagiasmos is translated as “sanctification.”

Two concepts are inherent in these words. Firstly the idea of that which is holy, clean and pure. The second is the idea of that which is “separate” or “set apart.” The action of “setting apart” is determined by the Holy character of God. Not vice versa! Holy Character is never determined by the action of “setting apart.”

Looking at the main sanctification verses from the point of view of it being a completed event, we find:

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” 1 Cor. 1:30 (NKJV)

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,” 2 Thess. 2:13 (NKJV)

“and such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. 6:11 (NKJV)

“by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Heb. 10:10 (NKJV)

Further definitions of the word sanctify

The word sanctify – (Strong’s 37 hagiazo). To sanctify means to be separated from and to withdraw oneself from the fellowship of the world and from selfishness by gaining fellowship with God.

Sanctify - G37 Thayer Definition

1) to render or acknowledge, or to be venerable or hallowed.
2) 2) to separate from profane things and dedicate to God
2a) consecrate things to God
2b) dedicate people to God
3) to purify
3a) to cleanse externally
3b) to purify by expiation: free from the guilt of sin
3c) to purify internally by renewing of the soul

The word is found in John 17:17, John 17:19, Eph 5:26, 1 Thess 5:23, Heb 13:12, 1 Pet 3:15

Is sanctification sometimes described or interpreted incorrectly?
I have often heard, and indeed have been taught that sanctification is progressive only, that it is (only) a process in itself whereby we are made more holy. Also that is was never an event (at regeneration). I do not believe those ideas are supported by scripture. As can be seen by the descriptions given above, sanctification is given at regeneration and is complete in the spiritual realm, just as justification is a given and complete at salvation. In the spiritual realm therefore, we cannot become more sanctified than we are at salvation. It is complete. However, scripture also teaches that the process of improving our walk of holiness with Christ is one of walking by faith – by faith alone – that is the process aspect of sanctification, which occurs in the temporal realm. It is vital to consider that we are fully sanctified at salvation, because to do otherwise, would be to deny ourselves of one aspect of the fullness of Christ provided by His death and resurrection, even though we do not yet have it fully in the temporal realm.

To justify sanctification as being an event, we can see in the scriptures that the words introducing sanctification are always past or present tense, words such as was, are, were, is, have been, and so on. However, there are a handful of scriptures that tend to perpetuate the idea that sanctification is only a process, where the words may seem to suggest that sanctification is entirely a process. The variations of this are shown below in bold underlined italic, for NKJV, KJV and NIV.

**Hebrews 10:14**

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who **are being sanctified.**” **Heb. 10:14 (NKJV)**

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that **are sanctified.**” **Heb. 10:14 (KJV)**

“because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who **are being made holy.**” **Heb. 10:14 (NIV)**

Zuck offers this explanation. The translation “are being made holy” sounds like a continuous process. But this ignores the force of the expression “made holy” in verse 10. A better rendering is “them who are sanctified”. The net effect of all this is that the KJV is the best rendering describing sanctification as being past tense, having already happened. (Zuck pp 804)

**Romans 15:16**

“That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, **sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**” **Rom. 15:16 (NKJV)**

“That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, **being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”** **Rom. 15:16 (KJV)**

“to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, **sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**” **Rom. 15:16 (NIV)**

Seeing that to sanctify means to be separated from and to withdraw oneself from the fellowship of the world and from selfishness by gaining fellowship with God, it can be seen as a single event (in the spiritual realm). So, whilst still acknowledging the post regeneration move towards holiness by the process aspect of sanctification, the weight of evidence also points to this also being an event, occurring at salvation. This comment applies to various renderings of both Romans 15:16 and Hebrews 2:11 shown below.
Hebrews 2:11

“For both He who sanctifies and those who **are being sanctified** are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,”  **Heb. 2:11** (NKJV)

“For both he that sanctifieth and they **who are sanctified** are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,”  **Heb. 2:11** (KJV)

“But the one who makes men holy, and those **who are made holy** are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”  **Heb. 2:11** (NIV)

**Summary of sanctification**

To be sanctified is to be set apart by God and to His purposes and in a state that He considers holy. In this short article, several different supporting explanations are given to show the true nature of sanctification, as both an event at regeneration and as a continuing process as we walk in faith to become more holy.

