

# The Talmid



**Talmid תלמיד** a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)*

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDED NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY  
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



**Dr. Eddie Ildefonso**

*West Los Angeles Living Word Christian Center  
Los Angeles, California*

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary  
Honduras, Pakistan, Zimbabwe Extensions  
International Dean, Covington Theological  
Seminary*

## DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY (Part 7)

### The Great Announcement

“All authority in heaven and on earth has  
been given to me.” [Matthew 28:18](#)

(Continuation from last edition)

### Exodus and Conquest *The Gospel and the Kingdom* The Big Map: Exodus and Con- quest

**Exodus and Conquest in the Old  
Testament**  
**Exodus and Conquest in the**

### New Testament The Kingdom (Conquest) They Were Expecting The Kingdom (Conquest) That Came

### In the Meantime Jesus Opens Up a Crack in History

Jesus does not abandon the disciples on the verge of the conquest. Rather, he enters the true sanctuary—heaven itself—in royal triumph. There is now a gap between Jesus’s earthly ministry in the past and his return in the future. And our history is now taken up, with Jesus’s glorified body, into the age to come. This is why Paul can even speak of our being “seated ... with him in the heavenly places” as a present reality ([Ephesians 2:6](#)). “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.... For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” ([Colossians 3:1, 3-4](#)).

This delay between Christ’s two advents—the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory—is a stay of execution, affording an opportunity for repentance. As we see below, Jesus taught (especially in the Olivet discourse) that during this era the kingdom grows through proclamation of the gospel even as it suffers persecution.

Christ's universal reign will be far from obvious to the world. There are wars, famines, earthquakes, hatred—all the way until Christ's sudden and surprising return. There is no indication that we will reach a golden age on the earth and that the nations will welcome Christ at his return. Quite the contrary, Peter reminds us, scoffers mock, **“Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation”** ([2 Peter 3:4](#)).

Yet they overlook the fact that the delay of Christ's return in judgment creates a space in history for repentance and faith in Christ.

Jesus was not leaving the battlefield but taking the seat of heavenly command, securing our place, while the Spirit led the ground campaign. Satan has been defeated, cast out of the heavenly courtroom where he accuses the saints day and night. At the Father's right hand is the seat of all power where our defense attorney sits enthroned, interceding for us. **“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us”** ([Romans 8:33–34](#)).

As the conquering King, Jesus Christ distributes the spoils of victory to his companions below who are still engaged in the earthly conquest. This is how the New Testament interprets the **“Psalms of Ascent”** (especially [Psalms 24](#) and [68](#)). Jesus enters the heavenly sanctuary announcing, **“Behold, I and the children God has given me”** ([Hebrews 2:13](#)). Interpreting [Psalm 68:18](#), Paul explains, **“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”** (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)” ([Ephesians 4:8–10](#)).

What compensates for the bodily absence of Jesus from the earth right now? *Nothing!* One medieval theologian said, “He who looks at the church looks directly at Christ.” That is simply not true—and it's a good thing, given the church's checkered past. It is the Spirit who causes the church to look

up to its ascended head in faith, confident in his Word and eagerly expecting his triumphant return. The Spirit testifies to Christ and empowers the Spirit-filled church to do the same.

Israel's downfall began when it demanded a king like the rulers of the nation's instead of being satisfied with its true, heavenly King. Similarly, whenever the church tries to make Christ's kingdom visible through its own decisions, programs, and methods, it becomes assimilated to this passing evil age, swallowed in the sea along with Pharaoh's mighty men. Yet whenever the church proclaims the gospel, baptizes, teaches, and administers the Lord's Table, the powers of the age to come break into this present age, and the light of the new creation dawns.

## Pentecost: The Sending of the Spirit

Only when we face with all seriousness the ascension—the absence of Jesus Christ in the flesh—do we realize our dependence on the Holy Spirit as the one who now mediates his active presence in the world. **“It is to your advantage that I go away,”** Jesus instructed, **“for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you”** ([John 16:7](#)). Jesus does not leave us orphans but goes to prepare a place for us and reign on our behalf at the Father's right hand, and so that the Spirit can draw the nations to Christ.

### *The Holy Spirit's Long and Fruitful Career*

The Holy Spirit's earthly ministry doesn't begin at Pentecost: **“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters”** ([Genesis 1:1–2](#), *emphasis added*). The Spirit's work is always associated with *completion*: bringing about the effects of the word spoken by the Father in the Son. This is why the sending of the Spirit is treated by the prophets as the sign of the consummation, the sign that the **“last days”** have dawned (see [Joel 2:29](#)). This is true already in creation: the Spirit was at work in the creation to bring it to the place where it could become the stage for God's unfolding plan and covenant relationship with his creatures.

The exodus account ([Exodus 19](#)) also invokes this

creation imagery with the Spirit descending, hovering over the waters, and separating them in order for dry land to appear, then leading the redeemed host by pillar and cloud to the Sabbath rest. The Spirit also descends over, upon, and within the tabernacle and then the temple, as well as resting upon the prophets for their unique mission.

This same Spirit separated the waters in a virgin's womb, as it were, to make the "dry land" appear not only for divine-human communion but for the Son's assumption of our humanity. When Mary asked, **"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"** the angel answered, **"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God"** ([Luke 1:34–35](#)). In Matthew's Gospel, before the engagement or any conjugal union with Joseph, Mary **"was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit"** ([Matthew 1:18](#)).

The Spirit **"overshadows,"** bringing to completion the creative word of the Father in the Son, sharing in the Triune benediction: **"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good"** ([Genesis 1:31](#)). Echoes of [Genesis 1](#) and [Genesis 8](#) (including the benediction formula) are evident in the report of Jesus's baptism: **"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased' "** ([Matthew 3:16–17](#)).

