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KEY WORDS

Obedience to Sin versus Mastering Sin through Christ

What does it mean to “die to sin?” Can we, by the power of the Lord within, become *consistent* in overcoming Satan’s influences during trials? Can we die to the old self and be in the new self during *each* of the real-life trials we experience? Can we cease to be slaves to sin? If the theological concept of being dead to sin can be experienced in our lives, how must our perspectives change in order to do our parts more effectively in cooperation and service to the Lord? How, as disciples of Christ, must our views shift in order to realize these possibilities in our trials?

In Romans 6, Paul shares some very powerful concepts that can challenge how we view and evaluate our walk with Christ.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Are we to **continue** in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who have **died** to sin still live in it? (Bold added by authors)

We know we died to sin through the Lord’s sacrifice for us, but even as believers we still falter in some of our trials. Is it realistic to believe we can submit to Him so much that we can stop failing Him in trials? Isn’t this the same as believing we can be perfect? Doesn’t just thinking about it seem arrogant and sinfully wishful, or is it that Satan is causing us to fear seeking out these possibilities in Christ? Causing us to fear thinking about realizing possibilities in Christ for His sake would certainly fit Satan’s modus operandi!

The truth is that we are already not perfect as we have already missed the mark in the past and have been in need of Christ’s sacrifice. Learning to follow Christ well doesn’t happen overnight. Still, God’s Spirit in Paul says we are not to **continue** in sin. The Greek word for **continue** is ἐπιμένωμεν, and it means “to continue in any state or course.” Paul says the key is to have **died** to sin. The Greek word for **died** is ἀπεθάνομεν, and it means “to be dead to sin, as the truly regenerate are, by having renounced and abandoned it in consequence of their conformity with Christ in His death.” Our part, by the power of Christ in us, includes participating in choosing to abandon sin one trial at a time. It includes conforming to His image by seeing ourselves as having died to sin with Him, and restoring this view actively by the power of the Spirit during each trial we face.

*We can never claim
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We can never claim perfection because we failed in past trials and we don’t know how we will handle our future trials; so, “being dead to sin” cannot be a concept that deals with *claiming* perfection. Yet there is a difference between knowing that theologically it is true we died to sin through Christ and, in trials, having an inner sense of having to view one’s self as being actually dead to sin. Essentially what Paul is describing is the importance of cultivating a powerful, heartfelt perspective of ourselves of having been united with Christ on the cross. Can this perspective be so powerful that our sense of dying with Christ is incredibly real and literally alters our actions during the most difficult of trials? The Spirit of God, inspiring God’s written Word through Paul, goes on...

Romans 6:5-7 For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Italics are part of translation)

...do we feel uncomfortable or maybe even guilty when we are not interested in making the sacrifices necessary for that kind of submission...? [This] must be transformed before we can experience the greater change.

If we cannot be perfect and since we sometimes witness the activity of our old selves in trials, then perhaps the concept of our “old self being crucified with Him” is referring to our “positional” status in Christ. In other words, perhaps Paul is simply meaning that from God’s perspective, our old selves were crucified with Christ such that even when they are active, God chooses only to see Christ’s sacrifice. While this is true, we still may wonder whether it rules out experientially cultivating such an extreme change

within by learning to submit to and partner with the powerful Spirit of God in us. If this is possible, do we feel uncomfortable or maybe even guilty when we are not interested in making the sacrifices necessary to submit to that experience? If so, those disturbances within us indicate old self fear that must be transformed before we can experience the greater change. The Holy Spirit in Paul continues...

