Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2a-Paul Prohibits His Christian Readers From Conforming To The Standards Of This Present Age Ruled By Satan

As we noted in our study of Romans 12:1, the apostle Paul appealed to his Christian readers in Rome on the basis of the merciful acts of the Father on their behalf to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which is their reasonable service to the Father.

We will now begin to note Romans 12:2 and in this passage Paul issues a prohibition to his Christian readers in Rome to not be conformed to the cosmic system of Satan. Also, in this passage, he issues a command on the heels of this prohibition to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The purpose of this command he teaches is so that they could discern the will of God for their lives, which he describes as “good”, “extremely pleasing” to God and “perfect.”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“And” is the “consecutive” use of the conjunction kai (καί), which introduces a prohibition and a command that are the direct consequence of Paul’s appeal in Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I appeal to each and every one of you spiritual brothers and sisters on the basis of the merciful acts produced by God the Father to offer your bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing and beneficial to God the Father, which is your reasonable service.”

The apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 appeals to his Christian readers in Rome on the basis of the merciful acts of the Father on their behalf to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which their reasonable service to the Father. Paul appeals to the Roman Christians on the basis of the merciful acts of the Father to offer their bodies as a sacrifice. They were to do this by appropriating by faith the Spirit’s teaching that they have been identified with Christ in His crucifixion, deaths, burial, resurrection and session. In other words, they were to do this by appropriating by faith their new position in Christ, which would enable them to experience eternal life and sanctification and would make them extremely pleasing to the Father.

Paul’s teaching that the Christian who offers his body as a sacrifice to the Father by appropriating his new position in Christ is performing the only reasonable service or the only service that makes good sense. It is the only service that makes sense because the believer was identified with Christ through the baptism of the Spirit for the express purpose of serving the Father. The Father
crucified His Son and had Him die a substitutionary spiritual and physical death on the cross and raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand and through the Spirit regenerated and identified the justified sinner with His Son in His crucifixion, His deaths, burial, resurrection and session. All of this was to make it possible for the justified sinner to serve God.

Now, in Romans 12:2, the conjunction καί is introducing prohibition to the Roman Christians to not be conformed to the cosmic system of Satan and a command to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Both are the direct result of the appeal in Romans 12:1 to the believers in Rome to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which is their reasonable service to the Father on the basis of the merciful acts that the Father performed on their behalf through the Son and the Spirit. In other words, in order for the believers in Rome to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father on the basis of the Father’s work on their behalf, they must obey both the prohibition and the command in Romans 12:2.

Therefore, Paul is saying with the conjunction καί: “I appeal to you my brothers and sisters on the basis of the merciful acts of God on your behalf, to offer your bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which is your reasonable service to Him, ‘consequently’ do not be conformed to this world but rather be transformed in the renewing of your mind.”

The conjunction καί indicates that the Roman believers can never offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father if they do not obey the prohibition and the command in verse 2. Therefore, we will translate καί, “Consequently.”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“Do not be conformed” is composed of the negative particle μή (mē) (may), “not” and the second person plural present (deponent) passive imperative form of the verb συσχεματίζω (soos-khay-mat-id-zo), “do be conformed.”

The verb συσχεματίζω is a compound word composed of the noun σχέμα, which denotes outward appearance, form or shape and the prefix συν, “with,” which indicates a personal assimilation to or conformity with the pattern indicated.

In classical literature, it means to form or mold after something. The meaning of the word is to form or mold one’s behavior in accordance with a particular pattern or set of standards.

Braumann commenting on the verb writes that the word “means not only to conform to the external form, but (from Aristotle onwards) to assume the form of something, to identify oneself essentially with someone else. (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, volume 3, page 709).
Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament lists defines the verb “be formed on the model of, take on the form of something, conform to” (volume 3, page 314).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following meanings for the word, “to form, from; to fashion in accordance with; to conform or assimilate one’s self to” (pages 393-394).

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, “to conform; to conform oneself (i.e. one’s mind and character) to another’s pattern” (Page 608).

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains defines “to form or mold one’s behavior in accordance with a particular pattern or set of standards – ‘to shape one’s behavior, to conform one’s life’” (volume 2, page 507).

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition defines the word, “to form according to a pattern or mold, form/model after something” (Page 979).

In Romans 12:2, the verb *suschematizo* means “to conform to” and speaks of conforming one’s behavior according to the standards of the present age, which is Satanically inspired and dominated by Satan’s cosmic system. The verb’s meaning is negated by the negative particle *me*, “not.” Together, they form a prohibition. The Roman believers are the subject of this prohibition.

Paul employs *me* and not *ouk* since the latter is much stronger than the former and would indicate that his readers were conforming their behavior to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system. Thus, by employing *me* instead of *ouk*, he does not believe that his readers were conforming their behavior to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system, which *ouk* would indicate. Therefore, the particle *me* indicates that this has not taken place but is used with the verb *suschematizo* to prohibit Paul’s readers in the future from conforming their behavior to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system.

Also, further indicating that the prohibition here in Romans 12:2 does not imply that the Roman believers were conforming their conduct to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system is that the present imperative form of the verb *suschematizo* with the negative particle *me* has the force of a general precept. It makes no comment about whether the action is going on or not. Thus, Paul’s readers were “not” presently disobeying this prohibition.

Furthermore, the context of the epistle further indicates that the Roman believers were not conforming their behavior to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system. In Romans 15:14-15, Paul writes to the believers in Rome that he was convinced that they were full of goodness and filled with knowledge and able to admonish each other. Thus, his teachings in this epistle would serve as a reminder to them.
Romans 15:14-15, “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God.”

Therefore, Paul is simply performing preventive maintenance by employing this prohibition in Romans 12:2. He is in effect warning the believers in Rome to not conform their conduct to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system. Thus, he is simply stating a general precept for his readers to follow in the future that would protect their fellowship with God.

The majority of witnesses in the Western and Byzantine traditions read the infinitive form of the verb *suschematizo* (and *metamorphoo*) over against the imperative of the Egyptian tradition (𝔓⁴ B* L P 104 365 1241 1739 pm). Based on this superiority of the Egyptian tradition and that the imperatives make perfect sense in the passage, we conclude that the mood of both verbs in Romans 12:2 are imperative.

This is a “customary present imperative,” which is a command for action to be continued, action that may or may not have already been going on and is often a character building command to the effect of “make this your habit.”

The voice of the verb *suschematizo* is uncertain. It could be passive meaning “do not be conformed” (KJV; NASB; NRSV) or it could be a direct middle meaning “do not conform yourselves” (TEV). However, the latter would be quite rare for the Greek New Testament. The former could be a “permissive passive” as the NET suggests.

The NET writes, “It is very telling that being ‘conformed’ to the present world is viewed as a passive notion, for it may suggest that it happens, in part, subconsciously. At the same time, the passive could well be a ‘permissive passive,’ suggesting that there may be some consciousness of the conformity taking place. Most likely, it is a combination of both.”

If the verb *suschematizo* is in the passive (“do not be conformed”), this would indicate that the articular dative form of the noun *aion*, “to this world” has an instrumental sense. The noun refers to the mass of attitudes, opinions, thoughts, speculations, aims, aspirations and hopes of those unregenerate individuals who are deceived by Satan’s cosmic system. If the noun is instrumental this would indicate that Paul is prohibiting his readers from being conformed “by” this present age that is deceived by the devil. If the verb is in the passive voice it indicates that the cosmic system is being portrayed as a power that is acting upon the believer.

However, Moo believes that the voice is a deponent middle/passive citing Turner “who notes that Hellenistic Greek manifested a tendency to use the middle and the passive voice with an active meaning.” (Moo, Douglas J., The New
Some translations follow this point of Turner’s interpreting the voice as a deponent middle/passive meaning that though the word is in the passive or middle voice form it has an active meaning, which would render the translation of the verb “do not conform” (NIV; REB; NJB).

Furthermore, the meaning of the word *suschematizo* is to form or mold one’s behavior in accordance with a particular pattern or set of standards, which suggests that though it has a passive/middle form, it has an active meaning.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature—Third Edition says that the word has a passive form but active meaning (Page 979).

If active in meaning, this would indicate that the noun *aion*, “to this world” functions as a dative of rule specifying the rule or code a person follows or the standard of conduct to which one conforms. Therefore, the verb *suschematizo* has is a deponent verb meaning that although it has a passive/middle form, it has an active meaning. This would indicate that Paul is appealing to the volition of his readers in that he does not want them to conform to the standards of this present age that is under the deception of the devil, which is similar to the apostle John’s warning in 1 John 2:15.

1 John 2:15, “Do not love the cosmic system in the sense of honoring it by taking pleasure in it to the extent that it becomes more important than your relationship with God, nor the cosmic system’s temptations. If anyone does love the cosmic system in the sense of honoring it by taking pleasure in it to the extent that it becomes more important than one’s relationship with God, then, the love for the Father is, as an eternal spiritual truth, unequivocally not resident and active in him.”

Therefore, we will translate the verb *suschematizo*, “Do not conform your behavior.”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“To this world” is composed of the articular dative masculine singular form of the noun *aion* (αἰῶν), “to world” and the dative masculine singular form of demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (ὁὗτος) (hoo-tos), “this.”

In the classical period *aion* denoted “lifetime, age, generation, a long period, or eternity.” Time and eternity are two complementary categories for comprehending the historical process.
The Greek language has a wealth of various terms with which to express the experience of time. The most extensive one is *aion* which is primarily a designation for a long period of time. When such an age refers to the past, it denotes remote antiquity, the dim and distant past and when it is directed to the ongoing future aion can take on the meaning of eternity. Eternity is thus not necessarily a timeless concept, but the most comprehensive temporal one which the experience of time has produced. Theologically speaking, lasting time or eternity is a property of God the Creator, whereas passing time belongs to man as the creature.

The Greek word *aion* is probably derived from *aei*, “always” and is distinguished from its Indo-European parallels (Latin: *aevum*; English: *aye are cognate) in that it is thought of not so much from the point of view of an abstract period of time as from the point of view of the time in which one has lived. The essential meaning of *aion* in classical Greek is time as the condition for all created things and as the measure of their existence. It came to mean all that exists in the world under conditions of time.

Ethically speaking *aion* refers to the course and current of this world’s affairs. In Homer *aion* is often parallel with *psuche*, “soul” (Il. 16, 453); in Hesiod (Frag. 161, 1) it denotes a life-span, and in Aeschylus (Sept. 742), “a generation.” So it came to mean the time which one has already lived or will live meaning it can relate to past as to future. It thus appeared appropriate to later philosophers to use the word both for the dim and distant past, the beginning of the world, and for the far future, eternity (Plato, Tim. 37d).

In Plato the term is developed so as to represent a timeless, immeasurable and transcendent super-time, an idea of time in itself. Plutarch and the earlier Stoics appropriate this understanding and from it the mysteries of *Aion*, “the god of eternity” could be celebrated in Alexandria and Gnosticism could undertake its own speculations of time.

In Hellenistic philosophy the concept of aeons contributed towards a solution of the problem of the world-order. The aeons were assumed to be mediating powers which bridge the infinite qualitative distinction between God and the cosmos. They are an emanation of the divine pleroma, the fullness of the divine Being. As differing levels of being of the divinity, they rule the various world-historical periods, which follow one another in a perpetual circular movement.

The thought of personal, divine aeons was widespread in the speculation of the ancient orient such as in the Zoroastrian religion and Philo. In Gnosticism is found the doctrine of the two ages representing on the one hand the eternal and supratemporal and on the other the temporal and transient world.

So the term *aion* in classical Greek generally expresses an extended span of time, but it additionally assumes a specific meaning according to its various
contexts. Aion does not imply any movement of time from one point in time to another but rather aion designates the totality of time and sees the entire picture simultaneously. Because aion suggested an age or aeon, it represented the world or kosmos and the course of the kosmos itself. Whereas kosmos connotes the world in terms of space, aion designates the world in terms of time.

Kosmos and aion form the framework of mankind’s existence. The Greeks possessed the concept the present aion and the one to come. The Papyri tell of a crowd of people that pays homage to the emperor with cries of Agoustoi kurioi eis ton aionan, “The emperors be forever!” (The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 1.141). The Greeks like many nations imagined an eternal age to come.

Liddell and Scott (Greek-English Lexicon, New Edition, page 45): (1) lifetime, life, age, generation (2) one’s life, destiny (3) long space of time, age (4) eternity (5) space of time clearly defined and marked out, epoch, age.

The noun aion appears over 450 times in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, aion is the primary equivalent of the Hebrew `olam. The concepts behind this word greatly influence the definition of aion in the Greek New Testament. In reference time the word points to an existence beyond that which is material, an unlimited, undefined, and unknown period of time, either past or future.

The term also contains the concept of being uninterrupted. Depending on the context it can be translated “formerly, always, eternal, all eternity.” It is `olam and its cognates which the Old Testament most frequently relies upon to describe “eternal” concepts and “eternity.”

The Old Testament often understands the expressions “eternal” and “eternity” as relative in meaning. The nature of the matter in question and the pertinent circumstances determine the interpretation (Job 20:4; Josh. 24:2; Jer. 28:8).

The word `olam retains its relative nature in expressions of future time such as in connection with the divine institutions in Israel (Ex. 12:14; 31:16; Deut. 15:17; 1 Ch. 16:11; 2 Ch. 7:16; Ps. 105:10). The word is used in relation to the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:16).

The terms “eternal” and “eternity” are also employed in the absolute sense. They are used in relation to the existence of God (Deut. 32:40). It is used in relation to the attributes of God and His superiority over His creatures (Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Is. 40:28). God is in the absolute sense eternal in His relationship with humanity.


A figurative use of the eternity concept appears in the expression “from eternity to eternity” (Ps. 90:2 [LXX 89:2]; 103:17 [102:17]). This denotes through a means of polarity, the extent of something immeasurable.

Nowhere in the Old Testament does “eternity” carry a philosophical meaning. Therefore, `olam can denote a prolonged period of time which extends beyond sight which is hidden and secret and which cannot be comprehended. Nevertheless as with the Greek aion, `olam can refer to near and temporal things.

The noun aion is employed more than 100 times in the Greek New Testament. It primarily means “eternal,” but in other instances it carries the same definitions and nuances, which are found in classical Greek and in the Septuagint.

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised (page 11): (1) a period of time of significant character (2) life (3) an era (4) an age (5) a state of things marking an age or era (6) the present order of nature (7) the natural condition of man, the world (8) illimitable duration, eternity (9) the material universe.