After his baptism by John, Jesus, **"full of the Holy Spirit, ... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil"** ([Luke 4:1–2](#); cf. [Matthew 4:1](#)). In these forty days he recapitulates Adam's trial and Israel's forty-year trial in the wilderness. Jesus's self-consciousness as the Servant of the Lord prophesied by Isaiah is inseparable from the endowment of the Spirit. In his first public speech, Jesus takes up the scroll in the synagogue and reads [Isaiah 61:1–2](#): **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor"** ([Luke 4:18](#)). Then he announces, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hear-**

**ing"** ([Luke 4:21](#)).

Jesus performs his miracles by the Spirit—in fact, attributing them to Satan is **"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit"** (see [Mark 3:28–30](#); [Luke 12:10](#)). Jesus also bestows the Spirit on his disciples ([John 20:22](#)). In [Exodus 19](#), the momentous event of the Spirit's descent is represented by the sound of winged creatures in a moving cloud, a scene that is repeated throughout Ezekiel and will return at Pentecost with the erection of the end-time sanctuary **"made without hands"** that Ezekiel prophesied.

To the Spirit particularly is attributed the dignity of transforming created space into covenantal place: a home for communion between Creator and creatures, extending to the ends of the earth in waves of kingdom labor. In the prophets, the Spirit is associated with a glory-cloud ([Isaiah 63:11–14](#); [Haggai 2:5](#)) and divine wind or breath—*ruach*, the same Hebrew word for spirit/the Spirit ([Psalm 104:1–3](#)). It is, in fact, by this Spirit that all things are created and renewed ([Psalm 104:30](#)). The presence of the Spirit always signals the arrival of God's kingdom in judgment and salvation.

The Spirit who clothed Christ in our flesh and in consummated glory now clothes us with Christ. Adam became **"a living creature"** when God **"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"** ([Genesis 2:7](#)). Here **"breath"** (*ruach*) is the same word used to refer to the Spirit of God, and with many of the church fathers I interpret **"the breath of life"** here as **"the Spirit of life."** We hear an echo of this in the Spirit's filling of the temple in [Ezekiel 37](#) and in [John 20:22](#) as Jesus Christ breathes on the disciples and they receive the Holy Spirit.

In all of these events in the history of creation and redemption, the Spirit is sent as the divine witness or covenant attorney who sends the human witnesses (prophets and apostles). Throughout the prophets, **"the day of the Lord"** is the final judgment. Already in [Genesis 3:8](#), God arrives to arraign Adam after his disobedience **"in the Spirit [*ruach*] of the day."** Although this is commonly translated **"in the cool of the day,"** *ruach*—the same term for the Holy Spirit elsewhere—is used here. This is why Jesus calls the Spirit **"another *parakletos*,"** meaning **"attorney."** The Spirit's arrival announces judgment and justification.

The Creator Spirit is, even in the very beginning, a divine witness to the goal of creation: namely, the consummation. Forfeited by Adam in the first creation, this goal is finally achieved by the Last Adam in the new creation, but he accomplishes this as our representative by constant dependence on the Spirit. ***The age to come is Christ's to win; it is the Father's to give; and it is the Spirit's to bring into the present, even in the midst of this present evil age.***

It is no wonder, then, that the outpouring of the Spirit is identified with the “last days”—specifically, the last days *of this present evil age*, prior to the entrance into the everlasting Sabbath (the age to come). The Spirit comes from the consummated future of Sabbath glory, like the dove that brought Noah a leafy twig in its beak as a harbinger of new life beyond the waters of judgment. Already in creation, therefore, we meet the Spirit of promise: the one who propels creation toward its goal, which is nothing less than the consummation at the end of the trial. This interpretation of the relationship between the Spirit of Glory and judgment is especially supported by [2 Corinthians 3](#) and [4](#). In Christ, the veil that prevents us from seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ is now removed by the Spirit of God ([2 Corinthians 3–6](#)).

Like a ripple effect, this Spirit-filling expands to all of those gathered in the upper room at Pentecost. And now we are called to “**put on**” Christ, wearing his righteousness as a royal robe, and the Spirit begins gradually to conform us to his image ([Romans 13:14](#); [Galatians 3:27](#); [Ephesians 4:24](#); [Colossians 3:10](#)). The indwelling of the Spirit even now is a down payment on our full re-creation in Christ's likeness, as we “**put off**” death and “**put on**” immortality and glory ([1 Corinthians 15:53](#); [2 Corinthians 5:2–5](#)). This is what it means for us to become “**partakers of the divine nature**” ([2 Peter 1:4](#)). In Christ, and by his Spirit, believers are even now “**the image and glory of God**” ([1 Corinthians 11:7](#)).

The Spirit evacuated the earthly temple, exiling Judah to Babylon, and now the Spirit returns to fill his true and everlasting temple. However, this time it is the real thing, the end-time sanctuary: Christ and his “**living stones**.” Echoing the original creation, the Father and the Spirit issue their heavenly

benediction on Jesus in his baptism ([Mark 1:11](#)), repeated by the Father testifying from heaven at the transfiguration ([Mark 9:7](#)). Nevertheless, since the hearers are “**dead in trespasses and sins**” ([Ephesians 2:1](#)), there must be an inner work of the Spirit, convicting them of sin and giving them faith to trust in Christ. Even after spending three years at Jesus's side, the disciples' understanding of, much less testimony to, Christ's person and work depended on the descent of another witness from heaven: the Holy Spirit.

The church fathers (especially Irenaeus) spoke of the Son and the Spirit as the “**two hands**” of the Father. With these two hands, the Father draws us to his breast, so that we may share in that exchange of gift-giving love that the persons of the Trinity have enjoyed from all of eternity. After the Spirit clothes them, the disciples—themselves drawn into this communion of love—will be the emissaries sent out as God's witnesses for the final ingathering.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus referred to the Spirit as “**another attorney/witness** [*parakletos*],” “**even the Spirit of truth**” who illumines the hearts of his people to understand Christ's teaching ([John 14:16–17, 26](#)). And John writes,

**“The Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.... And when [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”** ([John 15:26–27](#); [John 16:8–14](#))

And now in the last recorded words before the ascension, Jesus tells them, “**You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Fa-**



ther promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” ([Luke 24:48–49](#) NRSV). The Spirit brings about within us the “Amen!” of faith to all that Christ has accomplished. In the cosmic courtroom, the Spirit is the divine Cloud of Witness whose animating agency creates an ever-growing cloud of witnesses in heaven and on earth.