6  **What is the role of adversity in life according to God? How is it that a God of love can send or permit suffering, difficulty and persecution and use it as a means of growing faith in us?**

**How do you see and handle the adversities that come to you in your life?**  Most of us consider them a nuisance, something that shouldn’t have happened to us. Common adversities include ill-health, financial loss, violence of both physical and verbal types, loss of loved ones, unemployment, disunity and various traumas such as accidents or just plain misfortune. We almost never see such things as positive, but always as something bad, calling it a set back, bad luck, misfortune, or if they the adversity is really difficult we would call it a disaster, calamity of catastrophe, as indeed they can be.  **So why are adversities such a common occurrence in life? Why do they happen and how should we view them? This is just a short introductory discussion on the issue.**

There are some basic premises being implemented here. One is that because mankind is basically sinful, there is plenty of trouble and strife available in the world for God to use as afflictions to bring adversity. The second is that because God is sovereign and in control of the whole world, He is able to utilize whatever might be going on around us to allow the adversity he wants. Also, it is a Biblical principle that God uses bad or evil to bring about good. So, just in case God might appear to be an ogre who only brings trouble, let it also be known that God also brings good to all men and protects and keeps them from a wide range of otherwise harmful events – and in His own time, delivers His own from trouble. However, let us establish from the Bible that God also initiates the negatives of adversity, woe and calamity, all for His own purposes, which normally can be shown to be of ultimate benefit from mankind.

**First, Solomon tells us that prosperity and adversity come from God.**

“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of **adversity** consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.”  **Eccl. 7:14** (NKJV)

**Second, Jeremiah tells us that both woe and well being proceed from God**

“Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that **woe** and well-being proceed?”  **Lam. 3:38** (NKJV)
Third, Job, one of the greatest sufferers of all time tells his wife that God brings adversity.

>“But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:10 (NKJV)

Fourth, God Himself, through Isaiah tells us he created calamity.

>“I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.” Isa. 45:7 (NKJV)

In the above verse God says that He makes peace and creates evil. (KJV) Different versions of scripture use different words for evil. It comes from the Hebrew word “ra” meaning adversity or calamity.

In addition to those four, there are many other examples in scripture where God both plans and uses evil for His own glory and His own purposes – to bring ultimate good from evil.

Exodus 4:11. God says that He makes the dumb, the deaf, the seeing and the blind.

Jeremiah 43:10 God said that the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar was His servant.

Isaiah 10:5 God called the evil Assyrians, “the rod of My anger”.

Joel 1:4 and 2:25 God called the locusts etc “My great army which I sent among you”.

Genesis 50:20 God MEANT evil etc “My great army which I sent among you”.

Acts 2:22-23 Peter said that Jesus was delivered (unto the cross) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Acts 4:27-28 When believers were praying after Jesus death, they acknowledged that Herod and Pilate only did what God had decided to permit them to do beforehand.

John 19:11 Jesus said to Pilate that he could only have the power over Him that was given from above. If there were two powers, Jesus would surely have said – power from below. Jesus only saw one power.

John 18:11 Jesus said to Peter in the garden when he was being arrested, that it was the Father’s cup that He had to drink. Would not he have said Satan’s cup if He was acknowledging two powers?

As a believer in God, and therefore believing in what the Bible says about these things, and as an observer of the human condition of my own and the lives of others, I believe that adversity, if viewed correctly can have and indeed normally will ultimately have a positive effect. Of course it is rarely possible to see the good in adversity just after the difficulty happens. We are emotionally involved in our lives and will always be shocked or saddened or annoyed at this trauma that has just happened to us. Some time later we may well see that it was meant to be and had that difficult event not happened we would not have learnt what we did.