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon (pages 18-20): (1) age, a human lifetime, life itself (2) an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity (3) eis ton aion, for ever (4) eis aiona, unto the day which is eternity (5) never, not forever, not always (6) eis tous aionas, unto the ages, i.e. as long as time shall be (the plural denotes the individual ages whose sum is eternity) (7) eis tous aionas ton aionon, forever and ever (8) from the most ancient time down, from of old (9) by metonymy of the container for the contained, the worlds, the universe (10) this age.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition: (1) a long period of time, without reference to beginning or end (2) a segment of time as a particular unit of history, age (3) the world as a spatial concept, the world (4) the Aeon as a person, the Aeon. (Pages 32-33)

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains (volume 2): (1) a unit of time as a particular stage or period of history – ‘age, era’ (page 648). (2) (always occurring in the plural): the universe, perhaps with some associated meaning of ‘eon’ or ‘age’ in the sense of the transitory nature of the universe (3) the system of practices and standards associated with secular society (that is, without reference to any demands or requirements of God) – ‘world system, world’s standards, world’ (page 508).

Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (volume 1, pages 44-46): (1) life, lifetime, generation (2) from time immemorial (3) forever (4) eternity (5) eternal (6) present age (7) world.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, “Aion, ‘an age, era’ (to be connected with aei, ‘ever,’ rather than with ao, ‘to breathe’), signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period.
The force attaching to the word is not so much that of the actual length of a period, but that of a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics. This is illustrated in the use of the adjective [see Note (1) below] in the phrase ‘life eternal,’ in John 17:3, in respect of the increasing knowledge of God. The phrases containing this word should not be rendered literally, but consistently with its sense of indefinite duration. Thus *eis ton aiona* does not mean ‘unto the age’ but ‘for ever’ (see, e. g., Heb 5:6). The Greeks contrasted that which came to an end with that which was expressed by this phrase, which shows that they conceived of it as expressing interminable duration. The word occurs most frequently in the Gospel of John, the Hebrews and Revelation. It is sometimes wrongly rendered ‘world.’ It is a characteristic word of John’s gospel. Notes: (1) *Aionios*, the adjective corresponding, denoting ‘eternal,’ is set in contrast with *proskairos*, lit., ‘for a season,’ 2 Cor 4:18. It is used of that which in nature is endless, as, e. g., of God, Rom 16:26, His power, 1 Tim 6:16, His glory, 1 Peter 5:10, the Holy Spirit, Heb 9:14, redemption, Heb 9:12, salvation, 5:9, life in Christ, John 3:16, the resurrection body, 2 Cor 5:1, the future rule of Christ, 2 Peter 1:11, which is declared to be without end, Luke 1:33, of sin that never has forgiveness, Mark 3:29, the judgment of God, Heb 6:2, and of fire, one of its instruments, Matt 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7. (2) In Rev 15:3, the RV has ‘King of the ages,’ according to the texts which have *aionon*, the KJV has ‘of saints’ (*hagion*, in inferior mss.). There is good ms. evidence for *ethnon*, ‘nations,’ (KJV, marg.), probably a quotation from Jer 10:7.”


The word is used with the preposition *eis* to express the concept of eternity. It appears regularly in the doxologies and offerings of praise. The noun appears in the formula *eis ton aiona tou aionos* to emphasize the concept of eternity (Philp. 4:20; Eph. 3:21). This repetition of the word is the figure of Polyptoton appearing in context of praise to both the Father and the Son and is actually a Hebrew idiom.

*Aion* like *kosmos*, may under certain contexts acquire a negative sense. Both of these words when used in relation to the present age in which the devil is the god of this world idiomatically express what one might refer to as “the spirit of the age,” the philosophies and ideologies which dominate this period.
Bengel defines *aion* as “the subtle, informing spirit of the kosmos or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.”

Vincent explains that *aion* refers in essence to “time, as the condition under which all created things exist, and the measure of their existence: a period of existence; a lifetime; a generation; hence, a long space of time; an age, era, epoch, period of a dispensation. On this primary, physical sense there arises a secondary sense, viz., all that exists in the world under the conditions of time. From this again develops a more distinctly ethical sense, the course and current of this world’s affairs... and this course as corrupted by sin; hence the evil world.”

In Romans 12:2, the noun *aion* means “age” referring to the particular period of human history in which the devil is the temporary ruler over planet earth. It is used in relation to the present age in which the devil is the god of this world idiomatically expressing what one might refer to as “the spirit of the age,” the philosophies and ideologies which dominate this period that are Satanically inspired.

The word then refers to the spirit of this age in which the devil rules over the earth, which seeks to be independent of God and the Bible. It is an age in which people characteristically seek self-gratification regardless of the consequences or cost to self or others.

This Satanic age is characteristically self-centered, self-pleasing, self-indulgent, self-concerned and indifferent to needs of others. It is also an age in which when men display concern for the needs of others, it is either because they seek to gain merit with God through their good deeds, which God rejects since these deeds are not done in His power or they are deeds that they perform to gain power over people and gain approbation from them. They are not deeds that they perform in obedience to God.

The prevailing, popular thinking and culture is in continual rebellion against God and His authority and seeks to conform all the world’s inhabitants to its godless “world view.” This Satanic world view permeates the thinking of mankind, molding, corrupting and degrading and in the process affecting all culture and every institution of man.

The noun *aion* differs from the noun *kosmos*, “world” in that the former speaks of a particular period of human history in which the devil and fallen angels rule this world whereas *kosmos* refers to the devil’s world system. The noun *aion* can also refer to the age in which the devil’s viewpoint prevails over men in contrast to the Messianic age and the eternal state to come whereas *kosmos* is the system he has in place to propagate his viewpoint of this Satanic age.

The noun *kosmos* and is used of a vast system and arrangement of human affairs, earthly goods, godless governments, conflicts, riches, pleasures, culture, education, world religions, the cults and the occult dominated and negatively
affected by Satan who is god of this satanic cosmos. But as Trench writes, aion is “that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.” (Synonyms of the New Testament, page 204)

1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

“World” is the noun kosmos and is the primary word in the Greek New Testament for the world. Kosmos means “order, ornament, adornment, an orderly arrangement. Our word “cosmetics” comes from this word.

In the New Testament it has three main uses: (1) The orderly arrangement of the heavens or the earth and all things in their complex order and composition as created by God, created in perfect order and subject to the laws God established to govern its operation. (Matt. 13:35; John 21:25; Acts 17:24). (2) The cosmos (Greek, kosmos) may also refer to the world in its arrangement of the inhabitants of the earth in tribes and nations or peoples (Acts 17:26; John 3:16; 1 Cor. 4:9; 1 John 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:5). (3) But most importantly, (3) kosmos is used of a vast system and arrangement of human affairs, earthly goods, godless governments, conflicts, riches, pleasures, culture, education, world religions, the cults and the occult dominated and negatively affected by Satan who is god of this satanic cosmos.

This system is promoted by Satan, conformed to his ideals, aims, methods, and character, and stands perpetually in opposition to God the cause of Christ. This world system is used to seduce men away from God and the person of Christ. It is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible, and very anti-humanity though it often appears as humanitarian as part of Satan’s masquerade as an angel of light.

The devil's world will never be healed; the devil's system will never be successful in bringing in perfect environment apart from God. Indeed, Satan's kosmos is not at all designed to do so it is to the contrary constructed to appear to have the betterment of humanity as a prime objective, in order to further the devil's plans of enslaving and misleading as many people as possible.

While masquerading as a kingdom of light, Satan's world is entirely a kingdom of darkness, and so the scriptures describe it, making abundantly clear the distinction between God's world to come and the present cosmos of evil. Satan has incorporated into his system of world rulership as many material distractions as possible.

Affluence, the increase and spread of wealth, communication and technology are factors, which, from one point of view, are very beneficial to the devil's control of mankind. Fear is a major element in Satan's manipulation of humanity, and to the extent that men enjoy and rely on such things for their happiness and security,
to that degree the fear of losing them produces a sort of bondage which the devil is quick to exploit (cf. Heb.2:14-15 for the principle). In order to prevent our enslavement to the delights of this world (as well as to its necessities), an area Satan knows only too well how to manipulate against us, we need to have a full and sober appreciation of what the world really is.

We need to be very aware of the world's essential vanity and of the pointlessness of its distractions and diversions. We need to be able to keep the pressures and exigencies of life (as well as its pleasures and delights) in proper perspective. God is important. Knowing Him and serving Him is why we are here. Everything else is mere context.

We are neither asked nor commanded to get through life without taking any joy or pleasure in worldly things and we certainly will not pass through the human experience without worldly pressure and problems (especially as Christians). But it is all these largely extraneous matters, which we must compartmentalize, and not God.

We dare not put God “in a box,” giving priority to everything the world sees as important (but which from the Christian point of view is ultimately inconsequential), and neglecting the One who made us, who bought us, and whom we claim is our Master. Whenever we allow the “things” of life to grow high, and fail to tend our faith, we endanger our spiritual growth.

Ironically, believers have a tendency to do better spiritually in times of severe testing than in times of prosperity (cf. Deut.8:10-20). Prosperity can be very dangerous and destructive to a believer’s spiritual growth. In these last days it is especially important for Christians to avoid a pair of assumptions, which are equally dangerous: (1) Affluence is a sign that God is blessing us, and therefore, if we are wealthy, that we must be doing just fine in our spiritual lives. (2) Result of spiritual growth and a prosperous relationship with God is material wealth (i.e., the “prosperity gospel”). In fact, the opposite effect is certainly not without precedent, that is, the spiritually mature encountering greater testing on this score (e.g., consider Job's trials, or Elijah's privation).

Morbid over-emphasis on material prosperity has always been an occupational hazard of the human race in general, and, the closer we come to the end of history, the more we can expect this issue to grow as a threat to Christian spiritual growth. During this last era of the Church, the Laodicean era, there is destined to be an ever increasing tendency toward equating wealth and affluence with spiritual success (Rev.3:14-22).

Untroubled lives of ease in the midst of abundance are neither the norm nor the objective of the Christian life. The closer we walk with God, the more we can expect that walk to be opposed by Satan and his angels:
2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

As we have noted another word that sometimes refers to this world system is the Greek aion, “age, period of time.” This word seems to serve as a synonym in certain contexts. It is used in some contexts of the age in which we live as marked by certain spiritual and moral characteristics as affected by Satan whom Paul identifies as “the god of this age.”

A very interesting use occurs in Ephesians 2:2 where Paul combines both aion and kosmos, “the course (age) of the world (cosmos). This age is often contrasted in Scripture with the age to come because of the very different characteristics and conditions of the two ages (Eph. 1:21; Matt. 12:32; 13:22; 1 Tim. 6:17; Tit. 2:12-13; Heb. 6:5).

Trench defines aion: “All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, But which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale, all this is included in the aion, which is, as Bengel has expressed it, ‘the subtle informing spirit of the kosmos, or world of men who are living alienated and apart from God.’”

The world, then, instead of remaining a beautiful expression of God’s will and creative power as seen under the conditions of its creation, has becomes the seat of an angelic conflict and the very rival and antithesis of the plan of God.

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

To achieve his aim, Satan must try to make the values of his godless system seem attractive. Thus he works to make people give top priority to self as number one and to the here and now as most important.

When John wrote that all that is in the world is not of the Father he explained what he meant by “all” by three epexegetical statements that follow in 1 John 2:16. All of them emphasize self as number one. Satisfy the lusts of the flesh, Satan counsels. Try to get what the inordinate desires of the eyes make you covet and build a self-sufficient, arrogant attitude that arises from boasting about the possessions one has in life.

This selfishness is, of course, the prevailing philosophy of the world, and it comes from Satan who promoted himself from the beginning. Satan also seeks to focus people’s attention on the present rather than on eternity. That is why John reminds us in verse 17 that the world passes away but the one that does the will of
God abides forever. Thus Satan seeks to achieve his purposes by trying to change our priorities (self first) and our perspective (here and now more important).

In reality the truth is that God is first and eternity most important. The Scripture sets forth a number of importance truths regarding the believer’s relation to this satanic cosmos in which we live. Though we are in the cosmic system of Satan, we are not of it (John 17:14-16). We are of a different kingdom and, as sojourners and aliens. We are to be living our lives in light of eternity.

Though in the world, we are to be both unstained by the world and separated from it and its way of life while also penetrating the world as ambassadors of Christ, as those holding forth the Word of life (cf. Jam. 1:27; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; with Phil. 2:12-18; Matt. 5:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:20-21).

Philippians 2:14-16, “Continue performing all activities without murmurs resulting from doubts so that you might demonstrate yourselves to be uncensurable and uncontaminated, students of God (the Holy Spirit), virtuous in the midst of a corrupt and depraved generation. Among whom you yourselves continue appearing as luminaries in the cosmos by all of you continuing to exhibit the Word of life as a boast for me on the day of Christ.”

Our trust, therefore, is not to be in the uncertain riches of this age nor in the things in which men glory (1 Tim. 6:17-19; John 5:41; 1 Thess. 2:6). We are not be friends with this world which amounts to hostility to God and His aims (Jam. 4:4); nor are we to love the world, for loving the world and its things chokes out our ability to love God (1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 6:19-24; Mark 4:18-19). Rather, we are to find our purpose, peace, significance, and joy, not as the world seeks these things, but through the Savior’s life and the eternal purpose He gives us (John 14:25-27; Phil. 2:1-5).

We can enjoy the things God gives us in the world for He has given us all things freely to enjoy, but our security, significance, or basic satisfaction and contentment in life are to come from knowing, loving, trusting, and serving the Lord (1 Tim. 6:17; Phil. 4:11-13; Eccl. 2:24-26). So while we can use the things in the world, we must not abuse them as one who belongs to Satan’s cosmic system who seeks from the world what only the Lord can give (1 Cor. 7:29-35).

As believers we can expect animosity from the world bridled with an attempt by the world to conform us to its ideal, ambitions or aims, and way of life (John 15:18-19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13; Rom. 12:1-2); it is God’s truth as found in the Bible that protects from the world (John 17:17). So therefore, the believer is in enemy territory and is under siege from the kingdom of darkness. This world system of Satan is against the Lord Jesus Christ and His church, which is His body and future. We are not to love the world because our citizenship is heaven.

Philippians 3:20-21, “For our citizenship exists from eternity past in the realm of the heavens, out from which also we ourselves at the present time are
eagerly anticipating as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will cause our humiliating body to be outwardly transformed to be identical in essence with His glorious body because of the power that will enable Him to marshal all things created to Himself.”

The citizens of the cosmic system of Satan hate the citizens of heaven. Satan and his cosmic system persecuted the Lord Jesus and have and will continue to persecute the church as well.

John 15:18-25, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’”

There are many passages in the New Testament, which address the believer’s attitude and conduct to this present cosmic system of Satan.