As John the Baptist announced, Jesus baptizes with the Spirit and with fire, and as Jesus confirmed in [John 14–16](#), the Spirit comes with both salvation and with judgment. But this single event is unfolding in various stages. It requires patience.

We recognize the close connection between the Spirit and judgment in Peter’s Pentecost sermon ([Acts 2:14–41](#)), where he announces the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, which itself is unmistakably judicial in character ([Joel 3:4, 12](#)). In fact, Peter’s explanation of the Spirit’s outpouring harkens all the way back to [Numbers 11:1–12:8](#), in which a weary Moses longs for the day when all the people are filled with the Spirit. The new creation has dawned and the Spirit descends in judgment, but this time not to scatter the proud nations and divide their languages (as at Babel) but to unite them in all of their diversity by the gospel. Because they are clothed with Christ, the Spirit’s judgment turns out to be a benediction even greater than the one pronounced at creation. As **Raymond Dillard** comments, Joel prophesied that multitudes will come in that day “**not to make a decision, but to hear the decision of God**” (see [Joel 3:14](#)). Pentecost inaugurates the day of reckoning—not the final day of judgment, but its prolepsis, as Israel and the nations are gathered to be judged and justified in these last days before the last day in which only judgment will prevail.

Through the Spirit’s work of convicting sinners and uniting them to Christ for justification, the verdict of the last judgment is already rendered in the present: “**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**” ([Romans 8:1](#), *emphasis added*). Through this union also the Spirit makes us share in Christ’s new-creation life, raising us from spiritual death and indwelling us as the down payment on our bodily resurrection in glory ([Romans 8:11, 23](#)).

## CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

### Jesus Calls the First Disciples

([Luke 5:1–11](#))

In [Luke 5](#) we have one of the most strange and, I believe, fascinating narratives in Luke’s gospel. Luke not only records the calling of the first group of disciples (also chronicled in the other gospels), but he gives us some additional information about that particular occasion.

#### *In the presence of the Holy* ([Luke 5:1–7](#))

Jesus was preaching to a large crowd of people on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats out of which the fishermen had gone because they were washing their nets. Jesus got into Simon’s boat, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. He sat down in the boat and began teaching them. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “**Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch**” ([Luke 5:1–4](#), NASB).

If there is ever a time when Simon Peter, the rock of the church, exhibits impatience or annoyance at his Master, it is here. He says to him, “**Master, we worked hard and caught nothing!**” It is almost as if Simon Peter is looking at Jesus and saying, “Jesus, when you speak to us about the things of God we hang on your every word. But give us a little bit of credit! Maybe we are not great rabbis, but we know about fishing. We’ve let down those nets a hundred times and we can’t even catch a minnow!” But Peter reluctantly acquiesced to the command of Jesus, “But, at your bidding I will let down the nets.” It is as though Simon Peter is humoring Jesus.

What happens is remarkable, for they caught a huge multitude of fish, to the point that their nets were breaking, and they had to get their partners in the other boat to come and help them. Even then the boats were so full of fish that they began to sink. How did Peter react in the face of that miracle? I would have thought that Peter, as a professional fisherman, would have been eager to take Jesus on as a partner in the business! That’s what any enterprising businessman would have done if he found someone who could do what Jesus did there. Instead of that, however, Peter asks Jesus to leave: “**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**”

What an incredible response!

If we examine this passage carefully we see that there is a kind of similarity between Peter's reaction to Jesus and the reaction of the demons to Jesus. The demons recognized his holiness and were terrified. When Simon Peter saw the awesome power of Christ, he too was terrified, because he recognized something of the majesty of Christ, the holiness of Christ that was showing through. Human beings are always terrified in the presence of the Holy.

### *Man's fear of God's holiness ([Luke 5:8-11](#))*

Sigmund Freud says that humans invented religion because they are afraid of the forces of nature, and so to seek some comfort and solace from the forces of nature, they begin to invent deities. I don't doubt that we have the capacity to do that, but if there is anything that scares me more than hurricanes and earthquakes, it is the holiness of God. If our religion were an invention, born of fear, we would hardly be inclined to invent a holy God. We will see more of that concept being developed by Luke on other occasions throughout his narrative. Jesus made people uncomfortable.

It is significant that the people who became hostile to him, the ones who plotted his death and were most threatened by his presence, were the Pharisees and the Sadducees, those most noted for their manifestation of righteousness. They seemed to be so far ahead, so morally superior to everyone else, that they were looked up to as the moral paragons of the community. But when the incarnation of pure righteousness, unblemished holiness appeared, their righteousness just seemed as filthiness. Their holiness seemed as profanity. Their standard of excellence was totally eclipsed by the presence of the Son of God, and they despised him.

John Calvin, reflecting on the reaction of the Old Testament saints to the appearance of God in his holiness, said that men uniformly were filled with dread and terror. Isaiah in the temple, when he saw God high and lifted up and heard the seraphim singing, '**Holy, Holy, Holy**', cried out in response, '**Woe is me! For I am undone. For I am a man of unclean lips**'([Isaiah 6:5](#)). As soon as he saw real

holiness, he was immediately aware of his own sinfulness. He not only discovered who God was, but he also discovered who he was.

As fascinated as people were by the power of Jesus, they were also terrified and intimidated by his righteousness. There was a certain sense in which sinful men simply could not abide the presence of the Son of God. He had to be removed. If he would not leave them, then sinful men would make sure that they would put him away, that they would drive him out, and if necessary, even kill him. These words were not spoken by a demon or an enemy of Jesus, but by Simon Peter, his own disciple; when he sees the identity of Jesus, he says, '**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.**'

How many people still have that posture towards Christ, still do everything they can to keep him at a distance, to keep him removed from their thoughts, because the very idea of Christ makes them uncomfortable. Holiness is scary, but oh, that all of us would understand the grace, mercy and compassion that is borne by that same Man of holiness who says to people whom he makes uncomfortable, '**Fear not! Peace be with you!**'

Not only was Simon amazed, but Luke tells us that so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. But Jesus said to them, as he says to all of those who would come close, '**Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men**' ([Luke 5:10](#)). Then Luke comments: '**So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.**' The call to discipleship was in the midst of a manifestation of holiness