Romans 6:11-16 Even so consider yourselves to be **dead** to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you **obey** its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the **dead**, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be **master** over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you **obey**, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (Bold added; italics are part of translation)

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The Holy Spirit through Paul says that when Satan attacks (which involves Satan “nurturing” our old selves) we must consider ourselves as “**dead** to sin.” The Greek word for **dead** is νεκρὸς, and it means “‘to be dead indeed unto sin,’ i.e., no longer willingly subject to it.” To not be subject to missing the mark in any given trial, we must know exactly what it is that Satan, through our old selves, is seeking to cause us to do! Isn’t failing to seek out the old self patterns which can be and are active in a trial a willing neglect when we know it is a necessary part of not being slaves to sin? The Spirit reiterates this when Paul writes “for sin shall not be **master** over you.” The Greek word for **master** is κυριεύσει, and it means “as exercising mastery over us.” If we are not seeking out how Satan is deceiving us (as he seeks mastery), then we cannot fully appreciate what the Lord is challenging us to change. This is part of letting God mold us in the new self. Without recognizing the old, we cannot truly understand how the Lord wants us to act in the trial (demonstrate that new self change). To know what Satan seeks to make us do, we must partner with the Holy Spirit within, The Teacher. He seeks to communicate that information to us directly through our hearts.

Though we transform in some trials, at some point our trials may raise the ante of sacrifice we must make. The Lord knows what this means for each of us (His disciples). Individually, part of our submission to Him involves becoming more proficient in hearing what changes (sacrifices) we must make. This is part of the Lord’s discipline. It facilitates growth in our new selves. We must embrace His changes whenever He is seeking to communicate them to us in our hearts!

In trials, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us because Satan is attacking and deceiving us. God’s Spirit in Paul indicates we will either conduct ourselves as slaves to sin or to obedience in a trial. The choice hinges on whether our hearts transform in that trial. Notice that Paul says we are “slaves to the one whom we **obey**.” The Greek word for **obey** is ὑπακούειν, and it means “to yield to one’s passions giving them the upper hand.” Passions are of the heart. Jesus

Consistently meeting the spiritual challenges in our trials involves having an acute awareness of the old self desires that Satan “nurtures” in us!

said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Just because we have passions and are believers does not mean our passions are always godly. Our love and passion for the Lord is demonstrated by how well we recognize Satan’s deceptions within us, and subsequently, whether we are willing to transform our passions during a trial to conform to what God would have them to be. Consistently meeting the spiritual challenges in our trials involves having an acute awareness of the old self desires that Satan “nurtures” in us! Sometimes we may be successful in trials without being consciously aware of our own old selves’ desires, but we cannot expect to be consistently successful in spiritual battles if we aren’t paying attention to the half of spiritual warfare that involves deception, lies and attacks on the Lord in our hearts.

Paul explains the basic concept of living for Christ in these passages, yet he also presents a very powerful and perhaps even somewhat uncomfortable reality! On the one hand we can do nothing to stop missing the mark in trials, but in Christ we can and must do everything we can to actively move in that direction.

Paul indicates that we must conduct ourselves as “slaves for obedience” (Romans 6:16)! When we think of our relationship with God, we usually don’t think of ourselves as slaves, but as free! While it is true we are free in Christ, there are trials during which Satan is using the blessing of freedom in Christ against us so that we might misuse it. From a certain perspective we are free, but Paul indicates that sometimes it can be more useful to view ourselves as “slaves for obedience.” This can be useful in order that our actions result in righteousness more frequently, especially when the cost of change in Christ is noticeably more than what we expect, or than to which we are accustomed! This is not a new concept. It is also not simply a New Testament concept.

Genesis 4:6-7 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must **master** it.”

*...there are trials
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might misuse it.*

One of the first things God did, when it came to seeking to counsel and guide mankind, was to provide Cain, and indeed all of us, with the direction above. The Hebrew word for **master** is תָּמַשׁל and means “to rule, govern, control, to be in charge of.” In the very beginning of the Bible we see God challenging mankind to have true passion for Him. He sent Christ and gave us the permanent indwelling of His Holy Spirit to help us do what Romans says is possible by the grace of God through Christ Jesus: doing our part to master sin.