Galatians 6:14, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Philippians 1:27-30, “Single-mindedly, continue conducting yourselves (as citizens of heaven) in a manner worthy of the gospel concerning the Christ. So that whether having come and having seen all of you or being absent I might continue hearing the things concerning all of you, that all of you are persevering by means of one Spirit, one soul. By all of you fighting together for the Christian faith, namely, the gospel and by not letting yourselves be intimidated in anything by the adversaries, which to their disadvantage is evidence of destruction but on the other hand, (evidence) of your (soul) prosperity. Indeed this (prosperity) originates from God (the Father) because for the benefit of all of you, it has been graciously granted (the privilege) because of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also, to suffer (hardship) because of Him. Since all of you are experiencing the same conflict, which all of you have seen with me and now all of you are hearing through me.”

Philippians 2:14-17, “Continue performing all activities without murmurs resulting from doubts so that you might demonstrate yourselves to be
uncensurable and uncontaminated, students of God (the Holy Spirit), virtuous in the midst of a corrupt and depraved generation. Among whom you yourselves continue appearing as luminaries in the cosmos by all of you continuing to exhibit the Word of life as a boast for me on the day of Christ because I have not run in vain, nor have I worked diligently in vain. In fact, although I am offering myself as a libation poured out upon the sacrificial service which is (the expression of) your faithfulness: I rejoice and I congratulate all of you. On the other hand, in the same manner, I request that all of you also begin rejoicing and congratulating me and continue doing so.”

James 1:27, “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

The fact that we are not to love this world does not mean we are to withdraw from society and live in a monastery but rather God has separated us from the world in order that we might manifest His Son to a lost and dying world through our words and actions. God’s purpose of conforming us to the image of Christ is not accomplished by withdrawing to a monastery. We are not to conform our thinking to the world’s thinking but rather our thinking is to be conformed to Christ’s thinking.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.”

As He conforms us into the image of His Son, God permits us to use that which the world has devised, but we are to use it in service for the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers can and should use the world’s means of communication, such as radio, television, movies and the Internet in order to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are in the world as servants of Christ. We are here to manifest His glory and to reveal the knowledge of God. We don’t do this by conforming to the world, and not by loving the things that are in the world, but by being conformed to Jesus Christ and by loving Him with singleness of purpose, by being dedicated and devoted to Him. We are not to “sell out” to the world and play by its rules but rather we are to walk in conformity with Christ.

Sooner or later, every Christian discovers that the Christian life is a battleground and not a playground that he is up against an enemy that is much more powerful and smarter than he is.

The church age believer is involved in spiritual warfare with the kingdom of darkness (Eph. 6:12-16). He is described as a “soldier” in Scripture (1 Cor. 9:7;
Phil. 2:25; 2 Tim. 3-4). The church age is the intensive stage of the angelic conflict. The believer can glorify God in this angelic conflict by becoming an invisible hero with an invisible impact on human and angelic history.

The believer is being conformed to the image of Christ by conforming his thoughts, words and actions to Christ by means of the Spirit will have an invisible impact in five categories: (1) Personal: Your own periphery. (2) National: The Pivot. (3) International: Blessing by association through a mature missionary. (4) Angelic: Witness for the Prosecution in the Rebuttal Phase of Satan’s Appeal Trial. (5) Heritage: Children of a mature believer are blessed after the believer dies.

Invisible Heroes are described as the “salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). They are the “lights of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Invisible Heroes are like a “city on a hill” (Matt. 5:14).

The noun \textit{aion} appears frequently in the New Testament in this negative sense. In Ephesians 2:2, the word is translated “course” referring to the Satanic viewpoint of Satan’s cosmic system.

\textbf{Ephesians 2:1-2}, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

The word appears in 2 Corinthians 4:4 where it refers to the Satanic age of world history in contrast to the Messianic age.

\textbf{2 Corinthians 4:1-4}, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Paul uses the word in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 where he uses it with reference to the present period of human history in which the devil’s viewpoint rules.

The noun \textit{aion} is found in Matthew 13:22, Mark 14:19 and 1 Timothy 6:17. In these passages the word means “age” and these passage teaches that the anxieties of this age coupled with the seductive power of riches can strangle a believer’s spiritual life. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:10 that Demas, a believer loved this present age.

The noun \textit{aion} in Romans 12:2 speaks of the period of human history in which the devil is the ruler of the earth and his independent attitude permeates human thought. The believer is living in enemy territory, which is the cosmic system of Satan. Satan runs this world and deceives it.
1 John 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

Revelation 12:9, “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

In his temptation of Christ, Satan declared, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:5). Of course, God is sovereign and omnipotent, but in accord with God’s eternal purposes, the Bible does teach us that this present world is Satan’s domain and under his authority. Thus, the Lord frequently spoke of Satan as the ruler of this world (kosmos) (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and Paul likewise asserts the same truth (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 5:19).

The nature of Satan’s aims in the world are quickly evident in his first appearance in the Garden of Eden when he tempted the Woman to act independently of God that she might become like God knowing good and evil. He appeals to what is pleasant to the senses and desirable to gain wisdom, but always, the goal is a life that seeks to get by “without” God.

Genesis 3:1-7, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’ The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

Satan’s aim is to create a world system that rivals God’s kingdom but which leaves Him out. His aim is to promote a counterfeit world order. Basically, the cosmos is evil because it is independent of God. It may contain good aspects as well as overtly evil aspects, but its inherent evil lies in its being independent of God and a rival to Him. This sharp rivalry surfaces in such verses as James 1:27 where the believer is told to keep himself unstained from the world; in 4:4 where friendship with the world is said to be hostility toward God; and in 1 John 2:16 where John declares that all that is in the world is not from the Father.

The believer has 3 great enemies according to the Scriptures: (1) Satan, our chief adversary, the devil: (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Eph. 6:12; John 16:11; Col. 2:15; but note
1 John 2:13-14). (2) The world, a system and arrangement of the affairs of men and
government under the control of the evil one and opposed to God and His purposes
for man: (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4; Eph. 2:2). (3) Indwelling Adamic sin nature or
the flesh and all its corrupting power and life-dominating patterns: (Rom. 7:15;
8:4-8, 13; Gal. 5:16-26).

The intelligence apparatus of a nation plays a vital part in modern warfare. Unless,
we know who our enemy is, where he is, and what he can do, we will have
difficult time defeating him. The leader of the church’s great invisible enemy is
of course Satan whose name means, “adversary” because he is the enemy of God.
He is also called the “tempter” (Mt. 4:3), the murderer (Jn. 8:44). He is compared
to “lion” in 1 Peter 5:8, a serpent (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9), an angel of light (2 Cor.
11:13-15), the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). The Christian is not to be ignorant
of his schemes and devices (2 Cor. 2:11).

Satan is a created being. The Lord Jesus Christ created angels who are moral
rational creatures like mankind and the greatest of these was angels was Satan.
Therefore, Satan is a creature (cf. John 1:1 with Psa. 148:1-5; Col. 1:16; Ezek.
28:13). He is also a spirit being. Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as spirits and
demons are called unclean spirits (Matt. 8:16; 12:45; Luke 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts
19:12; Rev. 16:14).

Furthermore, the fact we are told that “we do not wrestle with flesh and
blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world
rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in
heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) also suggest that Satan and his demons are spirit
beings.

Finally, the fact that Paul describes them as invisible also shows they are spirit
beings (Col. 1:16). Satan is not omniscient, omnipotent or omnipresent like God
but rather he has limitations. He simply cannot be everywhere at once. Nor, can he
read your mind.

Angels, though spirit beings and very powerful, are not omnipotent, omniscient,
or omnipresent. They cannot be everywhere at once and this is true of Satan.
However, as the chief of his demons forces or as the “prince of the power of the
air” (Eph 2:2), he is chief of a vast host of demons who are so numerous as to
make Satan’s power and presence seem to be practically ubiquitous or everywhere
at once (cf. Mark 5:9). Therefore, because of this limitation, many references to
Satan or the devil include his whole kingdom.

The person of Satan does not personally tempt each of us for he simply cannot
do that. He is only able to do so through his world system and demon hosts. In his
appearance when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord (Job
1:6), in the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:10f), and the entrance into Judas (Luke
22:3) we surely have clear references to the person of Satan himself, but in many

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other passages, Satan or the devil seems to stand for Satan’s kingdom (see Mark 3:23; 4:15; Luke 13:16; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jam. 4:7). It is also comforting to know that Satan is limited.

The promise of Scripture is that “greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). For all his power and hatred against God and man, he could do nothing against Job that God did not expressly allow. Therefore, he can be resisted and made to flee (Jam. 4:7), but only by the strength of God made available to believers in Christ (Eph. 6:10-18).

Satan is a person. The Scripture state that he possesses the traits of personality. He shows intelligence (2 Cor. 11:3). He exhibits emotions (Rev. 12:17, anger; Luke 22:31, desire). He demonstrates that he has a will (Isa. 14:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:26). Satan is referred to as a person in both Old and New Testaments (Job 1; Matt. 4:1-12).

Notice that the information in this latter passage (the temptation of Christ) had to come from the Lord. Thus He, by using personal pronouns, attributes personality to Satan. If Satan were merely a personification that people have devised to express their ideas of evil, then such a personification could scarcely be held morally responsible for his actions, since, in reality, there is no being who can be held accountable. But Satan is held accountable by the Lord (Matt. 25:41), and this passage reminds us that to deny the reality of Satan requires denying the veracity of Christ’s words.

We must learn from the devil’s failure. If angels like Satan who were so close to God gave way to the pride of seeking to be independent of God and fell in sin, we certainly should learn from this that we might be more careful “to take heed lest we fall” (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12 with 1 Tim. 3:6-7). We should know full well, as with the temptation of Eve, Satan will seek to reduplicate his sin in us by seeking to get us to attempt to live life independently of God as though we were gods ourselves.

Let’s go back to the original angelic Eden, to a time before Satan had rebelled from God and had fallen from his privileged status. What we know about Satan in his perfect state comes mainly from the testimony of Isaiah (chapter fourteen) and Ezekiel (chapter twenty-eight). It must be remembered that in eternity past, Satan held a 3-fold office, which is now belongs to the incarnate Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan was a prophet, priest and a king in eternity past prior to his rebellion against his Creator. The devil was the preeminent creature in the universe before his fall, and each of the various characteristics described below call attention to specific aspects of this preeminence.

Ezekiel 28:11-12, “Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, "Thus
says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”

“Seal of Perfection” is the Hebrew chatham, “a seal of proportion, a sealer of symmetry, one sealing perfection, “which are literal renderings from the Hebrew and can be expanded to the meaning “the one who puts his seal on harmonious-proportion” or, better, the “touchstone of symmetry” (that is, norms and standards of all kinds as seen from the divine point of view).

Satan, in his un-fallen state, could be looked to as one who upheld, embodied and represented perfect divine standards. It is a tragic irony that he is now the prime example of all that is wicked, wrong and anti-God. In contrast to Satan, our Lord Jesus Christ is the One who died to satisfy the Father's righteous standard regarding our sin (2 Cor.5:21; 1 Pet.2:24).

“Full of wisdom” is composed of the Hebrew adjective male, “full,” and the noun chokhmah, “wisdom.” The adjective male is used figuratively here in Ezekiel 28:12 indicating a high degree of wisdom by which Satan in eternity past, before his fall was characterized. This word indicates that Satan did not reject God out of ignorance. To the contrary, he was the wisest of God's creatures until he perverted that wisdom (Ezek.28:17). It is a tragic irony that Satan corrupted this wisdom and so became the “father of lies,” the adversary of God’s wisdom and truth (Jn.8:44). In contrast to Satan, our Lord Jesus Christ is the very wisdom of God (1Cor.1:24).

Ezekiel 28:12, “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”"

“Perfect in beauty” is composed of the Hebrew adjective kalil, “perfect,” and the noun yophi, “beauty.” Satan before his fall in eternity past was the epitome of beauty.

Ezekiel 28:13, “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared.”

This “Eden” in Ezekiel 28:13 refers to the original garden of Eden on the original planet earth before the earth’s renovation in Genesis 1:3 and following. Though he was the premier creature in a utopian setting, Satan was not content. It is a tragic irony that through his rebellion he has exchanged a perfect environment for eternal place in the lake of fire, and is leading his followers to share his fate (Matt.25:41). In contrast to Satan, our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a place for us (Jn.14:1-4), a place whose wonders will outstrip even those of that first Eden (Rev.2:7).
The precious stones mentioned in this verse are indeed additional manifestations of Satan's beauty, but it is likely that they also mark him out as the one who represented the angels before God. The nine stones mentioned in this context bear a striking similarity to those placed on the high priest's breastplate (Ex.28:17-21; 39:10-14).

In the Exodus context, each of the stones represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel and bore its name inscribed on the gem. Exodus 28:29 states that Aaron (i.e., the high priest) shall wear the breastplate with the stones inscribed with the twelve tribes “over his heart” whenever he enters the Holy Place “as a continual memorial before the Lord”; the verse also calls the breastplate so equipped “the breastplate of judgment”.

Each of Israel's tribes is thus a precious jewel in God's sight, and was represented before Him in this fashion whenever the high priest entered into the presence of God. Furthermore, the breastplate also served the practical function of acting as a means of communication from the Lord in designating specific tribes for specific tasks. What we see in Ezekiel's representation of a very similar apparatus on Satan, therefore, should be seen as fulfilling a similar function.

As the “anointed cherub who covers,” Satan would have been continually in the presence of the Lord as the prime representative of angelic kind in the same way that our Lord Jesus Christ (symbolically represented by Israel's high priest) has been continually in His presence as the “last Adam” (1Cor.15:45) and “the Son of Man” (e.g., Jn.9:35) since His ascension. It is a tragic irony that Satan, who used to represent his angelic brethren before the Lord would go on to corrupt many of them, thus leading them to eternal punishment (Matt.25:41). In contrast to Satan, our Lord Jesus Christ is our guide to eternal life (Heb.2:10; 12:2).

These 9 jewels are comparable to the 12 jewels found on the breastplate of the high priest of Israel, where each jewel represented 1 of the 12 tribes liable for military service. Satan in eternity past before his rebellion was the high priest of God ruling over these 9 divisions or tribes of angels just as the high priest in Israel presided over the 12 tribes of Israel. Remember three tribes surrounded the Tabernacle on all four sides in battle array. Revelation 12:4 says that 1/3 of the angels fell, that means 3 angelic divisions in the Lord’s military rebelled.

Revelation 12:3-4, “Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

These 3 angelic divisions are arranged in rank, thus mimicking God.
Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Ezekiel 28:14, “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.”