**Pastor Gary C. Fleetwood**  
Chime Bell Baptist Church  
Windsor, South Carolina

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary  
Aiken, South Carolina Extension  
Dean, Covington Theological Seminary  
Country of Romania*

## Hebrews 8 – Overview – Part 3

In our last study on the “new covenant” of [Hebrews 8](#), one of the specific issues addressed was the actual cost and sacrifice that had to be made within the Godhead to secure salvation. Until a believer actually understands that cost, then for the most part they will have a fairly minimal appreciation for the redemptive “covenant” spoken of here in [Hebrews 8](#) and the amazing sacrifice that God the Son made on their behalf. Unfortunately, and I say this with all the grace possible, the average Christian just sees Christ dying on a cross and ascending back into heaven where all returns back to normal. For them there seems to be no lasting or “real” eternal cost in this redemptive work since it appears that each member of the Godhead just returns back to their original position. There they are back in heaven and all is now well. However, that is a terrible spiritual misconception because it reveals a fundamental lack of knowledge and appreciation for the amazing sacrifice Jesus Christ is making for the believer **AFTER** their salvation was purchased. What He is doing now and what He will be doing forever in the eternal state is part of the amazing sacrifice that He made in the Incarnation when He became the God-Man forever. Three different times in Hebrews the author has quoted [Psalm 110](#),

**“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”**

The operative word is the word “**forever**”. The priestly function of Christ on the believer’s behalf will be “**forever**”.

From a very practical perspective for a Christian, the issue is really very simple. Until the actual and “on-going” cost of God’s redeeming work is appreciated, a believer will never deeply cherish and genuinely value their salvation and therefore never be truly willing to commit their lives to becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Clearly, that is the practical goal and outworking of salvation. Anything less is really a kind of spiritual pride and arrogance on our part. Many individuals within the church age in which we live only have a kind of “window dressing” type Christianity. It is one that lacks this foundational commitment to becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. There is nothing quite so naïve and adolescent as for one to think that this can happen in their life by just attending a few services each month at a local church. Until a believer personally grasps both the past and ongoing cost of God’s redemptive work, their salvation will most likely remain a shallow and inconsequential idea without a life-transforming effect and they will simply be a mediocre, lukewarm believer at best.

Now, in continuing in the overview presentation of [Hebrews 8](#), it is important to come to grips with the amazing high priestly ministry of Christ that is going on right now and one that will continue out into eternity. The author has clearly stated in [Hebrews 8:1](#) that “**this is the main point**”. Miss this, and we miss one of the most important truths in all of eternity. It is the author’s opinion that the average Christian has no real awareness or perception as to what is actually taking place on their behalf right now. Somehow that simple fact has become lost, and in so doing it diminishes the amazing sacrifice that Christ actually made on their behalf. After finishing the [Hebrews 8](#) overview, the study will enter into [Hebrews 9](#) which may be one of the two greatest chapters in the Scriptures along with [Romans 8](#). So, if a believer does not have a meaningful appreciation not only for what Christ has done in the past at the cross, but also for what He is doing right now on their behalf as well as what He will do for them in the future, then [Hebrews 9](#) may not have any significance for them at all. So, to just “highlight” some of the ministry of

Christ on the believer's behalf right now, it is necessary to take a minor detour and go back and reinforce some of His on-going ministry for the believer. Before entering into [Hebrews 9](#), it is critical to somehow better grasp the high priestly ministry of Christ on the believer's behalf. Look again at [Hebrews 7:25](#),

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

Here the author states that Christ is “**always**” interceding for a believer, but it may not really be that clear as to why. In order to better understand this idea of Christ's continuing high priestly “**intercession**” on the believer's behalf, we can use the “**intercession**” of the Holy Spirit as a parallel work that is virtually identical to that which Christ is performing on the believer's behalf. Why do we say that? It is simply because the Holy Spirit is called the “**Spirit of Christ**” in [Romans 8:9](#) and [1 Peter 1:11](#). Whatever the Holy Spirit is doing is simply a reflection of Christ Himself. If we remember His role in the work of salvation, the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity that is actually executing the will of both Christ and the Father on our behalf. [Romans 8:26-27](#) declares the following,

**<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. <sup>27</sup>Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

Please do not lose sight of the simple fact that this is a ceaseless work. Do not lose sight of that. A believer's spiritual needs are never-ending. We will never in eternity find one moment where we do not need Christ or His redeeming work on our behalf – never. If for some reason, we have developed the notion that when we enter into God's presence that at that moment we somehow no longer have a need for Christ, then we are to be terribly pitied. Did you know that the Mormons actually have a doctrinal position that reflects this idea? Mormons believe that human beings are children of God, and as such,

have within them the potential to become like God. In essence they believe that they can become Gods with a capital “G”. If they become like God then they would create other planets like earth and populate those planets with their children, just like God has done with this one. If you follow where all of that false theology eventually leads, it ultimately is degrading to the person of Christ because now they no longer even need Him. In essence, their theology could logically allow them to eventually discard Christ altogether! This is spiritually blasphemous to say the least. A believer will never come to a place in their life where they do not need Christ – AND THAT IS THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS. Do not miss it!

There is the ongoing Trinitarian work of bringing the believer's salvation to completion and presenting each believer to God as a bride without blemish. Never forget that the Holy Spirit has this insatiable desire to glorify Christ to each believer. The Holy Spirit is the One who sanctifies, sustains, and keeps the believer – and a part of that work is this “**groaning**” for them. By its very nature, it is a very deep and profound “**groaning**”. It is one that is never heard, but it is a continual groaning and a continual work of God on the believer's behalf. It is all there. He understands that we are weak and have spiritual “**weaknesses**”, but notice that what the Holy Spirit does is to “**help**” the believer in those “**weaknesses**”. The word “**helps**” is the Greek word “*sunantilambanomai*” from “*sun*” which means together and “*antilambáno*” which means to support or to help in bearing. I.e., it means to take hold of something with someone else, to take part in their burden or work, and thus to give help. It speaks of someone coming to another's aid by taking hold of the load and the burden that person is carrying and helping them carry it. The person helping (in this case the Holy Spirit) does not take the entire load, but he helps the other person in his endeavor and makes the load lighter. The Greek Interlinear Bible translates this word as “**joins in to help**”. That is an absolutely great picture of what the Holy Spirit does in the believer's life. He comes alongside of the believer and strengthens him and helps him to make it through something difficult, but the Holy Spirit does not do it all for the believer. He is there to help. It is the idea that God is not going to live the Christian life for the believer. Every believer has to live out the Christian life, but the Holy Spirit will help them in their “**weaknesses**”.



