In so many ways, spiritual growth parallels our physical development. An infant comes into the world with a blank slate. What’s written on that impressionable, precious life, and how it’s done, affects growth. Similarly, when believers trust Christ’s blood for salvation, they are babes. Our spiritual, inward man needs to grow-up to understand sound doctrine. The Spirit uses the Word to nourish those who desire it, as they read, study, & meditate.

However, in I Corinthians 3:1-2, we see what happens when saints walk ‘after the flesh’ & don’t process and integrate sustenance to mature. “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” Focused on their flesh, they refused to believe & live basic doctrine, so they weren’t established. Paul reproves them, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”

When babes in Christ do digest the ‘milk,’ and progress on to the nutritious ‘meat’ of the Word by faith, Romans-Philemon they will thrive. Further, they’re able to mature to spiritual adulthood and learn how to negotiate life challenges by living what the Spirit teaches.

The comparison between physical & spiritual growth is found throughout the Bible. Hebrews 5:13-14 says, “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good & evil.”

Maturity is NOT achieved quickly, squeezed into irregular time slots, nor is it naturally occurring. Each day, we need to learn & ‘workout spiritually’ to grow to ‘full age.’

Inner growth, using all Scripture, is a continual maturing process over the course of a lifetime. However, to properly advance, saints need to be particularly nourished in sound doctrine, God’s message of ‘Grace.’ Paul states, “...when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess. 2:13) Purpose to exercise the doctrine in the details of life, simply by yielding. God is your Power!

Women's Bible Study - N. Chesterfield, VA
When: Every Fri. 1-3pm  Topic: Romans & Call for information - (804) 519-1210

**Growing Spiritually**

**I'm Tired... So Why Can't I Sleep?**

The cares and concerns of this world pummel us all day; for some, it may carry into the night. Eventually, we fall asleep but may lie there for hours, wake-up a lot, or have troubling dreams. As a result, we just don’t get enough rest. Many plow through the day frustrated and cranky, dragging, unable to think clearly. Sustaining a peaceful inner man while focusing on this demanding, increasingly unpredictable world, can be challenging. General advice is to replace bad patterns with healthy ones, but what specifically can you do?

- Be open to change: Regularly, take a fresh look at your life and purpose to adjust as many negative factors as possible, like busyness, extra duties, or problem situations. Then, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col 3:2)
- Plan ahead: A couple of hours before bed, slow down... spirit, soul and body. Do calming activities. Choose to think on verses. Avoid spirited conversations, intense input, & caffeine/sugar. Use this ‘end of the day time’ to read the Scriptures, pray, and reflect.
- Make a personal ‘reminder list’ to wind down: Research and experiment to find what works best for you: a relaxing drink like warm milk/peppermint tea, calming music-white noise, meditation on the Word, etc. Review and use the list prior to bedtime.
- Before getting in bed, prepare your heart and mind to ‘close out’ your day. Reflect upon the day’s events. jot down a plan to deal with unresolved issues. Decide how to address concerns, then set them aside and keep these ‘windows of your mind’ closed.
- After an hour of not sleeping: Get up/read/do a quiet activity awhile, then try again.
- When undesirable thoughts overtake your mind: Plan a replacement. Think about Bible passages or calming activities, even visualize nature images.
- Physiological factors: Certain physical conditions can produce sleeplessness. Also, as we age the body changes, potentially reducing consistent sleep patterns. Consult your local nutrition store or seek out a professional. Consider recommendations carefully, with significant personal research, including natural approaches. Many times, one or more of the above approaches will be sufficient to improve consistently restful sleep.

Most important...Pray, asking God to help you!

**Romans 2: Student Study Insights**

Romans 2:2 “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”

This is the second in a series of articles encouraging a chapter-by-chapter study of Romans. It is designed to provide increased insight into how to study for the hidden nuggets and powerful teaching God has placed there to learn and apply. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” (Proverbs 4:7) Expect to be empowered and focused.

Romans was particularly selected for two main reasons. First, the Father has distinct instructions for the Church, the Body of Christ. The risen Lord Jesus taught them to Paul, who then wrote down this ‘form of doctrine’ in his epistles, Romans-Philemon. Romans 6:17 Second, God placed Romans first in this series of letters as it uniquely provides a strong doctrinal foundation to establish Gentile believers. Paul summarizes, “Now to him that is of power to do a quiet activity awhile, then try again.