The tables on the next couple pages present two columns of thoughts that when compared with one another may bring out some distinctions between being slaves to sin or to obedience. The fact that some of the perspectives and thoughts are in the column described as “limiting or might be limiting” to who we are in Christ does NOT necessarily mean they are untrue. It simply means that they are perspectives which, depending on how we apply them to our lives, may become limitations when Satan twists their application to our lives. Just as Satan tempted Jesus by seeking to cause Him to apply Scripture to His trial(s) improperly, Satan often seeks to do the same thing with us. When we do not notice or pay attention to the Holy Spirit’s voice through our hearts, we may miss the Spirit’s counsel pointing to times when Satan is influencing us to apply a distorted view of God’s truth.

Remember, some of the statements in the left column are theological concepts and truths about who we are in Christ that you may recognize from a particular favorite passage; however, we sometimes can focus on them in an improper way by forgetting to connect them to other responsibilities, roles, and truths about who we are in Christ. In that way we might take them out of the context of a total walk with Christ as described in other passages from the Bible. The right column seeks to challenge us to apply theological concepts and truths in our own, personal, actual daily walk, i.e., in all our trials by walking with the Lord and interacting regularly with His Holy Spirit.

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Some Distinctions between Being Slaves to Sin or to Obedience

I limit, or might be limiting, who I am in Christ when...	Mastering sin through Christ includes...
...I forget or simply fail to see what God would have me to do in a trial, and I live accordingly.	...knowing exactly what God wants from me in a trial and doing it.
...I rely on the fact I gave my life to God at one point in the past, and I live accordingly.	...suffering to die to sin in every single trial.
...I overlook or don't understand my personal, spiritual responsibilities in trials, and I live accordingly.	...seeking out my personal responsibilities in Christ during my trials.
...I think God expects me to be a flawed sinner because of being born into sin, and I live accordingly.	...knowing God holds me responsible to choose and act in His will because, in Christ, I can master sin in a trial.
...I see God controlling everything through His design, and I live accordingly.	...seeing that God's design included giving me control over the spiritual choices I must make.
...I believe that personal responsibility is mainly about accepting consequences, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing personal responsibility involves understanding and obeying the Spirit's counsel in my heart, so that consequences of <i>my</i> actions are in accordance with His will.
...I blame my pain on someone or something other than me, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing how I am in relationship to my painful experiences, and hearing the Holy Spirit's counsel so as to transform them to peace.
...I believe that my experiences are determined solely by God, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that whether I participate, and the consistency with which I participate, with the Lord's Spirit Who is available to me, determines how I experience events in life.
...I know God sees my ignorance, I believe He sees that as simply part of being human, and I live accordingly.	...knowing my ignorance is often my problem to overcome by hearing the Enlightener's counsel, because I am a follower of Christ.
...I worry about what others will think of my mistakes, and I live accordingly.	...learning from my mistakes by the Spirit's counsel, and in Christ becoming free from worry.
...I am afraid to change, and I live accordingly.	...having the courage to keep trying to change in Christ, even when I fail.
...I find strength mostly in others, and I live accordingly.	...finding strength in who I am in Christ, and seeking out others who will encourage me to do so regularly.
...I believe knowledge counts as experience, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that what I <i>really</i> know is revealed in my everyday experiences and trials.
...I use the Truth I learn mainly to change others, and I live accordingly.	...learning Truth to change me, and encouraging others to do the same for themselves.