The word “**weaknesses**” refers to a spiritual feebleness and moral frailty. It comes from a word that literally means to be without strength and to be impotent. It refers to someone who has a lack of strength and courage in the face of trials and someone who seems to have difficulty in standing for Christ. It is a word that is repeatedly linked in the New Testament to illness and sickness. The “**weaknesses**” in this passage, however, are not physical weaknesses and infirmities, but spiritual weaknesses. [Hebrews 4:15](#) uses the same word when it says,

**<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

Another nuance of the meaning of “**weaknesses**” is an incapacity to do or experience something. It is an inability to produce results, a state of weakness or limitation. It is a word that expresses powerlessness.

Every genuine believer can identify with this issue of spiritual weaknesses in their life, but it is important not to miss the specific weakness that Paul is speaking about in this passage. Notice what v26 says,

**<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

One of the specific “**weaknesses**” here is not just a general spiritual weakness, even though that certainly does apply, but it is a weakness in the believer’s ability to pray as they ought to pray. One of the areas in the spiritual realm in which the believer’s weakness needs God’s power is certainly in the issue of prayer. These “**weaknesses**” are very spiritual in nature and include the specific inability of a Christian to know that for which they should actually pray. [Romans 8:27](#) says that when that happens, when a believer does not know how to really pray in a manner that God wants them to pray, that the Holy

Spirit makes intercession for them with groanings that cannot even be uttered.

**...He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

He prays for the believer exactly for that which they need to be prayed. There is great comfort in this profound truth. Too often prayers are weak, feeble, and lack understanding and perspective on exactly how God may want the individual to pray. However, at that moment, as the believer is sincerely and earnestly seeking God for His perfect will in their life, the Holy Spirit comes along side of them and begins to pray for them exactly as God would want them to pray. He prays exactly what God the Father would want to be prayed, or as Paul says here “**according to the will of God**”.

The problem that most every Christian faces in this area is that they are weak in their ability to know what they should ask or how they should specifically pray. There is just a lot about both the present and the future that cannot be known, and so prayers are often off target. At that moment, the Holy Spirit intercedes for the believer “**according to the will of God**”. There are those very difficult and trying times in a person’s life, those times when they find themselves in despair, those times when they are losing heart, and those times when they seem to be without strength. It is then, at that moment of spiritual weakness in their life and at that moment when they could fail miserably and do things that would be spiritually inappropriate that the Holy Spirit comes along side to help.

There are things that happen to every believer that have the power to literally crush them spiritually and if possible to devastate their spiritual lives. That is the enemy’s plan – to destroy, to defeat, and to hurt. However, it is in the very midst of that in which the Holy Spirit “**helps**” the believer. Please do not lose sight of the fact that this help which the Holy Spirit provides for the believer is simply an outworking of the amazing ongoing, eternal high priestly ministry of Christ for the believer. Even the sending of the Holy Spirit is a work of Christ for the believer. He fully understood after He would leave that every believer would need His continuing help, and that comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Christ understood the need and Christ is the One who actually sent the Holy Spirit to help the believer. [John 16](#) is a primary chapter in the New Testament which

outlines what Christ would do for His disciples **AF-TER** His resurrection. [John 16:7](#) is the verse that clearly declares that the Holy Spirit has been given to us **by** Christ Himself,

**7Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.**

The Holy Spirit is interceding when the believer cannot see what is taking place and when they do not even know what to pray if they did know. Every believer can look back on some difficult times in their lives when they had no idea how things would turn out for their good, but now as they look back they can see the great hand of God in all that happened, and rather than being defeated by all that happened, they were strengthened, encouraged, helped, and ultimately more conformed into the image of Christ Himself.

At a personal level, often times I wonder why some of us are not just spiritual ruins and spiritual wrecks because of some of the debilitating circumstances that have confronted our lives, not to mention the utterly horrible decisions that too often we have made. I wonder why our faith was not just annihilated and all of our hope literally extinguished by the trials. I wonder how through all of those times, even though spiritually challenged, that we remained serene and secure and at peace – even when things surrounding our life were dark and hopeless. I wonder why our heart was not overwhelmed and our confidence in God not destroyed. I wonder how we found a place of refuge in just one simple verse, or by one simple message, or just by a simple phone call from someone who loved us and encouraged us. Do you want to know why? It was because of the silent, invisible, strengthening, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit praying for us according to the will of God and that our faith would not fail! It was for us, but not because of anything that we may have done. The Holy Spirit rescued us and placed His sovereign, omnipotent power around our life, and He went to battle against all of the forces of hell that were raised against us. He sustained us, and He kept us, and He delivered us – **and we did not even know it!** He shared in our weakness and took some of our load, and He, just like Christ and for our great

High Priest, He bore a burden that we could not bear. He lightened the pressure, He eased the grief, and He strengthened us in our spiritual weakness. It was the Holy Spirit who helped us, and even though we grieved Him and wounded Him and slighted Him a thousand times over, yet when we needed Him the most – there He was. This is staggering to me personally. He drew near when our trials and struggles bowed us to the earth. He drew near when in our despair we questioned His goodness and His love for us. Just like the Good Samaritan, He came along side of us when we were wounded and poured His healing ointment on our life and wrapped His loving and everlasting arms around us. We cannot find any greater love than what He has given to us. He is the very **“Spirit of Christ”** right now performing and implementing the very will of our great High Priest in our lives.