Take for example the receiving of a few speeding fines. Not nice! $125 each time really hurts the hip pocket. But after having these penalties applied, we might learn not to speed
and our lives are better off. It might have even helped us to live and not die on our roads. At a minimum we will have more money to enjoy. It seems to me that we can learn from adversity, if we take responsibility for what happens to us. Not that we can ever get rid of all adversity, but I believe we can limit the damage by learning from the adversities that come our way. If we don’t learn from them, we can really suffer long term effects and never really know something of the peace and prosperity in life that can be possible. I believe that the God of this universe has a purpose in allowing adversities to come our way. There are literally dozens of scriptures in God’s Word that say this in various ways.

So how does God use adversity to teach us better ways to live. There are many guidances like Psalm 1 which express God’s expectations about how man should live and the consequences of not doing so. Basically it says that those who go God’s way will prosper in life and those who do not shall not prosper. For those who do it His way, they prosper and those who don’t suffer. However, for both believers and unbelievers that is not the end of the story. Here is the psalm.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

So, given that basic position that God’s people will do well and those who do not acknowledge God shall not (even their own human effort shall ultimately fail them) let us first look at the reasons for the adversities that come to believers. Yes they do suffer them and there are Godly reasons for this. Right through the Bible God tells us to positively view adversity – to be joyful in it. The average person on reading this might think that perhaps God is some sort of a nut. Why should we be joyful in adversity?

For believers the reason is simple. God uses adversity to sharpen us up and refine us into the sort of person He wants us to be, including an increased level of faith. Scripture tells hundreds of stories that demonstrate that principle. King David once said that had God not afflicted him he would not have learned right ways. The Bible also teaches those principles in many places. Believers who know and realize this is how God works, normally after asking God lots of “whys”, eventually come to realize that many clouds of misfortune will probably have a silver lining. Of course any adversity caused by our own stupidity is exempt from this good. God does not reward us for doing stupid things. But genuine adversity allowed by God for our own benefit, will bring benefit if we take notice of the point being made and change our attitude and behaviour accordingly.

So the adversity suffered by believers, providing it is not caused by their own stupidity, will ultimately benefit them if they view it as God’s teaching of them. Mankind is sinful and stubborn and like a child needs disciplining for his wrong ways and stubbornness, so do we need to correct our ways as adults when we still need to learn more of God’s ways. God actually allows or causes such adversities as an act of His love for the believer, so that He can bring greater benefit to the believer out of the greater obedience that results in the believer’s life.

What of the adversity that comes to the unbeliever? Before we can look at that there is one more thing about the believer that needs to be understood. It is simply that he believes
in God and what Jesus has done on the cross and by way of His resurrection, in order to bring life to the believer by his trust and obedience in God. He belongs to God. He believes that God made all things. He believes that God can keep and guide him through life and that he will be saved from eternal death and live forever with Christ. He has crossed over the line from death to life.

As yet, the unbeliever has not crossed this line. He has not yet had the benefit of knowing these things. So God’s first task with the unbeliever is to get him to a point where he realizes he needs the power of God in his life. And to do this, one of God’s ways is to bring adversity to the life of the unbeliever, in order that he begin to question his life and who is in control of it. What God intends is that the more He brings adversity to a life, the more God hopes and believes that the unbeliever might begin to ask eternal questions about what life is all about— and by his seeking of truth, and seeking of God, that God Himself meets the unbeliever and saves him into eternal life.

The sooner the unbeliever decides to go God’s way, the less he suffers and begins to benefit. Bringing adversity to the unbeliever is God’s way of showing His ultimate love for him, to draw him to Himself that He might reward him from His vast storehouse of good things, that comes from the unbeliever coming into obedience to the things of God.

The primary purpose of this writing is to let both believers and unbelievers know of the principles behind how God works in relation to the adversities of life.

If an unbeliever does not find out these things he may consider life to be just one long succession of things going wrong. It may well be— until the unbeliever takes solace in these words and begins to seek God and His ways. It is the most important life lesson anyone can learn.

Norman Grubb spoke of life’s adversities in this way.

“The Bible makes it plain that God as purposively sends the unpleasant as the pleasant. No reader (who has read Old and New Testaments) can call that into question. God’s will and its outworking in our lives is not permissive, but determined. When even Satan is only God’s agent, and evil men only fulfilling His foreordained plan, then we can start off by praising God for adversity and counting it all joy…… Adversity is prosperity in disguise.” Grubb pp 95

Grubb’s writing on adversity is worth the read. Details below.