Some Distinctions between Being Slaves to Sin or to Obedience

I limit, or might be limiting, who I am in Christ when...	Mastering sin through Christ includes...
...I fear change, sometimes "settle" during trials, and I live accordingly.	...experiencing thankfulness in each trial so that I may press on toward the goal.
...I have the attitude of "This is who I am" almost all the time, and I live accordingly.	...the sentiment, "Again I discovered who I am in Christ," one trial at a time.
...I fear the unknown, and I live accordingly.	...a godly fear of settling.
...I know we all are sinners saved to be "saints" in the future, and I live accordingly.	...conducting myself as a "saint" by walking closely with God now, and doing my part in Christ to change me.
...I sometimes see miracles, and I live accordingly.	...always seeing miracles.
...I unconsciously tolerate my old-self deception, and I live accordingly.	...consciously eliminating my old-self deception in a trial by partnering with the Spirit of Christ and hearing His counsel.
...I rarely trust feelings and other heart disturbances, and I live accordingly.	...trusting the spiritual purpose of feelings and heart disturbances, which God designed to get our attention.
...I mostly see danger in the world, and I live accordingly.	...seeing danger in my own old self.
...I fear having to say, "I don't know," and I live accordingly.	...knowing "I don't know" leads to seeking in a trial, and is a key step toward listening to God with the heart.
...I understand the concept "I hurt others," and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that "I hinder my new self when my <i>old</i> self hurts me or others."
...I take the whole thing apart to see what is going on, and I live accordingly.	...putting the whole thing together to discover what is going on.
...I think the problem is when things are backwards, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that my problem is letting Satan help me to have things backwards in trials.
...I think that when Satan attacks it is possible to avoid being influenced, and I live accordingly.	...knowing that when Satan attacks I will be deceived until I hear the Holy Spirit's counsel.
...I believe Satan doesn't exist, or if he does, then he isn't actively affecting my spiritual choices, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that I need to hear the Holy Spirit's guidance with my heart because Satan exists and is at work against Christ in me.
...I define trials only as being about "the big stuff" I cannot solve myself, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing all trials by the disturbances my heart, regardless how great or small they be; this is part of how God designed me to be able to "see" spiritually.

Some Distinctions between Being Slaves to Sin or to Obedience

I limit, or might be limiting, who I am in Christ when...	Mastering sin through Christ includes...
...I think of freewill as being about making a particular choice or not (an external view of freewill), and I live accordingly	...recognizing that the way God designed freewill is such that I <i>will</i> choose between God’s will or Satan’s will in a given trial (an internal, spiritual view of freewill).
...I believe I am not being judgmental unless I can recognize it consciously, and I live accordingly.	...appreciating that <i>because</i> I have powerful, unconscious intentions, I can be judgmental whenever I am not transforming my heart.
...I think living in eternity starts after death, and I live accordingly.	...realizing eternity includes now as it doesn’t have a beginning or an end – a characteristic of God.
...I view Adam and Eve as being weak humans, and I live accordingly.	...seeing that Adam and Eve were perfect until they ate of the fruit, so a deeper truth of their story reveals the danger of Satan’s deceptions.
...I believe it is OK to ask God for anything I want, and I live accordingly.	...asking God for what I want when I am in my new self as opposed to when my desires are influenced by Satan and my old self.
...I believe that because I am a Christian I am almost always centered in Christ, and I live accordingly.	...knowing that because I am a Christian, I can become centered in Christ during a trial by following His guidance, one trial at a time.
...I believe I endanger myself mainly when I listen to false teaching, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing how I endanger myself anytime my old self’s false teaching causes me to stop looking for change in me during a trial.
...I believe God gave me a brain to figure out how to solve most normal life priorities and decisions, and I live accordingly.	...recognizing that God gave me a brain, but it is through my heart that my mind is renewed so I can make priorities and decisions in Christ.
...I believe God forgives me for my sins so there is no point in remembering them, and I live accordingly.	...understanding that God forgives me for my sins, and He gave me a brain and a heart to look for old self patterns that lead to my sin.
...I use my Biblical knowledge to try to control the disturbances of my heart during trials, and I live accordingly.	...transforming my heart in Christ in order to understand the Spirit’s counsel on how to apply Biblical knowledge to my trials.
...I view study of the Old Testament as “profitable” mostly in the sense that it leads to the arrival of Christ.	...recognizing that the lives and trials of people in the Old Testament show us, as Christians, what happens when we don’t recognize when, how and why our hearts condemn us during trials.
...I view “persevering in trials” to mean “holding myself together and doing the best I understand to do while loving the Lord.”	...persevering in trials, meaning “actually working to submit to the changes God seeks to discipline me to make during the trial,” and knowing what those changes are!