Once again, most believers simply do not know what they really should be praying for. They just do not know. No one can see even one minute ahead in their life. No one has any idea as to what tomorrow may bring. At times all believers make themselves sound much more spiritual than they are, much more committed than they really are, much more in prayer than they really are, and much more in love with Christ and His church than they really are. So we come to the throne of grace with that illusion. No wonder many believers do not know how to pray as they ought. [Hebrews 7:25](#), speaking of Christ, says,

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**

God is able to save to the very limits. All the way from eternity past to the moment in which God called the sinner and they were saved to that time when they will pass into the eternal state and beyond – that is what being saved **“to the uttermost”** means. So, how is all of that accomplished? It is because Christ as our great high priest is making **“intercession”** for us, and the Holy Spirit is making **“intercession”** for us, and the very gates of hell cannot and will not prevail over our lives.

If Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are not interceding for someone, then they will never make it to glory. They will never see the heavenly Jerusalem, they will never partake of His wedding supper, and they will never receive a redeemed body. All of the very forces of

hell itself are arrayed against them and will prevail. It is a spiritual warfare that they cannot perceive, and one that they cannot fully understand. However, be assured that once the sinner has become a part of God's family, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit are interceding for them with groanings that cannot be uttered and they will be brought safe into the very presence of God Himself, and that without condemnation – and that specific ministry of Christ on our behalf is going on right now.

Once again it is important to understand that in the big picture that believers are very secure – even when things do not turn out as they may want them to turn out. Why are they secure? It is because of this ongoing “**intercession**” by Christ and by the Holy Spirit. [Hebrews 1:3](#) says that Christ is “**upholding all things by the word of His power**”. Everything is being upheld and undergirded by Christ. At this point, however, it is critical to understand one very important point in the context of [Romans 8:26-27](#). It is **not** the believer's prayers that make the crucial difference, but the intercession of Christ and the Holy Spirit that make the difference. Some Christians rarely if ever pray, but in the end they will be delivered into eternity safe and without blame. Why? It is because of the “**intercession**” of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is not that Christ just died on the cross and went back to heaven and now is just passively watching all of these redemptive and saving activities unfold - not at all. To the extreme contrary, both Christ and the Holy Spirit are working to uphold all things that are redemptive in nature, all things that are declared in Scripture to take place, and all things that are necessary to bring every believer to their God guaranteed and glorified salvation. The believer could never do that by themselves.

As a Christian, I am incredibly thankful that my eternal security, protection, and salvation in Christ do **NOT** depend on me or my prayers. Thank God that they do not depend on me. In and of ourselves, we have absolutely no power to cause anything to happen – none whatsoever. In reality, what can believers make happen? We could never overcome our sinfulness, we could never defeat temptation, we could never defeat the devil, we could never cause all things to work together for good, we could never keep ourselves spiritually strong, and we could nev-

er bring ourselves to glory – never! That is exactly why every believer needs this incredible high priestly ministry of Christ on their behalf.

Now, exactly what is this thing that Scripture calls “**intercession**”? The NIV, NASB, and ESV all use the word “**intercedes**”. What does this particular Greek word actually mean when it says that Christ and the Holy Spirit “**intercedes**” for someone? This is a very, very interesting Greek word. It is a multiple compound word “*hyperentunchano*” and it begins with two prepositions (“*hyper*” and “*en*”) and then there is the verb. When a Greek word has a preposition before it, the preposition is the Greek way of strengthening and intensifying the verb. However this word has two prepositions before it and that doubly intensifies the meaning. The verb form of the word simply means to entreat and to intercede on behalf of someone else. It means to petition someone else, and in this case it is God the Father who is being petitioned. It was a technical term used for approaching a king. It is seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others. However, it carries with it the meaning of being an earnest request that is being made. Just the verb itself means **to plead** for someone and is the word translated “**plead**” in the New Testament. However when the prepositions are added, this particular word becomes a very intense, powerful, passionate, and forceful intercession. If I can say it this way, it becomes more than just a prayer. It is much, much more than just making a request. It is a powerful, intense, passionate intercession. In the [Romans 8](#) context, the word means to rescue someone who finds them self in trouble and has no resources, no means, and no power to escape the trouble that they are in. This should provide a whole different understanding of the conflict that is occurring because the word carries the idea of saving someone from a situation that would otherwise cause them to be lost. Several years ago a young lady in our church got unexpectedly caught in the powerful, dangerous, and often deadly undertow at Edisto Beach. If two or three other people had not gone out to rescue her, she very well may have drowned. She found herself in a situation over which she had no personal power to overcome. Honestly, she did not know and recognize that the undertow was even there until it was too late.

Now, that is the same idea here with this Greek word regarding “**intercession**”. Christ and the Holy Spirit have a continual, constant, and ongoing ministry where

He comes to the believer's personal rescue and where He intercedes for them in such a way that they are actually rescued from dangers and situations that for the most part they may not even know actually exist. This is utterly staggering! Notice once again how this is written in [Romans 8:26](#). It says "**but the Spirit Himself makes intercession**". It is the "**Spirit Himself**" doing this for the believer. Please notice that these are "**groanings which cannot be uttered**". These are not "**groanings**" which are uttered, but are groanings that "**cannot be uttered**". What the Scripture is profoundly declaring here is that the Holy Spirit and Christ are interceding for believers in a way that they could never pray and in a way that they could never "**utter**".

The idea is that Christ and the Holy Spirit understand all of the believer's spiritual needs and understand the weaknesses and frailties that are an inherent part of their makeup. They understand the struggle that believers all have with sin, with the flesh, and especially with the enemy. However, they also understand that with all of those inherent issues that the believer simply does not have enough insight into their struggles to really be victorious without the intercession of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. In some way this is one of the reasons why at times it seems like such a battle to actually pray and intercede, but in spite of all of the obstacles and the spiritual hindrances and hurdles that the believer has to overcome, Christ and the Holy Spirit know and fully understand the believer's dilemma, and they long with great intensity for believers to be conformed to the image of Christ. So they intercede for them in a profound spiritual way – a way that the believer neither sees nor knows about. The Triune God is not just grunting here as if they do not know what to pray. To the contrary, this is **an intense spiritual intercession**, and it is something that they are doing constantly. When Christ and the Holy Spirit intercede for believers, God the Father answers. The verb for "**making intercession**" is in the present tense, active voice which means that it is a constant activity that Christ and the Holy Spirit are personally performing for the believer.