“Anointed” is the Hebrew adjective mimshach, whose cognate verb is mashach, “to anoint,” and the noun mashiach, “Anointed One, Messiah.” The Greek noun Christos, “Christ” translates the Hebrew noun for Messiah, which is mashiach. The Hebrew verb mashach, “to rub means “to rub, anoint,” or “spread” a liquid. This word was used of anointing of people for special service or office such as priest (Ex. 29:7; Lev. 4:5, 16; 6:22; 21:10), prophet (1 Kings 19:16), and king (1 Sam. 2:10; 12:3; 16:6; 24:6; 2 Sam. 12:7; 19:21). The person who experienced such anointing was often called “the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam. 26:9; 2 Sam. 23:1).

In the Old Testament, two office bearers are expressly described as mashiach i.e. as anointed with oil: (a) High priest (b) King. The most reference in the Old Testament is to the anointing of the King. The rite of anointing was performed on the high priest in the post-exilic community in Judah. The anointing never became a rite of initiation into the prophetic office. The prophet is discharged a specific task assigned to him by Yahweh Himself. He is anointed for this. Thus the act of anointing confers power.

So the mashach’s Hebrew cognate adjective mimshach in Ezekiel 28:13 describes Satan as one who God conferred divine power to in order to carry out his duties. This anointing marked Satan out as God’s number 1 man!

“Cherub” is the Hebrew noun keruv. Cherubs take the lead in worshiping God (Is.6; Rev.4:8b; 5:8,14; 7:11-12; 19:4), act as intermediaries for God in His royal manifestations (Rev.6:1-7; 15:7), and, perhaps most significantly, control access into His presence and fellowship (a duty most strikingly evident from their guarding of the “way to the tree of life” after Man's expulsion from the garden: Gen.3:24).

“Who covers” refers to the fact that Satan's original position can thus be described as that of the ultimate “imperial guard,” charged with warding off all that is profane from the perfect holiness of God. It is a tragic irony that Satan's position as a bulwark against the profane has been altered by his own rebellion into that of a promoter of all that is detestable to God's holiness. In contrast to Satan, Christ kept Himself experientially pure from sin, so that in fulfillment of the Father's plan He might "become sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2Cor.5:21).
Ezekiel 28:15-19, “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; You have become terrified and you will cease to be forever.”

As we noted earlier, in the beginning the most exalted of all the angels was the anointed cherub, whom the Bible calls Satan or the devil, the son of the morning (Isa. 14:12). He was entrusted with responsibilities and was granted privileges beyond those of any other angel, but he abused his freedom through arrogance and rebellion against God (Ezek. 28:12-19). He was the anointed cherub who guarded the throne of God, he was said to created perfect in wisdom and beauty and he was blessed with the title of Hallel Ben Shechar, “morning star, son of the dawn” (Is. 14:12). But the Scriptures teach that he led the angels in rebellion against God (Is. 14:12-14). Instead of being 1 will in the universe, now there was 2…God’s and Satan’s. Satan had the audacity to oppose God.

Now, according to Matthew 25:41 Satan was sentenced to the Lake of Fire for his rebellion but he appealed the sentence.

Matthew 25:41, “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

This sentence has not been executed since the Scriptures states that Satan is the “prince of the power of air” (Eph. 2:3), and the ruler of this world. We can accurately infer that Satan’s argument for appealing his sentence was that how could a loving God cast some of His creatures into the Lake of Fire forever and ever, thus God granted Satan his appeal.

This appeal provides God an opportunity to demonstrate His incomparable love for all His creatures, both men and angels and thus vindicate His perfect character and integrity that was impugned by Satan. Therefore, God convened a trial to consider the evidence and pronounce judgment.

In the prehistoric trial God was the judge and the prosecution. Satan was the defense. God considered all the evidence and pronounced a guilty verdict and He sentenced Satan and all the fallen angels to "eternal fire" (Matt. 25:41).
So “eternal fire has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41), but because the sentence was not been immediately executed-and, in fact, will not be carried out until the end of human history (Rev. 20:10)—we can accurately infer that Satan appealed the sentence.

The elapse of time between the sentence and its execution indicates that human history is part of this momentous trial, the appeal trial of Satan. Human history is the appeal trial of Satan. Further biblical evidence for the prehistoric trial of the fallen angels is found in Satan's titles.

Human history was designed to resolve this conflict between God and Satan. The words “devil” and “Satan” are not names but titles, both of which mean “accuser” or “adversary” as an attorney accuses someone in court.


Revelation 12:10, “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.’”

Zechariah 3:1-2, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’”

He is called the devil and Satan because he was the defense attorney who represented himself and the fallen angels at the prehistoric trial and because he continues to act as an attorney now that the trial has entered its appeal phase during human history (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-5; Zech. 3:1-2).

Isaiah 14:12, “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!”

“Star of the morning, son of the dawn” (English transliteration from the Hebrew: Helel Ben-Shachar). This title speaks of Satan's role in reflecting the glory of God (cf. Job 38:7, where all the elect angels are described as “stars of the morning”).

“Star of the morning” (helel) literally means, “shining one” is translated in the LXX as “light bearer” and by the Latin Vulgate as “Lucifer.”

“Son of the dawn” (Ben-Shachar) is an apt rendering of this title, for it denotes a heavenly body so brilliant that it can be seen even in daylight.

As the prime creature of the original Eden, a place without darkness (for darkness did not exist before Satan's fall), Satan was the foremost representative of
God's splendor, reflecting, for all angelic kind to behold, the brilliant glory of their Creator. It is a tragic irony that through his own choice he has now become the ruler of the domain of darkness (Eph.6:12; Col.1:13).

Far from reflecting God's glory, he now opposes it in every way, but his ultimate destiny is to have his light extinguished forever (Jude 6, 13). In contrast to Satan, our Lord Jesus Christ, the new Morning Star (2 Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16; cf. Num.24:17; Is.9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6; Matt.2:2; 2:9; 4:16; Lk.2:30-32; Jn.1:4-5; 8:12; 9:5), is the perfect reflection of the Father's glory (Heb.1:3).

**Isaiah 14:13-17**, “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’”

So we can conclude from a study of Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 that Satan was the most talented, attractive and personable creature to come from the hand of God (Ezek. 28:12; 2 Cor. 11:14). His force of persuasion is as compelling today as when he convinced one third of all the angels to join his prehistoric revolution against God (Rev. 12:4a).

Satan's fall and his leadership of myriad angels in revolt started the prehistoric warfare called the angelic conflict which continues today and will be concluded only with the final judgment at the end of human history.

The base of operations and activities of the kingdom of darkness are located in the earth’s atmosphere. The cosmos, composed of the stellar universe (2nd heaven), the earth and its atmosphere (1st heaven) serve as the theater of military operations for the angelic conflict pitting the kingdom of God against the kingdom of Satan which are described in Scripture as light and darkness respectively. The fact that they reside in the earth’s atmosphere is implied by the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:6-8 where the second day of restoration is not identified by the Lord as tov, “perfect, good.”

A comparison of Scripture with this passage indicates that the reason why the Lord did not call it tov, “perfect” was because the kingdom of darkness, the fallen angels reside in the earth’s atmosphere.

**Genesis 1:1-8**, “In eternity past, God created out of nothing the heavens and the earth. However the earth became an empty desolation, and darkness was upon the surface of the raging ocean depths. Now, the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. And then, God commanded, ‘let there be light,’ and so, there was light.’ And then, God observed that in essence the
light was perfect, God then caused a division between the light and the darkness. And then, concerning the light, God designated the name day but concerning the darkness, He designated the name night and so it was evening and so it was morning, the first day. Next, God commanded, ‘let there be an atmosphere in the middle of the waters, and let it be a cause of division between waters from waters.’ Consequently, God having restored the atmosphere and thus having caused a division between the waters, which were below the atmosphere and the waters, which were above the atmosphere, thus it came to pass as previously described. And then, concerning the atmosphere, God designated the name ‘heavens,’ and so it was evening and so it was morning, the second day.”

In Genesis 1:3-5, Moses under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit records for us the 1st day of restoration where the Spirit under the direction of the pre-incarnate Christ restored light to planet earth. Upon the restoration of light, the Lord pronounced it tov, “good.” But He does not say this after the second day of restoration, which is recorded in Genesis 1:6-8. The reason for this omission is that Satan and the fallen angels inhabit the earth’s atmosphere.

Ephesians 2:1-2, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

So the base of operations of the fallen angels and their activities take place in the earth’s atmosphere. The believer is living in enemy territory, which is the cosmic system of Satan. Satan runs this world and deceives it.

1 John 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

The principle stratagem of the devil is lies and deception. Satan deceives and is the father of lies.

John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Satan employed the strategy of deception against the woman in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1-19, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’? The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’ The serpent said to the
woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’ The LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.’ To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.’”

1 Timothy 2:9-15, “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved
through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

2 Corinthians 11:3, “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

The devil’s purpose for deceiving the human race is to divert worship from the Lord Jesus Christ and to himself. Thus, he promotes independence from God. Evil is independence from God and is the genius of Satan.

The system that Satan has designed to promote independence from God is religion. Theologically, religion is the antithesis to Biblical Christianity in that it is the ignorant, presumptuous, vain and arrogant attempt by man to gain the approbation and approval of God by depending upon a legalistic, meritorious system of human works rather than the impeccable Person and Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Biblical Christianity and religion are antithetical concepts since the latter is man’s presumptuous, ignorant and vain attempt to gain the approbation of God through a meritorious, legalistic system of man-made oral traditions.

Religion is seeking to worship God apart from the protocol set by the Lord in John 4:23-24. Those who seek to worship the Father must do so by means of the Spirit and Truth.

John 4:23-24, “But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers, will worship the Father spiritually, yes, by means of truth. In fact, the Father intensely desires such worshippers of Him. God, as to His nature, is spirit and those worshipping Him must worship spiritually, yes, by means of truth.”

Religion is the genius of Satan but on the other hand, Biblical Christianity is total dependence upon God. It is God providing man everything He needs to worship through the Person, Work and Life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Religion promotes creature credit whereas Biblical Christianity promotes Creator credit. It is through religion that Satan feeds the arrogance of man so that he remains alienated from God. Satan employs religion to appear as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:1-15, “I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this
beautifully. For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things. Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”

Satan promotes religion through his false prophets. The Lord warned His disciples of these false teachers.

Matthew 7:15-29, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell -- and great was its fall. When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were
amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”

Paul warned the pastors in Ephesus in his farewell address to beware of these false teachers that promote religion.

Acts 20:28-30, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

Paul warned the Galatians of these false teachers that teach a counterfeit gospel.

Galatians 1:8-9, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

Peter warned his readers of being deceived by false teachers.

2 Peter 2:1-3, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

The Holy Spirit working through the Word of God is the Divine Provision that God has given every believer without exception to protect them from the lies of false teachers who are energized and promoted by the kingdom of darkness. The sword that the Spirit employs in spiritual combat is the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:17, “And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The Holy Spirit is the resident teacher or mentor whom the Father has sent through the Son to indwell every New Testament believer as God’s special anointing to teach and make the truths of the Word understood and real to the heart or mind of believers (John. 14:16-20, 26; 15:26; 16:7-16; 1 Co. 2:10-16; 2 Co. 13:14; Ga. 5:5, 16-25; Eph. 3:16-19; 5:18; 1 Jo. 2:20-27).

In Ephesians 6:10-17, he addresses the issue of the Ephesian believer’s conduct in relationship to their invisible enemy, namely, Satan and the fallen angels. In Ephesians 6:10-17, the apostle Paul commands the Ephesian believers to put on the full armor of God and he describes it for them.

Ephesians 6:14-17 lists 5 items that compose “the full armor of God”: (1) Ephesians 6:14a: “Belt of truth.” (2) Ephesians 6:14b: “Breastplate, which is
(Christ’s) righteousness.” (3) Ephesians 6:15: “Combat boots, namely, the Gospel.” (4) Ephesians 6:16: “Shield, which is your faith.” (5) Ephesians 6:17a: “Your helmet, which is your salvation.”

Ephesians 6:10, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” (NASU)

“Be strong” is the verb endunamoo, which means, “to be empowered” and refers to the dynamic spiritual power that is available to every believer who is obedient to the Word of God, which is alive and powerful.

“In the Lord” contains a figure of speech called the metonymy of the cause where the cause is put for the effect meaning that we have the Person of the Lord put here for His doctrine or word.

The prepositional phrase “in the Lord” should be translated “by means of the (Word of) Lord” since the context is not emphasizing the “sphere” in which the believer is to be empowered but rather the “means by which” the Ephesian believers were to empower themselves against the enemy.

The application of the Word of the Lord is “the means” by which the believer is to empower himself in order to achieve victory in spiritual combat with his invisible enemy.

Hebrews 4:12, “The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart.”

God’s power to overcome Satan and his angels is available to all of us as believers in the form of the Word of God. The specific doctrine in the Word of God that we as Christian soldiers need to take possession of by faith is our union and identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session.

“Strength” is the noun kratos, which means, “manifested power” and refers to the inherent omnipotence of God that has been “manifested” through the resurrection and session of the unique theanthropic Person of the cosmos, the Lord Jesus Christ who achieved at the Cross of Calvary the decisive victory in the angelic conflict.

“Might” is the noun ischus refers to “the possession of power to overcome” and is used in the context of a military analogy and denotes “the possession of Christ’s power to overcome” in spiritual combat Satan and the kingdom of darkness.

In Ephesians 6:10 the noun ischus refers to the 100% availability of divine omnipotence that has been made available to every church age believer because of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ that provides them “the power to overcome” their invisible enemy, namely Satan and the kingdom of darkness.
Ephesians 6:11, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

Putting on the full armor of God refers to appropriating by faith your union with Christ, which is equivalent to putting on the nature of Christ. This is accomplished when we appropriate (meaning take possession of) by faith meaning we agree with what the Word of God says about us, namely, that we have been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ at the Father’s right hand, far above all angelic power and authority.

We are to appropriate for ourselves by faith in the Word of God, the victory that is ours through our identification and union with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and session. We fight “from” victory and not “for” victory!

Ephesians 6:11, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

“Schemes” is the noun methodeia refers Satan’s “strategies, schemes and tactics” that he employs to make war against believers and destroy them.

The principle stratagem of the devil is lies and deception (Gen. 3). Satan deceives and is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).

Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (NASU)

“Rulers” is the noun arche and refers to the highest rank of angels in the Satanic order of battle and hold positions of authority (“thrones”) in the Satanic kingdom and are subordinate to only Satan himself.

The Lord Jesus Christ created these “rulers” (Col. 1:16) and He has defeated them through His death (Col. 2:15).