**Paul’s Roman Epistle: Designed to Establish the Body of Christ**

Romans 2:2 “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”

**The goal each month will be to address one successive chapter in the book of Romans and relay a few helpful study insights for application.**

**Continued on Page 3.**
Understanding the Romans 8 Grace Thinking Cycle Part 2

Take time to look up Romans 8:1-14 for yourself to make this real to YOU!

1. Law Manifests Sin
Romans 8:1-4
Fruit of the Flesh/Function in Death 8:21/7:24
Wretched Man & Body of Death is in Contrast 7:24
Condemnation/Goal...Walking After Flesh 8:1

2. Think Differently
(Faith in the Word)
Romans 8:1-3
Not Under Law/Condemned, Walking after Spirit 8:1
Free From Sin & Death 8:2
Knows Weakness/Condemns Sin, Trusts/Submits 8:3

3. Walk After the Spirit
Romans 8:4-8
Humble/Desires to Live as Who He is in Christ 8:4-5
Spiritually Minded to Yield/Trust God & Word to Walk after the Spirit 8:6-7
Prays/Studies/Meditates to be Spiritually Minded & Please God 8:6-8

5. Sin Cycle Is Broken!!!
(Rom. 5:3-5/8:28 Processes Begin/Grace Reigns)
‘Tribulation Works Patience...Experience...Hope’
(What is Needed: A Prepared Heart to Glorify God/Be Thankful-Romans 1:1)

6. Yield in Faith/Led by Spirit
Romans 8:9-14
Spirit & Word Work. As Saint Allows Spirit to Dwell Within 8:9
Christ Living Within Quickens/Now Made Alive 8:10-11
Denies Satan a Place/Mortifies Deeds/Led by Spirit 8:12-14

How to Let Grace Reign In Your Life...The Mind of Christ

Last month’s article made it clear that believers are in bondage to sin as long as they continue to try, in the energy of their flesh, to keep the law. The flesh is weak and unable to perform perfect righteousness. Historically, under the Law, the Nation Israel proved that man will always fail short. (Study Insight: To provide feedback on choices in order to learn.)

Believers have the option to step out of the ‘Sin Cycle’ at any moment. What holds them back is their ‘own’ thinking. Romans 7:25 transitions them to Romans 8, to think differently, acquiring God’s wisdom, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Romans 8 teaches, if saints continue ‘carnal thinking’ they will be unable to step off the path of sin and stay off. Trusting ‘The Lie,’ (exalting their flesh rather than God) will keep them stuck in this vicious cycle. The flesh serves the ‘law of sin,’ while the mind can serve the ‘law of God.’ A key to gain victory in this battle is to allow God’s power to change their thinking, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life & peace.” (Romans 8:6) They need to know, believe, and apply some things:

Romans 6: The old man is crucified and now ‘dead to sin.’ Yet, there are choices each moment. Rather than continue in sin, they can wholly trust God, yielding as an instrument of righteousness. The sowing and reaping process (Vs.21-23) provides feedback on choices in order to learn.

Romans 7: God made believers ‘dead to the law,’ breaking the bondage of sin. God separated the sin, that still works in the flesh, from the real ‘I,’ the ‘inward man.’ This provides glorious freedom from guilt; liberty to live godly and even make mistakes, without self-condemnation.

Romans 8:1-14: (Study Insight: Stop here to read Romans 8:1-14 and prove the Grace Cycle above.)

-Lords can now ‘mind’ godly things and ‘walk after the Spirit.’ “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:4)

-They can believe God: They choose to do what He says in faith, even when what He says seems impossible, is grievously hard, or when the flesh screams/rebels. (Rom.4:20-21) This is done by God’s strength.

-Lords led by the Spirit are fully absorbed in the Word (effectually dwelling in the inward man), becoming their wisdom/power base to live in God’s realm. This is how the Spirit ‘quickens’ the mortal body. Now they can mortify (deny life to) the deeds of the flesh.

-As believers choose to grow and mature, living unto God, He adopts them, desiring to teach/lead by the Spirit, through the Word. Now they can be pleasing & have functional spiritual life.