In [John 17:15 and 24](#), Jesus in His high priestly prayer for His disciples and for future believers prays this,

<sup>15</sup>**I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.**

<sup>24</sup>**"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.**

Why would He pray that if the believer could do that? Well, it really is very simple. He knew that believers could not keep themselves from the evil one and that He and the Holy Spirit were the only Ones who could ultimately bring them into the Father's very presence. No wonder believers are secure. No wonder they cannot lose their salvation. No wonder they will be brought to glory.

Now, any believer at any given time can become weak in faith. They can become discouraged, disillusioned, and disappointed. At times they may even become cynical, skeptical, or pessimistic in their faith. However, even if those things occur, what these verses are indicating is that Christ understands what is happening to the believer and His intercession for them is more than powerful and effective enough to not allow anything to destroy their faith in God or God's commitment to them. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are interceding to the Father on the believer's behalf and their prayers are ALWAYS and ETERNALLY effective on their behalf. What can we say? This is the doctrine of the perseverance and preservation of the saints. This is really staggering - that nothing in this world or in the unseen world is strong enough to ultimately destroy the very faith that God has given to a believer or strong enough to destroy the plans that God has prepared for them. This is really a staggering truth.

The only way that someone could ever be lost to God and not make it from justification to glorification would be if Christ was dethroned and could no longer sit at the right hand of God making intercession for them, and if the Spirit of God was put out of action and could no longer cry out with these Trinitarian groanings before God on their behalf. **The good news is that neither one of those things are even possible**. The believer's salvation is absolutely secure forever, and they should be as grateful for that as they can possibly be. Both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, at the same time, are working in and for the believer in order to bring about the perfect will of God in a sustained, strenuous, but



guaranteed effort. They are the guarantee of the end result – not me, not you, not our faithfulness, not our love, not our works, not our anything! So when someone comes along and says that a believer can lose their salvation, he is speaking against the interceding work of Christ and the interceding work of the Holy Spirit. What he is ultimately saying is that the believer's sin is greater than the work and ministry of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In reality, that is dangerously close to spiritual blasphemy. It is like calling God a liar, making God the Son and God the Holy Spirit weaklings and impotent to save to the uttermost. **To say that God can save believers, but that He cannot keep them saved is spiritual heresy of the greatest degree.** It demeans the work of Christ like nothing else because it makes sin more powerful than Christ and His work. Please understand that **God took care of sin at the cross.** End of discussion! The debate ends at the cross, it ends at the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The discussion is over! God is greater than sin and has fully and completely overcome sin to the greatest degree imaginable.

Do we realize that God the Father ALWAYS hears the prayers of God the Son and of God the Holy Spirit? He always hears their prayers and intercessions on the believer's behalf. Not one intercession of theirs falls to the ground unheard. [Romans 8:27](#) clearly states that the Holy Spirit always prays according to the will of God, and we know that Christ does so as well.

**<sup>27</sup>Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

So, when Christ and the Holy Spirit pray for the believer, God hears because they always pray in accordance with the will of God. Notice in your Bibles that the words “**the will of**” are in *italics* – which means that they are not actually in the Greek text. The following is how the Greek text actually reads:

**The One but searching the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because according to God He intercedes on behalf of saints.**

I.e., the Holy Spirit makes intercession “**according to God**”, or exactly as God the Father would want Him to pray. That is why v28 follows v27,

**<sup>28</sup>And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

And what is “**His purpose**”? It is v29-30,

**<sup>29</sup>For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

**<sup>30</sup>Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

God's purpose for the believer's life is that He will bring them to glory. Every believer will be with Him in glorified bodies conformed into the image of Christ. They will be in a glorified place and they will be with Him who is glory Himself – with Christ. That is God's overruling purpose for every believer's life – **AND THERE IS NOTHING IN ETERNITY THAT CAN PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING.** The only reason “**all things work together for good**” is not because Christians are so spiritual and so committed and such great prayer warriors – not at all. I hate to pop our bubble, but none of this really depends on us in any way whatsoever. The only reason things “**work together for good**” is because of God – and God alone. [Philippians 2:13](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

It is God who is working in the believer and working for them. It will not do any good to try and “hang on” to salvation. Believers simply are not strong enough, not smart enough, and not willing enough. Just try living the Christian life in your own strength and see how long you will last. This is the doctrine of eternal security being revealed in these verses. We do not even know how to pray as we ought to; nevertheless hang on until glory becomes real. It is sometimes nearly impossible to get professing Christians to even attend church and bring a Bible with them when they come, nevertheless make it to glory. Salvation is all of God – always all of God, and every believer better be glad that it is.

Now, having looked at what Christ and the Holy Spirit are doing for each believer right now, it is important to at least somewhat outline the part that each member of the Trinity would play in the fulfillment of the “covenant of redemption” that was previously studied. Why is that important? It is simply because in every covenant, those involved in it have obligations. If someone joins the Army, then just their “joining” implies that immediately they have obligations that they did not previously have. When someone makes a wedding vow, by doing so they are accepting the obligations and responsibilities that naturally follow those vows. Salvation is not getting something for nothing, but rather getting everything for everything. When as an unbeliever we come to Christ, the simple “coming” implies that there are very real and meaningful obligations that follow. The prevailing and very false idea that all we have to do is “punch” our ticket to heaven is a purely cultural concept of “easy believism” that has very damning ramifications to it. Once someone has declared their faith in Christ, then obedience becomes the evidence that they truly are believers and a part of the “**new covenant**”. [1 John 2:3-6](#) declares,

**<sup>3</sup>Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup>He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup>But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. <sup>6</sup>He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**

The personal and spiritual benefits of the covenants that God has made with believers are not automatic in their outworkings. I.e., just because someone is a Christian does not guarantee that God’s blessings will be routinely and repeatedly accrued to them. For the most part, the benefits only accrue to those believers who consistently demonstrate a true and living faith. This is clearly seen in the Abrahamic covenant. God would make of Abraham a great and mighty nation and would bless all the peoples of the earth through him. Nothing could frustrate that purpose of God. On the other hand, however, those people who became the children of Israel only received benefit as they manifested a true and genuine commitment and obedience to God as demanded by

the covenant that God made with them. The majority of this is revealed in the Mosaic covenant that God made with Moses at Mt. Sinai. [Exodus 19:5-6](#) says,