“Powers” is the Greek noun exousia, which refers to the rank of fallen angels who have been given by Satan “dominions” and are subordinate only to the arche, “rulers” and Satan himself.

“World-forces” is the noun kosmokrator, “world-ruler” and expresses the power or authority, which the fallen angels exercise over the cosmic system.

These angels are subordinate directly to the exousia, “authorities” and carry out their orders and are more than likely they are behind the miracles and other satanic demonstrations of power (cf. Rev. 13:13).

“Spiritual forces” refers to the rank and file angels in Satan’s military.

These rank and file angels are also known in Scripture by a variety of names such as: (1) “Demons” (Lev. 17:7; Mt. 9:34). (2) “Evil spirits” (Lk. 7:21; Acts 19:13). (3) “Unclean spirits” (Mt. 10:1; Mk. 1:27). (4) “Devils” (Jn. 6:70).
“In the heavenly places” designates the “location” of the base of operations and activities of these rank and file angels.

Ephesians 6:13, “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

The evil day is not a particular point in history or judgment in history, nor is it referring to the Tribulation period. But rather from the divine perspective it is an extended period of time in human history, which began with the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden and extends to the Second Advent of Christ when Satan will be imprisoned for a thousand years.

Ephesians 5:15-16, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 6:14, “Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.” (NASU)

“Having girded” is the verb perizonnumi, which means, “to fasten a belt around yourself and buckle it.”

“Truth” is the noun aletheia, which is used in the objective sense for the Scriptures. Obeying the Word of truth is analogous to the Roman soldier fastening his belt around himself and which belt held the Roman’s soldiers armor together.

“Having put on the breastplate of righteousness” refers to appropriating by faith the imputed, positional righteousness you received at the moment of salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ is the believer’s righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).

Ephesians 6:15, “and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.” (NASU)

“Having shod” is the verb hupodesamenoi, which is used in the middle voice and in the figurative sense meaning, “to strap on your combat boots.”

“Preparation” is the noun hetoimasia, which refers to the fact that the Gospel of peace provides a “firm foundation” for the soul of the Christian soldier.

The noun eirene, “peace” is a genitive of product meaning peace for the believer is “produced” by the acceptance of the Gospel message to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation.

In Ephesians 6:15, the foundation in the soul that the Gospel of peace provides the Christian soldier is analogous to the combat boots worn by the Roman military in combat.

Ephesians 6:16, “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (NASU)

“The shield of faith” refers to a heavy shield approximately 30 inches wide and 48 inches high, large enough for a soldier to crouch behind it.
It is this large, protective door-shield that the apostle Paul had in mind when he told the Ephesian believers to take up for themselves the shield of faith, which would enable them to extinguish the fiery missiles of the kingdom of darkness.

When the apostle Paul used this door-shield as a figure of the shield provided by God for the soldier of Christ Jesus, he was emphasizing the fact that the believer has full and complete protection from the enemy.

“Faith” is the noun *pistis*, which is used in the active sense meaning “to trust, to have total and absolute confidence in God.” The shield of faith therefore, is “not” the objective body of truth, the content of the Christian faith meaning Christian doctrine, although that is the object of the believer’s faith after salvation, but rather it refers to the Christian soldier’s faith or total and absolute confidence in God’s faithfulness to His promises.

**Ephesians 6:17, “And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (NASU)**

When Paul speaks of salvation here in Ephesians 6:17, he is speaking of salvation in the sense of a 3-fold deliverance from the believer’s 3 great enemies, namely, sin nature, cosmic system of Satan and Satan himself (cf. Eph. 2:1-3).

Salvation, like sanctification is accomplished in 3 stages: (1) Positional: The moment you believed in Christ you were delivered “positionally” (meaning God’s work and viewpoint of you as a believer) from real spiritual death and eternal condemnation, the devil, his cosmic system and the sin nature through the death, resurrection and session of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) Experiential: After salvation, you are delivered from the devil, his cosmic system and the sin nature “experientially” by appropriating by faith your union and identification with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and session. (3) Ultimate: At the resurrection you will be delivered “ultimately” and permanently from the devil, his cosmic system and the sin nature when you receive your resurrection body at the rapture of the church, which is imminent.

If you notice, the armor is for the protection of the front of the individual and not the back and the reason for that is that God makes no provision for the believer in case of retreat!

As J. Vernon McGee used to say, “A retreating Christian is certainly open season for the enemy; the enemy can get through to him.”

God the Father has awarded the humanity of Christ in hypostatic the highest rank in the entire cosmos for His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross with power and authority over all creation and every creature.

**Philippians 2:5-11, “Everyone continue thinking this (according to humility) within yourselves, which was also in (the mind of) Christ Jesus, Who although existing from eternity past in the essence of God, He never regarded existing equally in essence with God an exploitable asset. On the contrary, He**
denied Himself of the independent function of His deity by having assumed the essence of a slave when He was born in the likeness of men. In fact, although He was discovered in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by having entered into obedience to the point of spiritual death even death on a Cross. For this very reason in fact God the Father has promoted Him to the highest-ranking position and has awarded to Him the rank, which is superior to every rank. In order that in the sphere of this rank possessed by Jesus every person must bow, celestials and terrestrials and sub-terrestrials. Also, every person must publicly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord for the glory of God the Father.”

Because the Lord Jesus Christ controls history as sovereign ruler of history, He has the authority to conduct the following judgments and evaluations in the future. The humanity of Christ in hypostatic union has been awarded the sovereign rulership over the entire cosmos for His voluntary substitutionary spiritual death on the cross and as a result has been awarded by God the Father the power and authority to preside over and conduct the following judgments: (1) Bema Seat Evaluation: Takes place at the Rapture of the Church and is the evaluation of the Church Age believer’s life after salvation (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:24). (2) Israel: Takes place at the 2nd Advent and is the removing unregenerate Israel from the earth leaving only regenerate Israel to enter into the Millennial reign of Christ (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:2-3, 5; Matt. 25:1-30). (3) Gentiles: Takes place at the Second Advent and is for the purpose of removing unregenerate, anti-Semitic Gentiles from the earth (Matt. 25:31-46). (4) Fallen Angels: Takes place at the end of the appeal trial of Satan which runs co-terminus with human history and is execution of Satan and the fallen angels sentence for the pre-historic rebellion against God (1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10). (5) Great White Throne: Takes place at the end of human history and is the judgment of all unregenerate humanity in human history for the rejection of Christ as Savior (Rev. 20:11-15).

The following groups of regenerate human beings throughout human history will be subjected to a eschatological compulsory evaluation that the victorious, resurrected incarnate Son of God as Sovereign Ruler of the entire cosmos will conduct: (1) OT saints in heaven who lived during the dispensation of the Gentiles (Adam to the Exodus). (2) OT saints in heaven that lived during the dispensation of Israel (Exodus to 1st Advent). (3) All Church Age believers (Day of Pentecost to the Rapture). (4) Regenerate Jews who will live during the Tribulation (Post-Rapture to the 2nd Advent). (5) Regenerate Gentiles who will live during the Tribulation (Post-Rapture to the 2nd Advent). (6) Regenerate Jews and Gentiles who will live during the Millennial reign of Christ (2nd Advent to Gog and Magog Rebellion).
The following groups of unregenerate human beings throughout human history will be subjected to a eschatological compulsory judgment that the resurrected incarnate Son of God as Sovereign Ruler of the entire cosmos will conduct: (1) Unbelievers who lived during the dispensation of the Gentiles (Adam to the Exodus). (2) Unbelievers who lived during the dispensation of the Jews (Exodus to the 1st Advent). (3) Unbelievers who lived during the Church Age (Day of Pentecost to Rapture). (4) Unbelievers who lived during the Tribulation (Post-Rapture to 2nd Advent). (5) Unbelievers who lived during the Millennium (2nd Advent to Gog Rebellion).

All fallen angels including Satan himself have already been subjected to a judgment before human history but the execution of that sentence has been delayed because the Supreme Court of Heaven granted Satan and the fallen angels an appeal trial, which runs co-terminus with human history. The elect angels do not come under judgment for the very same reason that regenerate human beings don’t come under judgment because they have exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Every regenerate human being in every dispensation of human history must at some point in the future submit to an evaluation of their lives after salvation which will be conducted by the resurrected and sovereign humanity of Christ in hypostatic union. Regenerate Israel who lived during the Age of Israel and Tribulation period will evaluated at the 2nd Advent (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:2-3, 5; Matt. 25:1-30). Regenerate Gentiles who lived during the Age of the Gentiles and Tribulation period will be evaluated at the 2nd Advent (Matt. 25:31-46). Church Age believers will be evaluated at the Bema Seat Evaluation of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:24). Regenerate Jews and Gentiles who lived during the Millennium will be subjected to a judgment at the conclusion of human history (Rev. 20:15).

Every unregenerate human being in every dispensation of human history must submit to a judgment, which will also be conducted by the resurrected and sovereign incarnate Son of God at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Every fallen angel has already been judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire by the Supreme Court of Heaven before human history.

The execution of that sentence will not be carried out until the conclusion of the appeal trial of Satan and the fallen angels (Rev. 20:10). The Scriptures teach that the execution of Satan’s sentence to the Lake of Fire will not be executed until the end of human history. He will though be imprisoned for a thousand years. Satan must be thrown into prison at the Second Advent of Christ according to Revelation 20:1-3 before the millennial reign begins (Rev. 20:1-3).
All unbelievers will be removed from planet earth at the Second Advent of Christ and will be throne into the Lake of Fire with the beast and the false prophet (Jews: Ezek. 20:33-38; Gentiles: Matt. 25:31-46).

These judgments are designed to produce perfect government and environment on planet earth. During the millennial reign of Christ religion will be abolished from the earth because Satan, who is the author of religion will be imprisoned. The fallen angels have all been removed from the earth and a new civilization will begin with believers only. Satan will be released from prison after the millennium and will immediately start a rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ. Theologians call this rebellion, the “Gog, Magog rebellion.” God puts down this rebellion decisively.

The appeal trial of Satan terminates after the Gog and Magog revolution (Rev. 20:7-9). The eternal state will take place after the execution of the sentence against Satan and the fallen angels when they are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). It will take place after the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-14).

In Romans 12:2, the noun *aion* functions as a dative of rule specifying the rule or conduct a person follows or the standard of conduct to which he or she conforms. The word denotes that Paul is prohibiting his readers from conforming their behavior “to the standards” of this present age in which the devil is the ruler of the earth.

The articular form of the noun emphasizes that this age is “well-known” to Paul’s readers since it is the age in which they are living in and they received instruction regarding its evil character.

The demonstrative pronoun *houtos* is “anaphoric” pointing to the articular form of the noun *aion*.

We will translate the expression *to aioni touto*, “in accordance with the standards of this age.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age…”

Therefore, up to this point in our study of Romans 12:2a, Paul is prohibiting his readers from conforming their behavior in accordance with the standards of this present age in which Satan is the ruler of the earth and his world system dominates and controls all of humanity.
Romans 12:2b-Paul Commands His Christian Readers To Permit Themselves To Be Transformed By Renovating Their Minds

As we noted in our study of Romans 12:1, the apostle Paul appealed to his Christian readers in Rome on the basis of the merciful acts of the Father on their behalf to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which is their reasonable service to the Father.

Next, in Romans 12:2, Paul issues a prohibition to his Christian readers in Rome to not be conformed to the cosmic system of Satan. In contrast to this prohibition he issues to his readers in Rome to permit themselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit by renovating their minds. Lastly, the purpose of this command he teaches is so that they could discern the will of God for their lives, which he describes as “good”, “extremely pleasing” to God and “perfect.”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“But” is the strong adversative conjunction alla (ἀλλὰ) (al-lah), which introduces a statement that stands in direct contrast with the idea of the Christian conforming his behavior in accordance with the standards of this present age in which Satan is the ruler of the earth and his world system dominates and controls all of humanity. This word presents a strong contrast between the previous prohibition to not conform one’s behavior to the standards of the present evil age with the command that follows to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. We will translate the word “on the contrary.”

“Be transformed” is the second person plural present passive imperative form of the verb metamorphoo (μεταμορφοῦο) (met-am-or-fo-o), which is a compound word composed of the preposition meta, “change” and the verb morphoo, “to give shape or form,” thus the word means “to change forms, to transform.”

If the word is used in the passive voice, it means “to be transformed, altered in appearance.” This includes external transformation. The idea of being changed from one form to another is popular in ancient Greek literature such as in Apuleius’ “Golden Ass” in which the unfortunate character is changed into an ass.

The Septuagint offers only one versional reading of the verb. Symmachus substitutes it in Psalm 34:1 for alloioo, “to make different, change” and is used of David changing his disposition and pretending he was insane. No versions used it in Exodus 34:29-35 of Moses’ face which changed while he spoke with the Lord on Sinai. However, Paul spoke of a relationship to that event in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

Metamorphoo appears only four times in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18). It is always used in the passive
voice. In Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2, the word is used of the transfiguration of Christ. In these verses, it speaks of Christ being changed outwardly in the sense that He momentarily stopped veiling His deity and revealed the outward expression of His deity. Then in 2 Corinthians 3:18, the verb is used of the believer being transformed by the Spirit and the Word into the image of Christ.

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following meanings, “to changed the external form, transfigure; middle, to change one’s form, be transfigured; to undergo a spiritual transformation” (Page 266).

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon lists the following, “to change into another form; to transfigure, transform” (Page 405).

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains: (1) to change the essential form or nature of something – ‘to become, to change, to be changed into, to be transformed’ (volume 2, page 155) (2) to take on a different physical form or appearance – ‘to change in appearance’ (volume 2, page 587).

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition: (1) to change in a manner visible to others, be transfigured (2) to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition, be changed, be transformed.

Commenting on the verb, Vine writes, “Metamorphoo, ‘to change into another form’ (meta, implying change, and morphe, ‘form’, is used in the passive voice (a) of Christ’s ‘transfiguration,’ Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke (in 9:29) avoids this term, which might have suggested to gentile readers the metamorphoses of heathen gods, and uses the phrase egeneto heteron, ‘was altered’, lit., ‘became (ginomai) different (heteros)’; (b) of believers, Rom 12:2, ‘be ye transformed,’ the obligation being to undergo a complete change which, under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct; morphe lays stress on the inward change, schema (see the preceding verb in that verse, suschematizo) lays stress on the outward; the present continuous tenses indicate a process; 2 Cor 3:18 describes believers as being ‘transformed (RV) into the same image’ (i.e., of Christ in all His moral excellencies), the change being effected by the Holy Spirit. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

In Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo is in the passive voice and means “to be transformed.” The word speaks of the process performed by the Holy Spirit in the believer who is obeying the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the Word of God and deals with conforming the believer into the image of Christ in an experiential sense. This process is also accompanied by prayer. It involves prayer when learning the Word of God and prayer when applying it. It speaks of the process of the Christian being transformed in an experiential sense into the image of Christ.
The verb speaks of the process of growing to spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ in an experiential sense. In other words, it refers to the process of the Christian acquiring more Christ-like character through obedience to the Spirit who speaks to the believer in the Word of God.