Note for *Feelings 101* Readers: As was mentioned on page 6, one of the keys to becoming more consistent in successfully meeting the spiritual challenges of trials involves a strong and *accurate* awareness of Satan’s work at stirring up your old self’s activity during the trials. There are patterns in his attacks to which the Holy Spirit speaks. However, just because we experience trials and the inner conflict that arises because of them, this does not necessarily mean we are always fully aware of and keenly recognizing old our self desires, motives, etc. Why? When Paul talks about not conforming to worldly patterns, we must recognize that those worldly patterns aren’t just “out there.” Because we have old selves to which we must die in each trial, Satan seeks to enflame those patterns “in here,” i.e., within our own hearts and minds. The lessons in *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* (F101) talk about how those patterns develop over time, how the dynamics of the heart and mind work, and how to recognize critical, unique characteristics of Satan’s attacks on you. Learning to apply this knowledge to your life significantly helps you do your part in becoming more consistent in following Christ in your trials.

A spider web has patterns, but it is not solid – it has holes in it. Spiritually speaking, even when we unknowingly embrace worldly patterns it is often *because* the web of old self patterns has holes in it. Those holes are places where we are successful in acting in the new self (i.e., we act Holy)! That’s right, Satan even works to use our past victories in Christ as part of his deceptions as we go along in life! In other words, there are trials in which we are successfully following the Lord, and in other trials we are unsuccessful and miss the mark. The intermittent successes *sometimes* actually make it harder to see our old self patterns of the present, especially when we actually have experienced real spiritual growth in our recent or distant past.

All of this means that we might have trouble seeing old self patterns clearly when we aren’t more *consistently* successful in Christ during trials. In order to recognize patterns within our old selves and become more consistent, we must take advantage of the learning (discipling) opportunities the God offers us through our trials. The spiritual warfare tools offered in F101 can help you capitalize on exactly that! The more we examine ourselves during a trial and are able to compare and contrast that trial with other trials, the more we begin to recognize patterns in Satan’s attacks and the Holy Spirit’s guidance. The more trials in which you use the Painful Pattern Tool (PPT) to record and review important spiritual dynamics and characteristics of the patterns of your old self, the more the tool will assist you as the Holy Spirit seeks to help you remember and recognize relevant patterns.

The 7 *Spiritual Principles* (7SP) of hearing the Spirit’s counsel during a trial (Chapters 7 and 8) will also help you in remembering and get faster at recognizing the changes the Holy Spirit may be reiterating to you during your trials. Of course, each time you use the 7SP and the 7SP Record, you use them to deal with one specific trial at a time. However, the new-self evaluation questions from Chapter 8 will assist you in identifying patterns in the Holy Spirit’s guidance based on your work with the 7SP, as well as identifying the relationships His counsel has to old self patterns (from PPT).

Use the tools as often as you can in order to increase your awareness of the dynamics behind your spiritual battles. As you grow, your spiritual battles will present increasingly complex dynamics because Satan will adapt his deceptions in order to cause you to falter. Again, it is vital to do your part in permitting the Holy Spirit to make you more skilled at recognizing the old within you.

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KEY IN-SIGHTS

Trials are Satan's attacks upon you, and God's attempts at purifying you. HMMMM!! You cannot avoid trials; you can fail in them, make them more difficult than they need to be, or you can transform them in Christ. Of course, what we do in our spiritual trials and what we learn from them is up to us in terms of how well we do our parts in interacting with the Spirit of Christ within us during those trials.

HEARING THE HYMNS

Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart¹

In John 14:16-17 Jesus told His disciples that when He left the earth He would send His Holy Spirit to indwell those who believed in Him.

John 14:16-17 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” (Italics are part of translation)

The Scriptures also tell us that the Holy Spirit is not only the Helper, but also the Teacher, the Comforter, and the Guide for the believer.

In this hymn, the writer, George Croly, is seeking to be fully submitted to the leadership and guidance of the Spirit of Truth. He recognizes that it is his heart condition that determines this (Verse1):

Verse 1 Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; thro’ all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

Verse 2 I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no op’ning skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away.

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Verse 3 Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear.
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unceasing prayer.