**<sup>5</sup>Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. <sup>6</sup>And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”**

“**If**” leads to “**then**”. The “**if**” made the blessings and benefits of the covenant conditional and provisional. “**If**” the Israelites would “**obey**” and “**keep My covenant**”, “**then**” God’s blessings would be accrued to them. The blessings of God were not automatic. They were not just spontaneous or even guaranteed by virtue of Israel being called the “**people of God**”. Likewise, they are not automatic for the New Testament believer. A believer’s personal faith in Christ will always have a personal cost to it. Somehow the modern cultural church age has almost completely lost sight of terms like commitment, faithfulness, sacrifice, responsibility, steadfastness, loyalty, courage, fidelity, accountability, trustworthiness, devotion, dependability, morality, and honesty. In the process this church age has substituted a man-centered gospel that focuses more on what God can do for the believer in place of the true gospel of Christ which carries with it deep roots of personal sacrifice and commitment. The modern Christian prayer could be characterized as “*O Lord, abundantly bestow your blessings on our life, but please don’t make too many demands on us.*”

So, what we see in God’s covenantal promise was that the fulfillment of His promise was unconditional, but the blessings were conditional. God’s blessings are never automatic. No believer can violate God’s holy commands on their life and expect His blessings. The New Testament refers to it as the law of “sowing and reaping”, and it does not matter who we are or what we think, the law of sowing and reaping is a spiritual law that will not change.

The following is a brief listing of some of the obligations that each member of the Trinity was to fulfill as provided by Wayne Grudem in his book called Systematic Theology. First, the Father was to give the Son a people whom He would redeem for His own possession.

In His high priestly prayer in [John 17](#), Jesus prays several times for those whom the Father had given to Him. We are that people, that possession, and that gift that the Father was going to give to the Son. Secondly, the Father agreed to allow God the Son to be the “**Mediator**”, or the official representative and intercessor on behalf of sinful man. As will be seen in [Hebrews 9](#), this work of Christ on the believer’s part is an eternal work that will never cease in eternity. We will forever retain our need for a “**mediator**”. Stated another way, a believer can never come to God on their own merit – never. It will always be through the perfect intercessory work of Jesus Christ, and without that work on their behalf they would have no access to God whatsoever. We have no idea what Christ is doing for us right now. Some seem to have the idea that He is just passively sitting and watching what is taking place below. What a travesty of understanding.

Thirdly, God the Father agreed to prepare the Son “**a body**” that He would dwell in as the God-Man. This is as profound of a truth as can be imagined. [Hebrews 10:5](#) says,

**<sup>5</sup>Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.”**

“**A body**”? This was not some kind of temporary “**body**”, but one in which He would dwell for the rest of eternity. This is not just some kind of fleeting, interim, momentary, passing, or short-term change in which Christ returns back to His original state. This is the Incarnation. This is an eternal change and a part of Christ’s eternal sacrifice, and because it is an eternal change made by the very Son of God Himself, it is more than staggering to say the least. [Hebrews 9:24](#) probably expresses the best how Christ is our representative because of His identification with us,

**<sup>24</sup>For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;**

Fourthly, the Father has given Christ all authority in heaven and on earth ([Matthew 28:18](#)), but in that giving of authority to Him, Christ agreed to be per-

fectly obedient to the commands of the Father. [Hebrews 10:7-9](#) says,

**<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God.’” <sup>8</sup>Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup>then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second.**

Christ agreed that He would be obedient unto death and then that He would be fully and actively subservient to God the Father in eternity. The magnitude of this is more than can be understood by mortal men. Only eternity will reveal the depth of this Trinitarian sacrifice. [Philippians 2:8](#) says,

**<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death, even the death of the cross.***

Fifthly, the Holy Spirit agreed to fill and empower Christ to fulfill the will of the Father on the earth. He also agreed to apply the benefits of the redemptive work of Christ to God’s people after Christ returned to the Father. That is why as Christians we can say that we are “indwelt” by the Holy Spirit. He now lives deep within our being to enable and empower us to live out our lives for God’s glory.

So, the “covenant of grace” that God made for man was one in which He established the parameters of how salvation would be achieved and what an individual would have to do in order to have their sins forgiven. As a part of the outworking of this covenant that would provide salvation, one of the most profound functions that Jesus Christ fulfilled was that He would become the “**Mediator**” between a holy God and sinful men. [Hebrews 8:6](#) declares,

**<sup>6</sup>But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.**

[Hebrews 9:15](#) says,

**<sup>15</sup>And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant,**

**that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**

What this simply means is that Jesus Christ is the One, and the only one, who fulfills the conditions and requirements of the covenant for us, and it is in His fulfillment of those requirements that He secures our forgiveness and reconciles us to God. It was not only for us, but also for the transgressions of those sins that were committed under the Old Covenant. The fulfillment of the “covenant of grace” is based solely on the intervention, intercession, and mediation of Christ on our behalf. Without Him doing what he promised the Father that He would do in eternity past before time began, there would be no fulfillment of the covenant whatsoever. Everything in the covenant was dependent on Jesus Christ doing the will of the Father – everything.

So, in order to participate in this covenant, we must place our faith in what Jesus Christ has accomplished on our behalf. Apart from a meaningful personal faith in Jesus Christ, there can be no participation in the new covenant, and apart from personal obedience there can be no active benefits accrued to our lives. Until we believe, we are only “**aliens**” and “**strangers**” from the covenant of promise and are without God and without Christ. [John 3:18](#) describes it this way when it says,

**<sup>18</sup>“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Strong, 1392.

<sup>2</sup>Strong, 993.

<sup>3</sup>Precept, Weakness.

<sup>4</sup>Strong, 1086.

<sup>5</sup>Elwell, 300.

<sup>6</sup>Grudem, 519.

<sup>7</sup>Orr, 732.

<sup>8</sup>Hodge, 364.

<sup>9</sup>Hodge, 364.

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