This verb is related to experiential sanctification and experiencing salvation, both of which of course are related to fellowship but speak of it from different perspectives. Experiencing sanctification is related to experiencing being set apart to serve the Father exclusively and experiencing salvation is related to experiencing deliverance from the sin nature, Satan and his cosmic system. It speaks of the believer living in a manner consistent with his new position in Christ and as a regenerated child and son of God.

This process of being transformed into the image of Christ through the Spirit begins inwardly in the soul and manifests itself in the believer’s words and actions. So this verb speaks of a change that begins from within the soul and expresses itself outwardly in one’s words and actions and one’s lifestyle. It refers to accomplishing in time the Father’s plan to conform the justified sinner into the image of Christ, which Paul speaks of Romans 8:29.

In Romans 8:29, Paul teaches that God the Father first foreknew the Christian and then predestinated the Christian to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ, thus indicating that predestination is based upon God’s foreknowledge.

Romans 8:28-29, “In fact, we know without a doubt that for the benefit of those who are characterized as divinely loving God the Father, He (the Spirit), as an eternal spiritual truth, always works each and every circumstance together for the good, for the benefit of those who are, as an eternal spiritual truth, the chosen ones, in accordance with His predetermined plan. That is, whom He knew in advance, He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son in order that He Himself would, as an eternal spiritual truth, be the firstborn among many spiritual brothers.”

“To become conformed to” is the accusative masculine plural form of the adjective summorphos (σύμμορφος) (soom-mor-fos), which is a compound adjective composed of the preposition *sun*, “with, together with” and the noun *morphe*, “essence, nature,” thus the word literally means, “having the same essence as something.”

In Romans 8:29, the adjective summorphos refers to the Christian being “conformed” into the image of Christ, both inwardly (perfect Christ-like character) and outwardly (Christ’s resurrection body).

“The likeness” is the articular genitive feminine singular form of the noun eikon (εἰκόν) (i-kone), which refers to the Christian’s “likeness” to Christ “bodily” as well as “spiritually.”
Therefore, Paul is teaching us in Romans 8:29 that the Father’s predetermined plan for us as Christians to be conformed to the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. This work of conforming the Christian into the image of Christ began the moment the Christian expressed faith alone in Christ alone. It continues after salvation in the believer who obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God and it will be completed at the resurrection of the church.

The Father’s purpose for extending us grace, for crucifying us with Christ and burying us with Him as well as raising and seating us with Christ at His right hand is so that we might become conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. The sole objective of God the Father saving us, justifying, sanctifying and glorifying us through His Son Jesus Christ is so that we might become like His Son Jesus Christ and by doing so bring many sons to glory. His purpose for giving us a new nature, the nature of Christ, the mind of Christ and the Spirit of Christ is so that we might become like His Son Jesus Christ.

In Philippians 3:21, the adjective *summorphos* is used in relation to ultimate sanctification or in other words, the believer in a resurrection body.

**Philippians 3:20-21**, “For our citizenship exists from eternity past in the realm of the heavens, out from which also we ourselves at the present time are eagerly anticipating as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who will cause our humiliating body to be outwardly transformed to be identical in essence with His glorious body because of the power that will enable Him to marshal all things created to Himself.”

In this passage, the compound adjective *summorphos* is employed in an eschatological sense referring to the rapture when the believer will receive a resurrection body that will have the same identical essence as the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we have noted this compound adjective is composed of the preposition *sun*, “with, together with,” and the noun *morphe*, “essence.” Literally it means “having the same essence of nature,” or “identical in essence or nature.”

The believer’s resurrection body will not only look like the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus Christ but it will be in essence, identical to His, composed of flesh, bone and spirit and no blood because it will be minus the old sin nature. It will be composed of the same molecular structure and will function in the same manner as the resurrection body of Christ, which He first modeled after His resurrection.

In Romans 8:29, the adjective *summorphos* is not only used in relation to the Christian’s body being “conformed” to Christ’s resurrection body but it also is used in relation to the Christian’s character being conformed to Christ’s character.

In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* refers to the process of the Spirit reproducing the character of Christ in the believer who obeys the Father’s will,
which is revealed by the Spirit in the Word of God. This verb is related to the believer’s sanctification.

“Sanctification” is a technical theological term for the believer who has been set apart through the baptism of the Spirit at the moment of salvation in order to serve God exclusively and is accomplished in three stages: (1) Positional (2) Experiential (3) Ultimate.

The “baptism of the Spirit” takes place exclusively during the dispensation of the church age and is accomplished at the moment of salvation when the omnipotence of the Spirit places the believer in a eternal union with Christ, thus identifying the believer positionally with Christ in His death, resurrection and session.

1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

“Baptized” is the verb *baptizo* (βαπτίζω), “to cause the believer to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the moment of salvation, the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit causes the believer to become identical and united with the Lord Jesus Christ and also ascribes to the believer the qualities and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All three stages of sanctification refer to the process of conforming the believer into the image of Jesus Christ, which is the Father’s plan from eternity past. Sanctification is designed to conform justified sinners into the image of Christ. Not only with regards to Christ’s resurrection body will the Christian be conformed to but also the Christian’s character will be conformed to Christ’s.

“Positional sanctification” is the believer’s “entrance” into the plan of God for the church age resulting in eternal security as well as two categories of positional truth (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Thess. 5:23; Eph. 5:26-27; Heb. 2:11; 10:10; Acts 20:32; 26:18; Rom. 6:3, 8; 2 Thess. 2:13).

“Retroactive” positional truth is the church age believer’s identification with Christ in His death and burial (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:12).

“Current” positional truth is the church age believer’s identification with Christ in His resurrection, ascension and session (See Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 3:1-4).

Romans 6:3-5, “Or, are some of you in a state of ignorance concerning the fact that all of us who have been identified with Christ, who is Jesus, have been identified with His spiritual death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism with respect to His physical death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead ones through the glory of the Father, in the same way, we, ourselves will also walk in the realm of an extraordinary life. Therefore, if and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that we are entered into union with Him, conformed to His physical death. Of course,
we believe this is true. Then, certainly, we will also be united with Him, conformed to His resurrection.”

“Positional sanctification”: (1) What God has done for the church age believer. (2) His viewpoint of the church age believer. (3) Sets up the potential to experience sanctification in time. (4) Provides the believer with the guarantee of receiving a resurrection body.

“Experiential sanctification” is the function of the church age believer’s spiritual life in time through obedience to the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit through the communication of the Word of God (John 17:17; Rom. 6:19, 22; 2 Tim. 2:21; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 Thess. 4:3-4, 7; 1 Tim. 2:15).

“Experiential sanctification” is the post-salvation experience of the church age believer who is in fellowship with God by confessing any known sin to the Father when necessary followed by obedience to the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit through the Word of God.

1 John 1:9, “If any of us does at any time confess our sins, then, He (God the Father) is faithful and just with the result that He forgives us our sins and purifies us from each and every wrongdoing.”

1 John 2:5, “But, whoever, at any time does observe conscientiously His Word, indeed, in this one, the love for the one and only God is accomplished. By means of this we can confirm that we are at this particular moment in fellowship with Him.”

Sanctification is experienced by the believer who submits to the desires of the Spirit, which constitutes being filled with the Spirit, which is commanded of the Christian in Ephesians 5:18.

Romans 8:5-6, “For you see those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with the things produced by the flesh. However, those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit. In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

Ephesians 5:18: “And do not permit yourselves to get into the habit of being drunk with wine because that is non-sensical behavior, but rather permit yourselves on a habitual basis to be influenced by means of the Spirit.”

This obedience also constitutes obeying the command to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in your soul.

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
This obedience enables the Spirit to reproduce the character of Christ in the believer.

**Galatians 5:22-23**, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Experiencing sanctification is the direct result of obeying the command of Romans 6:11 to consider oneself dead to the sin nature and alive to God.

**Romans 6:11**, “In the same way, also, on the one hand, all of you without exception make it your habit to regard yourselves as dead ones with respect to the sin nature while on the other hand those who are, as an eternal spiritual truth, alive with respect to God the Father, in union with Christ, who is Jesus.”

The believer experiences sanctification by obeying the teaching of the Word of God, which states that the believer has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ and which teaching is inspired by the Holy Spirit (See Romans 6).

“Experiential sanctification” is experiencing the holiness or in other words manifesting the character of God through one’s thoughts, words and actions.

**1 Peter 1:14-16**, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.’”

Experiential sanctification is only a potential since it is contingent upon the church age believer responding to what God has done for him at the moment of salvation. Therefore, only believers who are obedient to the Word of God will experience sanctification in time.

In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* refers to experiential sanctification.

“Ultimate sanctification” is the perfection of the church age believer’s spiritual life at the Rapture, i.e. resurrection of the church, which is the completion of the plan of God for the church age believer (1 Cor. 15:53-54; Gal. 6:8; 1 Pet. 5:10; John 6:40). It is the guarantee of a resurrection body and will be experienced by every believer regardless of their response in time to what God has done for them at salvation.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**, “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

“Ultimate sanctification” is experiencing the holiness of God perpetually in a resurrection body.
The Lord Jesus Christ is the believer’s sanctification since the Christian’s sanctification is based upon the Person of Christ and His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session and it is designed to conformed them into the image of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

In Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo is also related to the believer experiencing his salvation. The Christian’s salvation, i.e. his deliverance from the sin nature is also accomplished in three stages.

(1) Positional: At the moment the believer exercised faith alone in Christ alone, he was delivered “positionally” from the sin nature through the crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 19:9; John 4:22; Acts 4:12; 13:26, 47; 16:17; Rom. 1:16; 10:1, 10; 11:11; 2 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 1:13; Philp. 1:28; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 6:9; 1 Pet. 1:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3; Rev. 7:10).

By “positionally,” I mean that God views the believer as crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ, which was accomplished at the moment of salvation through the Baptism of the Spirit when the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit placed the believer in an eternal union with Christ. In other words, the “positional” aspect of the believer’s salvation refers to the past action of God saving us from sin when we trusted in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

The believer’s deliverance positionally sets up the “potential” for him to experience this deliverance in time since this deliverance can only be experienced after salvation through obedience to the teaching of the Word of God. It also guarantees the believer’s ultimate deliverance at the rapture, which is based upon the sovereign decision of God rather than the volition of the believer.

(2) Experiential: After salvation, the believer can “experience” deliverance from the sin nature by appropriating by faith the teaching of the Word of God that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ. This constitutes the believer’s spiritual life after being delivered from real spiritual death (2 Cor. 1:6; 7:10; Romans 6:11-23; 8:1-17; Philp. 2:12; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5-17; 2 Tim. 2:10; 3:15; Heb. 2:3, 10; 1 Pet. 2:2). In other words, the “experiential” aspect of salvation is used of the believer’s deliverance from sin in the present moment.

1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
(3) Ultimate: At the resurrection the believer will be delivered “ultimately” and permanently from the sin nature when he receives his resurrection body at the rapture of the church, which is imminent (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:5). In other words, the “ultimate” aspect of salvation is used of the believer’s future deliverance from sin.

2 Timothy 4:18, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

In Hebrews 9:24-28, all three stages of the believer’s salvation are referred to.

Hebrews 9:24-28, “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (experiential aspect of the believer’s salvation); nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (This makes possible the “positional” aspect of salvation) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (This refers to the “future” deliverance of the believer at the rapture)”

Warren Wiersbe commenting on Hebrews 9:24-28, writes, “Did you notice that the word ‘appear’ is used three times in Hebrews 9:24–28? These three uses give us a summary of our Lord’s work. He has appeared to put away sin by dying on the cross (Heb. 9:26). He is appearing now in heaven for us (Heb. 9:24). One day, He shall appear to take Christians home (Heb. 9:28). These ‘three tenses of salvation’ are all based on His finished work.” (Wiersbe, W. W. The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books)

Just as in the believer’s sanctification, his deliverance positionally sets up the “potential” for him to experience this deliverance in time since this deliverance can only be experienced after salvation through obedience to the teaching of the Word of God through the enabling power of the Spirit. It also guarantees the believer’s ultimate deliverance at the rapture, which is based upon the sovereign decision of God rather than the volition of the believer.

The believer can experience his sanctification and salvation, i.e., the victory over and deliverance from sin, Satan and his cosmic system through the omnipotence of the Spirit by appropriating when he appropriates by faith the teaching of the Word of God that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ (Romans 6:11-23; 8:1-17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5-17).
In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* involves the believer appropriating by faith the teaching of the Word of God that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ.

In Romans 8:28, the adjective *agathos*, “the good” meant, “divine good of intrinsic quality and character” and referred to conforming the Christian into the image of Jesus Christ with respect to our Lord’s character.

Romans 8:28, “In fact, we know without a doubt that for the benefit of those who are characterized as divinely loving God the Father, He (the Spirit), as an eternal spiritual truth, always works each and every circumstance together for the good, for the benefit of those who are, as an eternal spiritual truth, the chosen ones, in accordance with His predetermined plan.”

Paul used *agathos* in the same way in Philippians 1:6.

Philippians 1:6, “I am confident of this very same thing, namely that, the One (God the Holy Spirit) who began in all of you a good work that is divine in quality and character, will bring it to completion up to the day of Christ who is Jesus.”

In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* is directly related to *agathos* in Romans 8:28 and Philippians 1:6 since it refers to the process of the Spirit reproducing the character of Christ in the believer in an experiential sense, which is denoted by *agathos*.

In Romans 8:29, the adjective *summorphos* describes the act of accomplishing this divine good of intrinsic quality and character or in other words, conforming the Christian into the image of Christ both inwardly and outwardly.

In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* refers to the process performed by the Spirit in the believer who obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit in the Word of God. It speaks of the process of producing in the believer this divine good of intrinsic quality and character or in other words, transforming the Christian into the image of Christ both inwardly and outwardly. This work of conforming the Christian into the image of Christ began the moment the Christian expressed faith alone in Christ alone. It continues after salvation in the believer who obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God and it will be completed at the resurrection of the church.