Nor does the unbeliever have to put vast effort into his new life as a believer. He will find that he has exchanged his old life of striving for the new life of letting the Lord provide His strength and wisdom to his new life in Christ. Many unbelievers think that if they become believers they will have to try hard and because they do not think they can do this (they can’t in their old state) they avoid seriously considering God and what He offers. What they need to do is to trust God that the new life He provides, will make all the difference to their lives.

So, God uses adversity both in the life of believers and unbelievers. With believers to enhance their life by bringing them into closer relationship with Himself and with unbelievers by bringing them into initial relationship with Himself so He can call them sons of God and provide for and guide them into their new life. It is certain to be difficult and sometimes painful, but the rewards are great for those who persevere. Ultimately, it settles the eternal destiny of every human being.

Reader, whether you be unbeliever or believer, try to see your life and the adversity that sometimes come as a wake up call from God, summoning you into fullness of life with Christ, both here on earth and later in heaven.
7 As Christians are freed from sin, do they actually sin?

7.1 Do Christians sin - or sin not?

We are told by Paul in Romans 6 that Christians are freed from sin. The book of 1 John says Christians do not sin, but then qualifies the issue, by explaining that when a Christian does sin (incidentally), he can confess it in order to receive forgiveness and cleansing.

There are three main verses in 1 John that say that Christians who are truly born of the Spirit of God do not sin, and in fact cannot sin. They are:

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. (1 John 5:18)

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. (1 John 3:6)

On the other hand John also makes the following statements, which appear to contradict his other statements. They are:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:10)

Then he seems to change tack a little as though acknowledging the possibility of sin, apparently hoping that we will not sin, but if we do, we have an Advocate in Jesus Christ, who can appear on our behalf before Father God Himself.

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (1 John 2:1)

And then he says, as if acknowledging we might sin or have sinned, that our sin will be forgiven if it is confessed before the Lord. Not only that, but we will be cleansed from the effects of that sin. He says:

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

7.2 An Apparent Contradiction.

So John, in writing in this way seems to be backing himself both ways. Christians do not and cannot sin, but if we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Then, if we do sin we can have that sin forgiven and be cleansed from it.
1 John 2:1 seems to eliminate the possibility that we can become or are perfect, because it says “if anyone sins”, indicating the possibility of sin. Remember the full verse says:

*My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*

Moreover, the experience of life in Christian circles provides fairly convincing evidence that Christians do sin. One does not have to think too hard to recall obvious public sin of Christian notables or in our own church or homes or indeed in our own lives. Christians can sin, and if aware of their biblical obligations, confess it in order to be forgiven and obtain cleansing.

So what does John mean when he says Christians do not sin and cannot sin?

Walvoord and Zuck in their Bible Knowledge Commentary suggest the following on page 894.

“A widely held explanation of 1 John 3:6 is that the believer does not sin habitually, that is, sin is not his way of life. They say that the Greek text has no words to represent phrases such as “keeps on” or “continues to” or “habitually”. ........For the believer, sin is abnormal and unnatural; his whole bent of life is away from sin........ The Christian still experiences a genuine struggle with the flesh and overcomes its impulses only by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Spiros Zodhiates in his Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible seems to have similar views. He says : “...yet he ( John ) speaks even of himself, as well as those whom he addresses, as capable of committing sin - sin considered however, not as a habit, but as an uncharacteristic act.” (Zodhiates Spiros pp 1529)

A further view is worth stating. Barker and Kohlenberger in their NIV Bible Commentary say this: “..those who “live” in the “sinless one” will, like Him, live a life of righteousness...but if they do sin, they will confess it as lawlessness and abandon it........ John acknowledges that the life of righteousness is only possible in Christ. By “living” in Him, in his “sinlessness,” one can expect conformity to His righteousness.” (Barker pp 1095)

Joining up these views we can say that no sin in a life means no habitual sin and that the only way we can live close to a sinless righteousness is by living in Him - that is by having and knowing we have the life of Christ within us as a complete replacement for our old sinful life.