To practically appreciate these things in the Grace Cycle, the ‘coveting’ example will be used again. The married man living in sin now chooses to acquire ‘grace thinking’.

1. Law Manifests Sin: The man knows he’s in sin, astonished as to ‘how’ he was swept into this adulterous relationship. He visualizes the ‘Y’ in the road of his mind. He chose the sin path to the left and feels convicted, being far down that road, in grievous captivity to sin in his flesh. (‘Y’ Road explained in Issue 11) He’s reaping what was sown: Anger toward God, carnal behavior, fighting with family, and trouble at work. “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” (Romans 6:21) The man has become functionally dead in sin and lost hope.

2. Think Differently: The saint begins to recall his identity in Christ and reflects, thankful God loves him and is always there to provide answers/help. While he knows there is no condemnation when he ‘walks after the Spirit,’ he’s been ‘walking after the flesh,’ under the law. He ‘feels’ like a failure, condemned and powerless. Yet he’s reminded: God has forgiven him, that God’s head lives within, never to leave him, and his ‘inward man’ is freed/separate from sin. The man decides to make changes: Prepare his heart, believe God, and choose to live as who he really is in Christ again. He now realizes he needs to pray and trust God’s strength and wisdom, to cease from ‘his’ works.

3. Walk After the Spirit: The man remembers a few verses in Romans 6-8, which help. He gains conviction, desiring to live godly. He recalls God is the provision/power to turn right on the ‘Y’ in the road, the ‘faith path.’ The man continues to pray, beginning to read the Word. As he ‘minds’ spiritual things, he becomes focused and motivated, replacing carnal thinking. After a few passages, he realizes, desiring to please God, yet the flesh is strong.

4. Yield/Led by Spirit: Slowly, the man becomes consumed with the Word and Christ’s life begins to be manifested, led by the Spirit. Prayerfully, he cuts off life to his flesh, to live his faith. Mortifying the deeds of the body, he ends the adulterous relationship. More and more, times, his choices are clearly to serve ‘the law of God.’ A key to gain victory in this battle is to allow God’s power to change their thinking, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life & peace.” (Romans 8:6) They need to know, believe, and apply some things:

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When Saul was converted, the Lord says something very significant to Ananias in Acts 9:16: “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” As a chosen vessel unto the Lord, Paul was not only to teach a body of doctrine, but was to be a pattern of the doctrine working in him. In Acts 14:22, Paul exhorts the disciples, “...to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” The word ‘must,’ used in connection with tribulation and suffering, tells us that God’s purpose will only be accomplished in connection with suffering. (Insight: Make time to study this in Paul’s epistles.)

God wants us to know that we will not be shielded or protected from suffering. In I Corinthians 10:13, Paul says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...”. Not only will we go through suffering, but we will also experience temptations. God is teaching us, in this present dispensation of Gentile grace, that His focus is on the inner man and not these earthen vessels. One reason God limited Israel’s suffering in time past was because he dealt with them as children, and not as adult sons.

Paul tells us, in Romans 5:3-4, what responding properly to tribulation will manifest in us: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope...”. As we go through tribulation and we respond properly to the Word of God, the virtues of patience, experience, and hope will be developed in our inner man.

Our Father wants us to look at suffering the way He does, for the Body of Christ. God is not preventing suffering from happening today, or putting a hedge about us to limit its impact. When we go through suffering, our response should be that of knowing the complete provision of the Word of God & our identity in Christ. “For in him we live, and move, and have our being...” (Acts 17:28). This should also be the attitude to any sufferings we encounter in the Christian life.

Our Father has determined, in advance, not to shield saints from the ‘sufferings of this present time.’ He knows that patiently enduring suffering, with the Word of God working in us, will produce godliness. As we go through common sufferings, we see that “...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) The doctrines of God’s faithfulness and His grace will enable us to ‘bear’ the suffering.

When we trust God’s provision in the midst of suffering, we will escape the despair of suffering, thinking that God has forsaken us. Our Father knows that only through suffering, working with the Word of God, will godly character qualities be produced in our inner man. Clearly, suffering is critical in the dispensation of grace.