The Father’s purpose for extending us grace, for crucifying us with Christ and burying us with Him as well as raising and seating us with Christ at His right hand is so that we might become conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. The sole objective of God the Father saving us, justifying, sanctifying and glorifying us through His Son Jesus Christ is so that we might become like His Son Jesus Christ and by doing so bring many sons to glory. His purpose for giving us a new nature, the nature of Christ, the mind of Christ and the Spirit of Christ is so that we might become like His Son Jesus Christ.
Paul prayed for the Philippian believers that the love for God and each other and all men would grow in order that the Holy Spirit might reproduce the character of Christ in their lives, which the verb *metamorphoo* in Romans 12:2 speaks of.

**Philippians 1:9-11,** “Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge so that all of you might continue to choose the essentials in order that all of you might be sincere and without offense for the day of Christ by all of you being filled with the fruit produced by righteousness, which is by means of the nature of Jesus who is the Christ for the ultimate purpose of glorifying and praising God.”

God wants us to live like Christ since it is His sovereign will from eternity past that we be conformed to the image of His Son. God wants us to live like Christ so that the character of His Son might be formed in us.

**Galatians 4:19,** “My children, with whom I am again in labor until the character of Christ is formed in you.”

It was Paul’s desire that he live like Christ in order to become like Christ as well.

**Philippians 1:21,** “As far as I am concerned, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

The apostle Paul commanded the Corinthian believers to be imitators of Christ just as he was an imitator of Christ.

**1 Corinthians 11:1,** “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

We are to apply the Word of God in our lives so that we might demonstrate ourselves to be students of the Holy Spirit and children of God.

**Philippians 2:12-16,** “Therefore, my beloved in the same manner that all of you have consistently obeyed, not only when in my presence, but now, much more in my absence, you yourselves keep on executing your own spiritual life by means of respect (for God) and with trembling. Because God (the Holy Spirit) is the One producing in all of you not only the determination but also the (resultant) production for the attainment of the grace purpose (of God the Father in eternity past). Keep on performing all activities without murmurs resulting from doubts so that you might demonstrate yourselves to be uncensurable and uncontaminated, students of God (the Holy Spirit), virtuous in the midst of a corrupt and depraved generation. Among whom you yourselves keep on appearing as luminaries in the cosmos by all of you continuing to exhibit the Word of life as a boast for me on the day of Christ because I have not run in vain, nor have I worked diligently in vain.”

First and foremost, the Word or teaching of Christ and in particular the teaching to love one another must become our thinking if we are to live like Christ since the manner in which we live is based upon the how we think.
Colossians 3:16-17, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

Letting the Word of Christ is essential in the Christian being transformed in an experiential sense into the image of Christ since Paul says that this transformation is by renewing the mind, which is accomplished by obeying this command in Colossians 3:16.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that in order to become like Him we must deny self and take up our cross daily. To deny self means to reject your will and desires even if they are legitimate in order to be obedient to the Father’s will for your life and to take up one’s cross is being willing to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death resulting in undeserved suffering for blessing.

Matthew 16:24-25, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’”

Mark 8:34-35, “And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.’”

Luke 9:23-25, “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?’”

Luke 17:33, “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses {his life} will preserve it.”

Luke 22:42, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

The believer can only interpret his cross by our Lord’s cross. The Lord Jesus Christ denied what He wanted, which is to continue to experience fellowship with the Father and chose the Father’s will.

The Father’s will for His Son was to voluntarily receive the judgment for our sins by being separated from the Father during the last three hours on the cross in order that the human race might never be separated from God.

Philippians 2:5-8, “Everyone continue thinking this (according to humility) within yourselves, which was also in (the mind of) Christ Jesus, Who although existing from eternity past in the essence of God, He never regarded existing
equally in essence with God an exploitable asset. On the contrary, He denied Himself of the independent function of His deity by having assumed the essence of a slave when He was born in the likeness of men. In fact, although He was discovered in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by having entered into obedience to the point of spiritual death even death on a Cross.”

Motivation to deny self and take up our cross daily and to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ and to love others as He has loved us comes from our love for Him and our love for Him is the response in our souls to His love for us as manifested at the Cross.

1 John 4:19, “We love, because He first loved us.”

In order to become like Christ, we must apply the word of cross in our lives, which states that the believer has been crucified, died and buried with Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being delivered it is the power of God.”

Paul denied self and took up his cross daily meaning he rejected his will for the will of the Father and experienced identification with the Lord in His death, which resulted in the life of Christ being manifested in his life.

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

It is only when we die to self meaning we surrender our will in order to do the will of God, that we produce fruit in our lives for God and bearing fruit is the production of Christ-like character by the Holy Spirit in the believer who is obedient to the Word of God.

John 12:20-26, “Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.’”

In Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo is directly related to the believer denying self and taking up his cross daily. It is related to dying to self.

In order to become like Christ, we must experience and endure with joy undeserved suffering, which is designed to test our obedience to the Father and manifest the life and power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. This too is related
to the verb *metamorphoo* in Romans 12:2 since the process of transforming the Christian experientially into the image of Christ involves experiencing underserved suffering.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

2 Corinthians 3:17-4:18, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace, which is spreading to more and more people, may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things,
which are not seen; for the things, which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

In order to live like Christ we must consider ourselves crucified and died with Christ but alive to God.

Romans 6:11, “In the same way, also, on the one hand, all of you without exception make it your habit to regard yourselves as dead ones with respect to the sin nature while on the other hand those who are, as an eternal spiritual truth, alive with respect to God the Father, in union with Christ, who is Jesus.”

In Romans 12:2, the verb *metamorphoo* involves the believer considering himself crucified and have died with Christ but alive to God.

In Philippians 3:1-14, Paul relates to the Philippians that the pursuit of Christ-likeness was his ambition in life and equates this pursuit as being like a foot-race to win a prize!

Philippians 3:1-14, “From now on, my brothers, all of you begin rejoicing and continue doing so because of the Lord: writing these same things for all of you is in fact never bothersome for me but safe for all of you. Beware of those dogs, beware of those evil workers, beware of the mutilation because we are the circumcision those who are serving (God the Father) by means of the Spirit of God, who are priding themselves in the nature of Christ Jesus, who have no confidence in the flesh. Although I myself having confidence in the flesh, if anyone of the same race (i.e., Jewish) claims to have confidence in the flesh and some claim to have confidence in the flesh, I more. With respect to circumcision: eighth day, descended from the nation of Israel, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew speaking parents), legally: a Pharisee, zealously persecuting the church, self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably! Nevertheless, what pre-salvation distinctions were assets for me, these I have come to regard as a liability because of the Christ. Furthermore in fact, yes without a doubt, I continue to regard each today as a liability because of the incomparable knowledge pertaining to Christ Jesus, my Lord because of whom I have renounced all of them, even regarding all of them as piles of excrement in order that I might gain Christ-likeness. So that I might be identified with Him, not by possessing my own legalistic righteousness, but rather faithful Christ-likeness, the divine righteousness based upon doctrine that I come to know Him experientially and the power from His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings by my becoming like Him with respect to His death. If somehow (by becoming like Him with respect to His death), I may attain to the exit-resurrection, namely, the one out from the (spiritually) dead ones. (I am) not (saying) that I have already achieved this, or I have already
been brought to completion, but rather I am sprinting, if (by sprinting) I also may have captured the prize for which I also have been captured by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not evaluate myself to have captured the prize, but I am in fact continually concentrating on one thing, namely, by forgetting the past and by extending myself forward towards the future, bearing down upon the objective. I am sprinting towards the finish line for the prize, which is God the Father’s invitation to privilege residing in the Person of Christ Jesus.”

The “fruit of the Spirit,” “the fruit of the Light,” and the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” are the production of Christ-like character.

Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Ephesians 5:9, “(for the fruit of the Light {consists} in all goodness and righteousness and truth).”

Hebrews 12:11, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

In Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo is directly related to fruit bearing since it refers to this process. The Father is glorified when we develop more of the character of Christ in our lives.

John 15:8, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.”

Therefore, in Romans 8:29, the adjective summorphos refers to the Christian being “conformed” into the image of Christ, both inwardly (perfect Christ-like character) and outwardly (Christ’s resurrection body).

Also, in Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo refers to the process of the Christian being “transformed” by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ both inwardly and outwardly, acquiring more Christ-like character.

Therefore, in Romans 12:2, the verb metamorphoo means “to be transformed” and refers to the process performed by the Holy Spirit in the believer who is obeying the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the Word of God and deals with conforming the believer into the image of Christ in an experiential sense.

This transformation also involves prayer both in learning and applying the Word of God. It speaks of the process of the Christian being transformed in an experiential sense into the image of Christ.

The verb speaks of the process of growing to spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ in an experiential sense. In other words, it refers to the process of the Christian acquiring more Christ-like character through obedience to the Spirit who speaks to the believer in the Word of God.
This verb is related to experiential sanctification and experiencing salvation, both of which of course are related to fellowship but speak of it from different perspectives. It speaks of the believer living in a manner consistent with his new position in Christ and as a regenerated child and son of God.

This process of being transformed into the image of Christ through the Spirit begins inwardly in the soul and manifests itself in the believer’s words and actions. So this verb speaks of a change that begins from within the soul and expresses itself outwardly in one’s words and actions and one’s lifestyle. It refers to accomplishing in time the Father’s plan to conform the justified sinner into the image of Christ, which Paul speaks of Romans 8:29.

The present imperative of the verb metamorphoo in Romans 12:2 is used of a general precept for habits that should characterize one’s attitude and behavior. Therefore, it denotes that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ should characterize the believer’s attitude and behavior and lifestyle.

This is a “customary present imperative,” which is a character building command to the effect of “make this your habit.”

The passive voice is a “divine passive.” The passive voice means that the subject receives the action of the verb from either an expressed or unexpressed agency. The subject of this command is Paul’s Christian readers in Rome and the unexpressed agency is the Holy Spirit.

The passive voice of the verb metamorphoo is also a “permissive passive.” The passive voice means that the subject is being acted upon by either an expressed or unexpressed agency. The agency is the Holy Spirit who as we noted is unexpressed but is the obvious agent because Paul taught that the Holy Spirit effects the believer’s sanctification. The fact that this is a “permissive” passive implies consent on the part of the subject. Therefore, the permissive passive indicates that Paul’s Christian readers in Rome are to permit themselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, which is accomplished when the believer obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit through the communication of the Word of God.

The permissive passive voice of the verb metamorphoo emphasizes that Paul’s Christian readers in Rome must make a conscious choice to permit the Holy Spirit to reproduce the character of Christ in their lives by obeying His voice, which is heard through the teaching of the Word of God. Therefore, we will translate the verb metamorphoo, “Permit yourselves to be transformed.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed...”
Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“By the renewing of your mind” is composed of the articular dative feminine singular form of the noun anakainosis (ἀνακαίνωσις) (an-ak-ah-ee-no-sis), “by the renewing” and the articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun nous (νοῦς) (noose), “mind.”

The noun anakainosis is a compound word composed of the adverb ana, “back, again” and the kainoo, “to make new.” It only appears in Christian literature and only twice in the Greek New Testament, both in Paul writings (Romans 12:2; Titus 3:5).

The word’s cognate verb is anakainoo, “to renew” (2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10). Both the noun and the verb are derived from kainos, “new in nature, essence and character.”

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains defines the noun anakainosis, “to cause something to become new and different, with the implication of becoming superior – ‘renewal’ (volume 2, page 594).


Vine writes, “Anakainosis, ‘a renewal,’ is used in Rom 12:2, ‘the renewing (of your mind),’ i. e., the adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God, which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life; in Titus 3:5, where ‘the renewing of the Holy Spirit’ is not a fresh bestowment of the Spirit, but a revival of His power, developing the Christian life; this passage stresses the continual operation of the indwelling Spirit of God; the Romans passage stresses the willing response on the part of the believer. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon defines the word “a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better” (Page 38).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised defines the word “renovation, renewal” (Page 22).

In Romans 12:2, the noun anakainosis means “renovation” rather than “renewal” since the former means to make new whereas as the latter to restore a former state. This renovation of the believer’s mind is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when the believer prayerfully obeys His voice, which is heard through the Word of God. It involves not only learning and obeying the Word of God but also prayer since prayer must accompany learning the Word and applying it. It takes place when the believer experiences sanctification and salvation, which constitute two different perspectives of fellowship with God.
This renovation of the believer’s manner of thinking is accomplished when he prayerfully learns and obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit in the Word of God. This in turn results in the believer’s manner of thinking being changed, which in turn results in the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ or the manifestation of Christ-like character. This renovation involves learning and obeying the Word of God and prayer accompanies both learning and obeying.

This renovation is related to the command in Ephesians 5:18 to be filled with the Spirit and the command in Colossians 3:16 to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you.

In Romans 12:2, the articular construction of the *akaionosis* emphasizes that this renovation of the believer’s manner of thinking or attitude needs no further clarification because it is well-known to the reader. It is well-known to the reader because learning and obeying the Word of God while accompanied by prayer was essential to this transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ.

The noun functions as a dative instrumental of means indicating the means by which the action of the verb *metamorphoo* is accomplished. Therefore, it denotes that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ is accomplished “by means of” the renovation of the believer’s manner of thinking.

The noun *nous* refers to the believer’s particular manner or way of thinking, their attitude, practical reasoning or intellect. The context indicates that the article preceding the noun functions as a possessive pronoun and therefore should be translated “your.”

It functions as an “objective genitive” meaning that it functions semantically as the direct object of the verbal idea implicit in the noun *anakainosis*, “renovation.” This is indicated in that *anakainosis*, “renovation” can be converted into the verbal form “renovating” and the noun *nous*, “mind” into its direct object. Therefore, we will translate *anakainosis*, “by renovating.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind…”

Therefore, we can see from our study of the command in Romans 12:2 that stands in contrast to the prohibition in this passage that Paul wants his Christian readers in Rome to be transformed by renovating their minds. This transformation refers to the believer becoming more like Christ or acquiring more Christ-like character and is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the believer who obeys His voice, which is heard through the teaching of the Word of God. It is the reproduction of Christ-like character in the believer who is obedient to the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Spirit through the teaching of the Word of God.
This renovation of the believer’s manner of thinking is referred to in Romans 8:5-6 and is called submission to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4, “Therefore, there is now, as an eternal spiritual truth, never any condemnation, none whatsoever for the benefit of those in union with Christ who is Jesus. Because, the life-giving Spirit’s authoritative power, by means of (the death and resurrection of) Christ, who is Jesus, has set you free from the sin nature’s authoritative power as well as spiritual death’s. Because with reference to the Law’s inability in which it was always powerless through the flesh, God the Father accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. In fact, with regards to the sin nature, He (the Father) executed the sin nature by means of His (Son’s) human nature. In order that the Law’s righteous requirement would be fulfilled in us, those of us who are not, as an eternal spiritual truth, conducting our lives in submission to the flesh but rather in submission to the Spirit.”