Verse 4 Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The kindling of the heav’n descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

In **Verses 1 and 2**, Mr. Croly asks for help to change in order to see his experiences from God’s perspective. To love God and be the person God wants him to be, Mr. Croly realizes he needs only to seek the power of God’s Spirit to transform.

In **Verse 3**, Mr. Croly addresses his need to deal with the struggles (trials) he experiences. He recognizes His need to feel connected with God. Mr. Croly recognizes his weaknesses, and the need to transform his doubts and rebellion (old self). Mr. Croly asks to be taught patience – the fruit of the new self in Christ – so that he might learn to continually be seeking connection with God (unceasing prayer).

In **Verse 4**, we see the subject of Mr. Croly’s passion: that he be taught to love with his heart, which is the alter upon which his life (each of his trials) is brought into submission to God. He seeks “one holy passion.” The heart mentioned by the writer in Verse 1 is the key. In the New Testament, the Greek word for *heart* is καρδία and means “desires, feelings, affections, *passions*, impulses,” and the heart “is the seat and center of the human being.” While our minds conceive the thoughts which influence our hearts and enable us to actually act, it is the condition of our hearts which drives us to do the things we do. So though our minds and hearts function with different roles yet in relationship to one another, our will is ultimately influenced by the contents of our heart (Proverbs 27:19). The contents of our heart, including our passions and treasures, can be influenced either by God’s Spirit or the old self, which is “nurtured” by Satan’s influences in a given trial.

What is our passion in the trials we face? What have we set our hearts to seek to actively hear God’s counsel whenever we work to solve our real-life problems in trials? Do we desire to listen to God’s Spirit speak to our hearts so that we transform to peace whenever we have been disturbed by troubles of this world? Do we desire to know what God would have us to change in ourselves to be able to walk worthy of the name “Christian?” Do we accept our trials as discipline from our loving Heavenly Father, Who seeks to mold us into that more perfect stone (1 Peter 1:6-7)? Are we seeking to be discipled by The Teacher, the Spirit of our Lord in our hearts during trials?

Let us, who are in Christ, hear the words of the hymn as we sing and examine our own desires!

The words to this hymn were written by George Croly (1780-1860).
The hymn was put to music by Frederick C. Atkinson (1841-1897).

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KEYS WEBSITE ALERTS

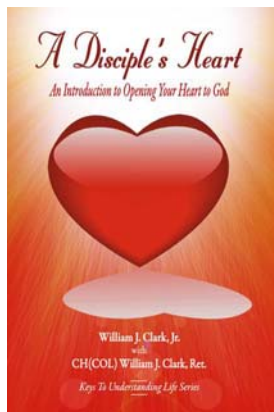
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STATUS OF THE *SERIES*

The following spiritual warfare and individual discipleship materials can be found by clicking the links in blue (remember, you must be connected to the internet for them to work) or by looking for them under this navigation menu button on the *Keys* website:



[A Disciple's Heart](#) (ADH):

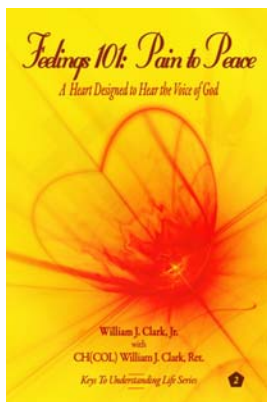


This thought provoking book challenges readers to examine how well they are being discipled “beyond the elementary teachings of Christ” during real-life trials. In addition to examining why the Holy Spirit seeks to teach us during life’s difficulties, the material discusses the importance of learning more about the spiritual warfare dynamics within our hearts and minds. The Scriptural “how to” behind these concepts are presented in detail in the second *Keys Series* book, *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*.

Available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Reader™, Kindle™, iPhone, and iPad, both in the U.S. and internationally! You can find links to popular e-retailers at the bottom of the page at www.adisciplesheart.com.