Start your study by rereading Romans 1 and realize that Verse 32 is a ‘transitional passage,’ summarizing and preparing the reader for what is to come in Chapter 2. “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” Here, God says, man ‘knows the judgment of God,’ but still purposes to do things ‘worthy of death,’ even enjoying others who sin. Romans 2 teaches that God is the perfect judge, and mankind is accountable. Apply a few of the following insights to help in seeking some of the particulars of the chapter. (Review last month’s article to begin building a resource of study skills.)

1. Prepare: Before studying each day, pray for an open mind & heart, then read the chapter several times. Reflect.
2. Target words: Skim through the chapter to locate unfamiliar terms; consider context and explore using a dictionary.
3. Fill in the Outline: Put topics to each of these sections: 2:1-11, 2:12-16, 2:17-23, 2:24-29. If you see Chapter 2 differently, jot down your outline. Now read each section, verse by verse, slowly considering what the Lord has to teach you.
4. Look Back: As with all Scripture, Chapter 2 is progressively built on what was laid forth before: “...precept must be upon precept...”. (Isaiah 28:10) Specifically, Romans 2 is constructed upon the teaching of Romans 1. It also follows the doctrine found in the Old Testament, Gospels & Acts. Paul assumes students have an appreciation of these things. When there are questions (gaps in understanding), take the time to investigate topics further. ‘Go back’ to study what has come before.

5. 5. Examine new phrases: For example, “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Romans 2:16) Research this specific ‘day’ of judgment and search how God will use the Lord Jesus Christ to judge i.e. Look up ‘judge’ or ‘judgment’ in a concordance. Finally, what does ‘according to my gospel’ mean? Look in Romans 1 and 16 to find clues.
6. Locate Self-Defense Tactics: Romans 2 contains man’s defensive maneuvers, attempting to get out of God’s judgment. Observe as many as you can and study God’s perfect response to each, thwarting all attempts, and bringing ALL under His authority and righteous judgment. Jesus Christ will righteously judge sin, rebellion, and ungodliness; He is ‘no respecter of persons.’ What are His standards for judging in Verses 6-12? Does God delight to condemn man? (Ez.33:11/I Tim. 2:4/II Pet. 3:9)
7. Question: Asking good questions is a great way to focus one’s study. Look at each verse and come up with a question or two to study out for yourself. Examples: Romans 2:1, Why does he use the word ‘therefore?’ Who is the ‘O man’ in this verse? What is ‘the man’ judging? Continuing in 2:2, To whom is the ‘we’ referring? Is the ‘judgment of God’ referring to the unbeliever’s judgment (Rev. 20) or the believer’s judgment? (I Corinthians 3)
8. Individualize: Unique questions and study bring personal results. There are innumerable ways to approach a chapter. Ask a few Bible students how they study for additional ideas. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you by being sensitive to what is interesting or useful to you. Take time this month to specifically pray for God’s help to evaluate your personal time schedule. Then, make ample time to read, think, & study each day, without distractions. Enjoy the process!
Generally, according to II Corinthians 5:18-21, each believer is an ambassador, God’s representative on earth. There are two specific aspects to sharing our faith; one is to hold forth the ‘word of reconciliation’ to those who do not know our Lord Jesus Christ. The other is to encourage/edify saints, especially teaching those living contrary to who they are in Christ, to ‘be ye reconciled to God.’ Each believer has a personal assignment: to progress and live out the details of their faith, being God’s agent, representing Him on earth. (Insight: Read II Corinthians 5 for context, increased awareness, and to expand conviction on this issue.)

What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? The 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, by Noah Webster, provides awareness. The definition relays the idea of it being an honorable position, of the most elevated rank on behalf of a King, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His power and dignity. Because of sin in the flesh, we’re only able to fulfill this position as we simply yield and walk by faith. “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” (Philippians 2:16) As we access the power of God, the Lord Jesus Christ manifests His life in us. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (II Corinthians 4:7) What an amazing privilege to have His wisdom & power stored within us! As we yield and speak the Truth, Christ shines forth; He’s the power. Sounds easy, so why is it hard to share our faith?