The apparent contradictions here are resolved even further by reference to Dan Stone’s description and relevance of the spiritual and temporal realms in Chapter 2 of his book The Rest of the Gospel. Based on 2 Corinthians 4:18, he places the Eternal Unseen Realm above an imaginary line and the Seen Temporal Realm below the line. The eternal realm is the realm of the spirit where we have been perfected at the time of our regeneration and are dead to sin. The temporal realm is the realm of the soul and body, the visible temporal realm.

Relating that perspective to this issue of whether Christians sin or not, Dan agreed with my assessment of it as follows. There is no sin in the eternal unseen realm and if we are living and operating in that realm, then we do not sin. However, if we continually live in the soul/body realm, the seen realm of life, without reference to the spiritual, then we may well sin, needing the cleansing and forgiveness that comes from 1 John 1:9. As can be seen from other articles listed at [http://www.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/index-gr.html](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/index-gr.html), yieldedness to the Lord brings about a separation of soul and spirit by the Holy Spirit as per Hebrews 4:12, the consequences of which are that the Christian does not sin habitually. A study of
Dan’s book is included in a course Fullness of Life in Christ, which is available online at the above address.

A full study on this issue is at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/truthgr-04.html

8 Using Romans 14:14-25, explain how Bible some commentaries can confuse rather than enlighten?

8.1. Introduction

This segment of scripture is a good example of vastly varying opinions that can seriously confuse if incorrect interpretations are accepted. Here we find an apparent conflict and contradiction which Romans 7:14-24 seems to describe. Our answer must be in accord with Paul and John’s other descriptions of the indwelling Christ that fills us for his purposes. Somehow, Romans 7 must be in unity with the fullness of the indwelling Spirit described elsewhere. This is where we must depart from some opinions found in Bible Commentaries. Many commentaries allow the conflict and contradiction to remain, leaving many believers in a constant war. On this point, Professor Daniel Steel - Professor of Greek at Boston University in Chapter 8 of Half Hours with St. Paul says that:

“Romans 7 cannot be seen to make the gospel as great a failure as the law in its reconstruction of the human character. He said that no understanding of Romans 7 that leaves a contradiction between it and the rest of scripture can be a true interpretation. Also, that nowhere else in scripture does he intimate that sin dwells in him.” (Steel pp 71-72)

8.1.1 The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck.

My otherwise reliable commentary The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, makes the following statement about Romans 7.

“even as believers we have an indwelling principle of sin that once owned me as a slave and that still expressed itself to have me do things I do not want to do, concluding that this is a problem common to all believers.”

and:

“The indwelling principle of sin is constantly mounting a military campaign against the new nature, trying to gain victory and control of a believer and his actions.” (Zuck pp 468)

They apparently do not see the conflict with the rest of the New Testament which says believers should have the fullness of God operating in them.

8.1.2 “Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary by Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger 111

Another commentary, “Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary by Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger 111, after skirting around all the theoretical possibilities, then say:

Perhaps the most satisfying approach to those verses in Romans VII is that the experience pictured here is not wholly autobiographical but is deliberately presented in such a way as to demonstrate what the situation would indeed be if someone who is faced with the demands of the law and apparent sin in his life were to try to solve his problem independently of the power of Christ and the enablement of the Holy Spirit. That is, Paul is hypothetically describing what life under the law would be like if it was seen according to the logic of its nature. A parallel use of this methodology may be seen in Ecclesiastes. The writer knows
God personally, but purposely and deliberately views life from the standpoint of his natural self in order to expose it as meaningless, empty and of lasting value. (pp 559 of Barker)

Well, that is an improvement, as it allows Paul the truth and honesty of his words and does not negate them, and allows the liberty of jumping fully into Romans 8 and all its fullness without any mention of the problems mentioned in Romans 7. But it does not fully answer the issue because in Romans 7 Paul is talking as a believer with at least some measure of the Spirit. (although Barker does allow for this description to be of a person not having much of the power of the Spirit)

Further possible understandings of Romans 7:14-23 are as follows.