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Feelings 101: Pain to Peace (F101):



Feelings 101 focuses on the Scriptural “how to” of transforming the heart during trials by listening with intention to the counsel of God’s Spirit in times when Satan seeks to influence us otherwise. This resource offers multiple tools specifically oriented on assisting you to deal with your specific trials by connecting with The Teacher within. The Scriptural and scientific examinations this handbook contains are augmented by personal practical application training tools and exercises. It is also supported by supplemental information from the *Keys* website (the book indicates when to go to the website; the e-formatted versions of this book have links to these pages).

***Feelings 101* Readers:** Several places in *Feelings 101* reference supplemental materials and downloads that are provided to F101 readers on the *Keys* website. To access these materials, *Feelings 101* readers must go to the Supplemental Information Section listed on the bottom right-hand side of the *Keys To Understanding Life Series* navigation menu.

Feelings 101: Pain to Peace is available in hardback, paperback, Adobe Reader™, Kindle™, iPhone, and iPad, both in the U.S. and internationally! You can find links to popular e-retail sites based on the format you want by looking at the bottom of the www.feelings101.com page.

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HEART TO HEART

Spiritual Preparedness Requires More Than Biblical Knowledge

I am one of those guys who really pay attention to Identity Theft issues. I read and collect articles about Identity Theft. I look for the “lock” symbol on my browser on the internet. I avoid questionable websites. I enter most web sites with suspicion. I make sure I have a good antivirus and firewall installed on my computer. In fact, my software has a “vault” on it to protect my information. I have had such software for at least five years, yet I have *felt like* (there’s a heart disturbance) I am watching my back all the time. Now I must confess, I am not a computer expert, but I do probably know enough to be dangerous.

Recently my computer crashed and I had to purchase a new one. I restored my antivirus and firewall to make sure I protected my computer and my data. At one point my son asked if I had put my private information into “the vault” provided with my security software. I responded, “No, I hadn’t done it before, why do it now?” He respectfully explained the importance and protection of the vault. Out of courtesy and respect to my son (some sense of guilt, also – there’s another heart disturbance), I put a bit of identity information into the vault so I would “feel better,” but I still had not embrace the spiritual significance of this trial!

A couple of days later I was making a purchase online, when a message flashed, “This site may be phishing. Recommend termination.” Well, the site looked alright, in spite of no lock (they are really quite small, you know). I had used the site before, or something pretty close to it, and everything worked okay then. No, I had not gotten the warning before (of course I didn’t have my credit card in the vault before either). The purchase was important and I was about to go ahead when I thought I would mention it to my son (smart move). His response was, “Dad, that is what the software is designed to do; give you a warning!! Don’t do it!” I started to justify my reasoning for going ahead – I had really good reasons. His response was to the point, “Don’t do it!!” Regaining my composure and dignity, I said, “Okay,” and disconnected.

The next day I went back to the site. I could see now that it was a little different from the night before. The site now had a lock (it seemed bigger somehow). The site functioned correctly this time with no warning about death and destruction from the dark places of the internet.

I learned several lessons from that experience.

1. I know less than I thought I knew about identity security on the computer.
2. I know a lot more about identity security than I actually practice.
3. What difference does it make how much I know if I don’t put what I know into practice.
4. Even though I am a part of a ministry that emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the heart, I missed my own heart disturbances in the above experience.

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I went through the listening process, using the Biblical principles discussed in *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, to deal with my heart disturbances (spiritual side) concerning the Identity Theft issues (external side). That led me to some spiritual applications which are perhaps more significant than the physical applications referred to above. Allow me to introduce these reflections with a few questions.

- Do I recognize that my old self is always in conflict with my new self?

My old self is suspicious because of the reality of Identity Theft, but I need to recognize my heart disturbances and transform them, so that my new self can discover ways to actually put to practice what I know.

The Bible clearly reflects a continuous inner spiritual struggle (Romans 7:14-25) between my sin nature and my new nature in Christ. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I am His disciple. This role is mine from the moment I respond to God’s invitation to believe in Him with my heart. From that moment I must continually learn how to defeat the old self and to strengthen the new self. This discipleship process will only happen by interacting with God’s Holy Spirit, and I will experience trials until I step into God’s presence. The trials may involve issues of life that do not appear to have much spiritual significance!