‘Holding forth the Word’ can often seem like a heavy burden, rather than a joy. Why? It’s because the law is working; we are under a performance system. A fear reaction can provoke excuses like: “I don’t have ‘the gift of evangelism’ or ‘I’m under grace, so I really don’t have to do it.” Respectfully, we may want to rethink this issue from God’s perspective. Fear blocks progression forward in spiritual growth. The Truth is, we need to rest from our works and learn a few things. When consumed by the Word of God to obtain the mind of Christ, fear, worry, and worry issues fade. As Paul matured in grace, he gained conviction to speak Truth in selfless love. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth...” (Rom. 1:16)

As saints, we are equally responsible to be His liaisons on earth. Though under grace and not the guilt of legalism, each have a unique position in the Body of Christ to be a light to the world. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them...” (Colossians 4:4,6) It is a great honor to be God’s ambassador; determine how you can live it out. Now... Let’s move on to reflect upon the purpose for sharing our faith.

The motive to share is thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, glorifying Him as our Provision. (Romans 1:20-21) God instructs, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men...” (Colossians 3:23) Another aspect is, “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” (Philippians 2:16) Thus, these are two main reasons to hold forth what we believe. First and foremost, it is because God tells us to share Truth; ‘unto’ Him. Though our heart yearns for others to believe the Truth, we are to simply obey our Father and share what we know, in love. The second reason is because there is a ‘day of rejoicing,’ which is when we will be eternally rewarded for ‘labor’ done on earth. (Romans 14/Cor. 3) Gloriously, it also works the doctrine in us, so we mature spiritually.

Each person has free will to trust the gospel. ‘How’ they respond to Truth is between them & the Lord; it is NOT our responsibility. We are not to force others; each are accountable to God. (Rom. 14) It is the Word that convicts, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11). We may not ‘see’ results, yet there is an eternal impact.

As we understand the true motive, the legalistic ‘burden’ to get others to believe is gone. When absorbed by the life of Christ and thanksgiving, grace compels us, with joy, to hold forth the Word. Satan desires to lure us down that road of fear, preventing this wonderful privilege. Is the God of the Universe powerful and wise enough to help us? Indeed! “...Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” (I Corinthians 1:24) (March - Part II: What is the gospel today?)

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**Sharing Our Faith, as Instructed - Part I**

Philippians 2:16 “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.”

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**‘On A Personal Side’**

**From Our Readers...**

“I am still going through the newsletter and wanted to thank you for sending this... I look forward to the next edition.” (California)

“Got it!! Thanks and keep up the good work!” (Chicagoland)

“This (January Just A Minute) is meaty...I need to reread it!” (Virginia)

“I really liked the January Issue, especially the Sin Cycle. It was so practical.” (Florida)

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

If you enjoy this ministry, please ask for more copies to share, or forward this email newsletter to others.

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**April 15-16, 2016**

**Women’s Retreat**

**Orlando, Florida**

Join us for a wonderful time of fellowship! We will resume the study of our identity in Christ, progressing to Romans 8, learning how to let grace reign in life. We will also continue to learn study tools and aspects of practical living. (Last year, we studied Chapters 6-7, realizing the wonderful provisions we’ve been given to negotiate life.)

Questions and insights are welcome, as this Retreat will be interactive teaching, with discussion and small group assignments. Feel free to bring a friend! (See details below. Reservations needed as lunch will be provided. No fee, but donations are always welcome, as one purposeful in their heart.)

**Schedule a Women’s Retreat at Your Church!**

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**Fellowship Bible Church**

**LaPrade Library, Prince George, Virginia**

**Monday February 22nd 7:00-8:30 pm**

LaPrade Library, 9000 Hall Street, Chesterfield, VA

Call for details/reservations - (804) 519-1210

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**Monthly Presentations**

**in the Richmond Area**

**February: Oneness In Marriage**

A FREE seminar on Marriage is available, on two separate dates and locations for your convenience, to practically apply God’s Word to your life. The Scriptures are not just words on a page. It is our living manual that provides REAL answers for day-to-day living. Join us for an interactive discussion on how to deal with challenges within Marriage, using the Bible as the Authority! Call for reservations: (804) 519-1210. (See details below. Donations welcome.)

**Plan a Presentation at Your Church Today**

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**Family Bible Study In N. Chesterfield**

**Brian’s Topic: How Does Suffering Work? Today?**

**Time: Fridays, 7-9 PM**

Call for details - (804) 519-1210

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The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be underlined, numbered, or made bold for emphasis.