He regarded these verses “as describing the state of Paul under the gospel and describing the operations of the mind of Paul subsequent to his conversion. He says it could not be written by an impenitent sinner because of the expressions that are used and it accords with the experience of Christians. Barnes considers that the descriptions in these verses exhibits Paul’s own experiences after he became a Christian. It is Paul looking back on the time of his struggles with coming into the fullness of life. It was not Paul writing of his current experience.” (Barnes pp 168-169)

That sounds more reasonable!! Another enlightened view follows.

8.1.4 William R. Newell - Romans Verse by Verse.

He says that “we must remember that this struggle that Paul writes about is not a description of an experience he was having, but the experience he had as a regenerate man before he knows either about indwelling sin, or that he died to sin and to the Law, which gives sin its power; and who also does not yet know the Holy Spirit, as an indwelling presence and power against sin. God let Paul have that experience, so that we may read and not only know the facts of our salvation, the guilt of sin, but also the moral hideousness of our old selves and our powerlessness, though regenerate, to deliver ourselves from the law of sin in our members.” (Newell pp 273)

In addition, Newell added:

“Furthermore, Paul spent three years alone in Arabia soon after his conversion, probably struggling in vain to compel the flesh to obey the Law, to have revealed to his weary soul that he had died with Christ - to sin and to Law which sin had used as its power.” (Newell pp 260)

So from that time on, Paul would have been free from conflict relating to sin and law, for the last 17 years before he wrote Romans 7.

8.2 An assessment of these views compared with scripture

Steel, Barnes and Newell, make a lot of sense to me. Whilst in Arabia, Paul apparently went through a period during which he did not know the full truth of the gospel as he should, but nevertheless would eventually apply to his life. Paul had to learn too! So there is hope for us! Thank God he was led to stay there until the fullness of the truth of the gospel was revealed to his brilliant and dedicated mind!

On the basis of these views, I have formed an understanding of Romans 7:14-24, using the following chronology of Paul’s life.
He was converted in AD 37
He went to Arabia in AD 38 staying there 3 years
He wrote Romans in AD 57, some 17 years later.

These dates are important as it can be seen that Paul - in A.D. 57 when he wrote Romans - was not describing current experience, but was looking back on the experience of when he was a new Christian and the difficulties he had in growing out of the milk into the meat. Paul had said too much about fullness of life in Christ in other letters to be still in a negative conflict, so we can be assured he had learned to live out that fullness.

As he experienced these early times, Paul knew intellectually that he was “dead to sin” and tried to live that way without the full realization that he had to do it without reference to the Law - and so he failed as many of us have done (by wrong interpretation of Romans 7 and consequences following), not realizing the full truth, until guided by the Holy Spirit into that full truth. His words describe the awful dilemma.

“Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:24)

So it seems that these words indicate the latter part of the experience in Arabia, just before he was brought into full knowledge by the Spirit of God. Then he had 17 more years of living that way before he wrote Romans.

But for us with the benefit of the full scriptures, we can see in Romans 7:14-23 that Paul uses the word “I” (meaning my-self) no less than 23 times and either “me” or “my” 8 times. So there are 31 references to the personal self of Paul. This reveals Paul’s own limited knowledge and experience at the time (not at the time of writing Romans, which was 17 years later - but early after his conversion) he was still focused on his own self, his old man, the same one that had been crucified with Christ. His old self (old man) was actually dead (and been replaced with the life of Christ) and should not have been doing all those Romans 7 strivings, except by allowing the law to dominate him, not fully realizing the fullness of the indwelling Spirit that was actually available.

That's why Newell was able to say that Paul’s sinful self was (now) NOT HIS REAL SELF. He had temporally forgotten or ignored that his real (old man) self had died with Christ. He in effect was under a delusion that he had personal power to operate in an independent fashion. Newell speaks of this delusion. He mentions Paul saying that we are strength-less naturally and therefore we are either servants of God or servants of sin. He then goes on to say that, “Man hates this fact. He boasts his independence, whether it be in the realm of intellect - “free thought!” in the matter of private wealth - “independent!” or in the manner of government - “free!” But all this is really a delusion.” (Newell pages 241) Man does not have the power to operate in an independent fashion. Modern Christian man needs to realize this - he is either one or the other - a servant of God or a servant of sin!