- Do I pay attention to my decisions and actions that make me vulnerable to Satan’s attack?

My resistance (heart disturbance) to using the vault actually made me more vulnerable to Identity Theft. It is very hard to recognize that my familiar and comfortable way of doing things often prevents me from discovering what God’s Spirit has to say about real-life problems.

When I disregard my heart disturbances, I yield to my old self desires. In those trials I am actually yielding to Satan and planting myself more firmly on his side. When I pay attention to my heart disturbances and transform them, I discover my new self interests and can put those into practice. In those trials I am actually yielding to God and strengthening my relationship with Him. Real-life experiences often have spiritual issues intertwined. Satan does not want us to see these. If I overlook heart disturbances about seemingly “unspiritual things,” then I am not really being trained to skillfully see the interplay between the spiritual and physical.

- Am I aware that my familiar patterns for making decisions often lead me into traps instead of toward deliverance?

Fear (heart disturbance) enters into my decision making regarding Identity Theft. Trying something new involves change and risk. Stepping through an unfamiliar door means I don’t know what is on the other side or what can happen; I can’t control the outcome.

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As a disciple of Christ I am really living on a spiritual edge. 2 Corinthians 5:17 alerts me to the reality of change being a constant in my life. My old life is to constantly be transformed into a new life. This is not going to happen if I overlook opportunities to cooperate with God and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit with my heart. As a Christian I am responsible for recognizing when I have a real-life need to cooperate with God in a transformation process; usually this will not be comfortable because it will not be familiar.

- Am I aware that while I can always justify what I do, that does not mean that what I do is right or good?

Here is an idea that is true about every one of us. Each of us can justify our actions on the basis of what we believe is true. I was able to justify why I wasn't using the vault because I was using carefully selected facts instead of looking at all the truth involved.

One of the reasons it is hard for me to be transformed by God is because I can justify why I say or do what I say or do. Since my justifications always make sense to me, why should I change? When we are being deceived, the distorted facts will really seem to make sense to us personally. Critical and honest introspection is not an exercise that I necessarily enjoy, even though I need it. I have to be willing to acknowledge, before I start the introspection, that I might be wrong (I may be being deceived). Is it any wonder that we don't like to be still and know that He is God? In real-life problem-solving I need the Holy Spirit's guidance to know what to change and transform. When He tells me, my course of action is no longer optional.

- Am I aware that gaining knowledge does not mean that I am experiencing and embracing the changes I need?

I knew lots about Identity Theft. I was thinking that because I know a lot I must, therefore, be protected. Because I had knowledge, I thought it was being applied.

I have studied the Bible on my own for years. I studied it in college and Seminary. I have preached it and taught Bible studies for years. I have received awards and acknowledgements for the studies I have developed. None of that means my life has been transformed as God intends for it to be, and it doesn't eliminate my need to be vigilant in watching my heart.

- Am I gaining knowledge without actually applying that knowledge to my life?

I had accumulated lots of ideas about Identity Theft, but had only applied a small portion to my life. How foolish of me to forget that application is always required for knowledge to be useful.

Fortunately the Lord alerts me to spiritual issues in everyday events by disturbing the peace in my heart. What good does Biblical truth do me if what I know is never really incorporated into how I make decisions, how I relate to others, how I live my life, and whether I allow God to participate moment by moment in my life, so I can spiritually handle each trial in my life in Christ? Spiritual preparedness always requires more than Biblical knowledge!!

Submitted by: William Clark, Sr.

If you write poems, psalms, lyrics or prose of faith, and would like to share one of them with others in a “Hearts Up” edition, you may submit it for consideration for the *Heart To Heart* feature. You may also submit a personal story or testimony of your own to share how one of the articles or the *Keys* materials helped you draw closer to God during a trial. Email your submission through the Contact Us page at www.keystounderstandinglife.com. Be sure to read the **Contribution Guidelines** before sending making your submission. You can view those guidelines by clicking the link provided on the contact page itself.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”, words by George Croly (1780-1860) as quoted in The Baptist Hymnal, Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1991, 245

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