8.3. More on Paul’s learning experience of A.D 37-40

To be spiritually effective, Paul found out that he had to let the Spirit of God rule his life. Paul had to stop striving to live by his flesh and the strength of his will, as this had the effect of bringing the power of the law against him. In that situation it was impossible for him to succeed. In effect he created a pseudo separate self that was trying to rule and live out of the old self, whilst at the same time having the life of Christ in him. He, at that time, did not fully realize that his old self was in fact dead and that he should have been able to live through the life of Christ. Nor did he realize at that stage that the more he tried to live by his own efforts, the more the law made it impossible to do so. Hence his conflict of having the Spirit of God, but no power from the presence of the Spirit. (Does that sound familiar?) The state in which he found himself was not clearly on either side, but in a sort of pseudo
independent position which was neither real nor had any future. Fortunately for him and for us, he was guided out of this false position.

So during the stage of his actual experience of Romans 7 Paul was quite confused (verses 7-24 indicate that) and to help us know the confusion of entering into the fullness of life, he has shared his learning experience with us. It is us, in eras since Paul, that have misinterpreted what Paul has been saying to us in Romans 7.

If it is looked at quite simply it is not so difficult to see. If in Romans 6 Paul’s self is dead and in Romans 8 he has a new self which is Christ in him, then what is all the fuss about in Romans 7? It is simply his transitional experience as he moved from a knowledge of the former old self to a full and working knowledge of the power of his new self - the indwelling Spirit of God in a believer.

The following paragraphs reveal Newell’s view of Paul’s experience.

- “Paul had to find out that sin did dwell in him though he delighted in God’s law. He had to discover that his own will was powerless against this sin and that the sinful self was not his (new) real self. Also, that there was deliverance only through our Lord Jesus Christ and (an awareness) the presence (and fullness ) of His Spirit within us.

- “What perfect theological folly to conceive that the struggle of Romans Seven had been all along in Saul’s heart! That such a monster of murder was at the same time "delighting in the Law of God after the inward man"? No, no! That was before the holy Law, with its "Commandment" for an inner personal holiness, -free, even, from unlawful desire (epithumia) had been quickened to him! “ (Newell pp 268)

- “How wonderful the consistency of Scripture! Paul was not under Law, being in Christ. God was not "beguiling" Paul in commanding what He knew Paul could not fulfil. But God permitted Sin to "beguile" him, by leading him to rely on his own power to obey, that Paul might find his utter powerlessness, and finally despair of delivering himself. (Newell pp 269)

- “He saw it at last, and bowed to it, - that all he was by the flesh, by Nature, was irrevocably committed to sin. So he gave up - to see himself wholly in Christ (who now lived in Him) and to walk not by the Law, even in the supposed powers of the quickened life, but by the Spirit only: in whose power alone the Christian life is to be lived.(Newell pp 281)

In conclusion to this section on Bible Commentaries, it is hoped that by expression of this example of how misleading Bible Commentaries can be, that readers in their search for truth, will consider the Word of God itself and the learning to be taken from the Holy Spirit Himself.

The particular case examined is also very important in the light of this whole study. If Romans 7:14-25 is not seen in the correct light – and is viewed or interpreted incorrectly, then the Gospel of Jesus Christ, will not be fully presented.

Conclusion

The Complementary Issues explanations that have been provided here, both underpin and then extend the study “Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ” provided in the list given at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gnaust/life/index-gr.html Although the Gospel teaching itself is quite complete in itself, knowledge of the issues in this study will enhance the readers understanding of the Gospel.

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Willmington, Dr H. L. *Willmington’s Guide to the Bible* Tyndale House Publishers Inc Wheaton Illinois USA.

Zodhiates, Dr Spiros *The Hebrew-Greek Study Bible*. AMG International Inc.

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Remember that we have no more faith at any time than we have in the hour of trial. All that will not bear to be tested in mere carnal confidence. *Fair-weather faith is no faith.*

C.H. Spurgeon