“Righteous requirement” is the noun dikaioma (δικαιόμα) (dik-ah-yo-mah), which means, “righteous requirement” and refers to perfect obedience, which the Law requires (See Galatians 3:10-12).

“Who are not conducting our lives” is composed of the negative particle me (μή) (may), “not” and the verb peripateo (περιπατέω) (per-ee-pat-eh-o), “who are conducting our lives.”

The verb peripateo is used in a figurative sense for the believer’s conduct or the manner in which he or she lives their life. It is used in relation to both the sin nature and the Spirit in order to contrast the Christian conducting his life according to the sin nature with that of the Spirit.

The negative particle me is used to negate the idea of the verb peripateo and denies the idea that the righteous requirement of the Law is fulfilled in an experiential sense in those Christians who conduct their lives according to the sin nature.

“In submission to the flesh” is composed of the preposition kata (κατά) (kat-ah), “according to” and the noun sarx (σάρξ) (sarx), “the flesh.”

In Romans 8:4, the noun sarx refers to the sin nature from the perspective of its location in the Christian, which is how the word was used in Romans 6:19, 7:5, 18, 25 and 8:3.

“In submission to the Spirit” is composed of the preposition kata (κατά) (kat-ah), “according to” and the noun pneuma (πνεῦμα), “the Spirit.”

The noun pneuma refers to the Holy Spirit. The root meaning of kata is “down,” which in our present context suggests submission to authority. The preposition kata is employed with the accusative form of the noun sarx, “flesh” and the noun pneuma, “Spirit” denoting conformity or submission to a particular
authority. Therefore, Paul is saying with this preposition that the righteous requirement of the Law is being fulfilled experientially in those Christians who are not conducting their lives “in submission to” the sin nature but “in submission to” the Spirit.

Now, it is important to understand that it is possible for a Christian to have his life governed by his sin nature in an “experiential” sense. Evidence that a Christian’s life is being governed by the old sin nature in an experiential sense is that he is out of fellowship with God. He is grieving, quenching or lying to the Spirit, which is why there are commands in the Word of God prohibiting such sins.

Ephesians 4:30, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Do not quench the Spirit.”

Acts 5:3, “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?’”

The Christian who is not walking by the Spirit is not obeying the voice of the Spirit, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God.

Hebrew 3:7-11, “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS; S I SWEORE IN MY WRATH, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’”

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul lists the different manifestations of a Christian being governed by the old sin nature, which indicate he is not walking in submission to the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-21, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The unbeliever perpetually is governed by the Spirit whereas a Christian can immediately stop being governed by the sin nature by confessing his sins to the Father according to 1 John 1:9 and then maintaining that fellowship through obedience to the voice of the Spirit, which is heard in the Word of God.

1 John 1:9, “If any of us does confess our sins, then, He [God the Father] is faithful and just with the result that He forgives us our sins and He purifies us from each and every wrongdoing.”
2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

Ephesians 5:18, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

The only way an unbeliever can stop being governed by the sin nature is to accept by faith Jesus Christ as their Savior. Therefore, Paul is saying in Romans 8:4 to the Christians in Rome that the Father’s purpose for sacrificing His Son on the Cross was so that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled in Christians experientially. Specifically, it would be fulfilled in those Christians who are not conducting their lives in submission to the sin nature but rather in submission to the Spirit.

The Scriptures teach that the believer is to walk or live his life on earth by faith in the Word of God and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7, “for we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Just as the Christian received the Lord Jesus as his Savior by exercising faith in Him for eternal salvation, so after salvation he is to live by the same principle of faith (Compare Ephesians 2:8-9 with Colossians 2:5-7).

In the book of Ephesians, Paul discusses the believer’s conduct quite a bit (Ephesians 4:1-3; 17-5:2). Like, the apostle Paul, the apostle John also addresses the conduct of believers (1 John 1:5:2-2).

Conducting one’s life in submission to the Spirit not only demands the confession of sin when necessary to be restored to fellowship and maintaining that fellowship by bringing one’s thoughts into obedience to the Spirit but it also demands being sensitive to the voice of the Spirit.

How does one identify the voice of the Spirit? How can we be sure what we hear is from God? First, God would never tell you to get involved in any activity or relationship that is inconsistent with the teaching of His Word. Second, if it conflicts with human viewpoint, it is probably from God. Third, it would be against God’s divine character and nature to tell you to do anything that gratifies the old Adamic sin nature. Fourth, if it challenges your faith, it may be designed to build a stronger relationship with Him. Lastly, if it involves risk, God often times call us to be courageous.

Our fellowship with God is comprised of four-steps: (1) communication, which requires that we listen to God the Holy Spirit, (2) comprehension, which requires
that we understand what the Spirit communicates, (3) confidence, which requires that we trust in what the Spirit communicates, and (4) change, which requires that we be transformed by what the Spirit communicates.

Without this process of communication, there simply cannot be any real spiritual change in the life of man. As a result, God is deeply concerned with how well we listen, when we do listen.

**Romans 8:5**, “For you see those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with the things produced by the flesh. However, those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit.”

“For you see” is the “explanatory” use of the conjunction *gar* (γὰρ), which introduces a first in a series of statements contained in Romans 8:5-8 that “explain” the appositional clause at the end of Romans 8:4, “who do not conduct their lives in submission to the flesh but in submission to the Spirit.”

“Those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh” refers to those Christians who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the sin nature.

“Are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with” is the verb *phroneo* (φρονεω) (fron-eh-o), which means, “to be preoccupied with” the desires of the sin nature in the sense of concentrating and having one’s thought patterns focused upon the desires of the sin nature to the exclusion of the will of God or what God desires.

To be “preoccupied” means to be “completely engrossed in thought, absorbed.” In Romans 8:5, the verb *phroneo* is used in relation to both the sin nature and the Spirit. In relation to the sin nature, it means to be “preoccupied with” the desires of the sin nature to the exclusion of the will of God. In Romans 8:5, when used in relation to the Spirit, *phroneo* means to be “preoccupied with” the desires of the Spirit.

Paul used it in a similar fashion in Colossians 3:2 where he commanded the Colossian believers to be “preoccupied with” the things above and not on the things that are on the earth meaning be occupied with your position in Christ where you are seated at the right hand of God (cf. Colossians 3:1).

**Colossians 3:2**, “**Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**”

Therefore, in Romans 8:5, the verb *phroneo* means, “to be preoccupied with” and is used in relation to both the desires of the sin nature and the desires of the Spirit.

**Romans 8:5**, “For you see those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with
the things produced by the flesh. However, those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit.”

“The things” is the definite article ho (ὁ) (ho), which refers to the “desires” or in other words, the various lust patterns of the flesh, i.e. the indwelling Adamic sin nature. It refers not only to sexual lust but also power lust, approbation lust, social lust, monetary lust, materialism lust, inordinate ambition resulting in inordinate competition, revenge lust, criminal lust, chemical lust, crusader lust, and pleasure lust. At the heart of such lusts is the desire to live independently of the will of God.

Paul could have used the word epithumia as he did in Romans 1:24 and 6:12 to denote these various lust patterns or desires of the sin nature. Instead, he simply employs the substantive use of the definite article since he wants the reader to focus on the conflict that takes place in them between the sin nature and the Spirit rather these various lust patterns or desires.

Galatians 5:24, “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

1 Peter 2:11, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”

“Produced by the flesh” is the noun sarx (σάρξ) (sarx), which refers to the sin nature from the perspective of its location in the Christian.

The noun sarx functions as a “genitive of production” meaning that these “things,” i.e. “desires,” or “various lust patterns” are “produced” by the sin nature. So Paul is saying in Romans 8:5 that those Christians who are submitting to the sin nature are preoccupied with the desires “produced by” the sin nature and which wage war against the Christian’s soul and new nature.

Romans 8:5, “For you see those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with the things produced by the flesh. However, those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit.”

“Those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit” refers to those Christians who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the Spirit. A Christian who is living in submission to the Spirit is submitting to the desires of the Spirit and is appropriating by faith through the power of the Spirit the teaching in Romans 6 that he has been crucified with Christ, died with Christ and has been raised with Christ. A Christian who is preoccupied with his position in Christ will be preoccupied with the desires of the Spirit. Paul is teaching an absolute in Romans 8:5 in the sense that the Christian who is preoccupied with his position in Christ, will not sin but if he is preoccupied with the desires of the sin nature, he will sin.

Romans 8:5, “For you see those who at any time exist in the state of being in submission to the flesh are, as an eternal spiritual truth, preoccupied with
the things produced by the flesh. However, those in submission to the Spirit, the things produced by the Spirit.”

“The things produced by the Spirit” is the definite article ho (ὁ) (ho), which refers to the Spirit producing in the believer the desire to minister to the body of Christ, to experience fellowship, to learn and apply the Word of God, to pray, to worship God, to witness and grow to spiritual maturity and become like Christ. So Paul is saying in Romans 8:5 that those Christians who are submitting to the Spirit are preoccupied with the desires produced by the Spirit.

The Spirit desires that the Christian take part in ministering to the body of Christ, experience fellowship, learn and apply the Word of God, pray, worship God, witness and grow to spiritual maturity and become like Christ. The Holy Spirit “produces” these desires in the believer. Therefore, He “produces” in the believer the desire to minister to the body of Christ, to experience fellowship, to learn and apply the Word of God, to pray, to worship God, to witness and grow to spiritual maturity and become like Christ.

After the Christian has been declared justified through faith in Christ, the Spirit not only produces these desires in the Christian but He also empowers the Christian to fulfill these godly desires through various ministries on their behalf that are designed to conform him into the image of Christ.

Romans 8:6, “In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

“In fact” is the “emphatic” or “intensifying” use of the post-positive conjunction gar (γάρ), which introduces a statement that advances upon Paul’s statement in Romans 8:5 and intensifies it. In Romans 8:5, Paul teaches that those Christians who are in submission to the sin nature, occupy their minds with the desires of the sin nature whereas those who are in submission to the Spirit occupied their minds with desires of the Spirit.

Now, in Romans 8:6, Paul’s statement advances upon his statement in verse 5 and intensifies what it means to be in submission to the sin nature and what it means to be in submission to the Spirit as a Christian. In verse 5, he taught that the result of submitting to the sin nature is the occupation of one’s mind with the sinful desires produced by the sin nature whereas in contrast to this he teaches that the result of submitting to the Spirit is the occupation of one’s mind with the godly desires produced by the Spirit.

Now, in verse 6, he is going to advance upon this statement in verse 5 and intensify it in the sense that he is going to present the ultimate result of submitting to the sin nature in contrast with that of submitting to the Spirit.
Romans 8:6, “In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

“The mind-set” is the noun phronema (φρόνημα) (fron-ay-mah), refers to the Christian’s “mind-set” or “state of mind” or “mental attitude” and is used in relation to both the sin nature and the Spirit.

“Produced by the flesh” is the noun sarx (σάρξ) (sarx), which refers to the sin nature from the perspective of its location in the Christian.

The noun sarx functions as a “genitive of production” meaning that this “mind-set” or “state of mind” is “produced” by the sin nature. It is produced by the sin nature because Paul taught in Romans 8:5 that those Christians submitting to the sin nature are preoccupied in their thinking with the desires produced by the sin nature. Therefore, the mind-set “produced by” the sin nature is the direct result of the Christian being preoccupied with the desires produced by the sin nature, which culminates in a loss of fellowship with God.

Romans 8:6, “In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

“Temporal spiritual death” is the noun thanatos (θανάτος) (than-at-os), which refers to “temporal spiritual death” or in other words, “loss of fellowship” with God. As we noted in detail, Paul is speaking in the context of the Christian’s sanctification. Therefore, since “real spiritual death” is used exclusively for the unbeliever and “temporal spiritual death” is used exclusively of the Christian, the latter is being referred to here by Paul in Romans 8:6.

“Temporal spiritual death” or “loss of fellowship” with God takes place when the believer commits mental, verbal or overt acts of sin as a result of obeying the desires of the sin nature.

Romans 8:6, “In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

“However” is the “adversative” use of the conjunction de (δὲ) (deh), which introduces a statement that presents a contrast with Paul’s statement that the mind-set produced by the sin nature is as an eternal spiritual truth, temporal spiritual death.

“The mind-set” is the noun phronema (φρόνημα) (fron-ay-mah), which once again means, “mind set” but this time it is used in relation to the Spirit, which functions as a genitive of production indicating that this mind-set is “produced by” the Spirit.
“Produced by the Spirit” is the noun pneuma (πνεῦμα), which refers to the Holy Spirit. The noun pneuma functions as a “genitive of production” meaning that this “mind-set” or “state of mind” is “produced” by the Spirit. It is produced by the sin nature because Paul taught in Romans 8:5 that those Christians submitting to the Spirit are preoccupied in their thinking with the desires produced by the Spirit. Therefore, the mind-set “produced by” the Spirit is the direct result of the Christian being preoccupied with the desires produced by Spirit, which results in experiencing eternal life and the peace of God.

Romans 8:6, “In fact, the mind-set produced by the flesh is, as an eternal spiritual truth temporal spiritual death. However, the mind-set produced by the Spirit is, as an eternal spiritual truth life as well as peace.”

“Life” is the noun zoe (ζωή) (dzo-ay), which refers to experiencing eternal life when the believer possesses a mind-set produced by the Spirit that is the direct result of being preoccupied with the desires of the Spirit.

“Peace” is the noun eirene (ἐἰρήνη) (i-ray-nay), which refers to experiencing the permanent and eternal peace treaty that God established between Himself and the justified sinner through the death of His Son and became their personal possession forever, the moment they were declared justified by Him through faith in Christ.

Therefore, in Romans 8:6, the noun eirene refers to the peace of God that the believer can experience by having a mind-set produced by the Spirit as a result of being preoccupied with the desires produced by the Spirit. These desires would include fellowship, learning and applying the Word of God, executing the Father’s will, unity, serving, and praying. Therefore, we can see from Paul’s statements here in Romans 8:5-6 and that experiencing fellowship with God and losing that fellowship is based upon the believer’s mental attitude.

The believer whose mental attitude is produced by the sin nature as a result of being preoccupied with the desires produced by the sin nature will experience loss of fellowship with God. While on the other hand, the believer whose mental attitude is produced by the Spirit as a result of being preoccupied with the desires produced by the Spirit will experience eternal life and peace and thus fellowship with God.

The development of Christ-like character begins with the way we think, conforming our thoughts to the mind of Christ.

Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”

This renovation of the believer’s thought process is experiencing fellowship with God. This renovation of the believer’s thought process, which constitutes fellowship is maintained by bringing one’s thoughts into obedience to the teaching of Jesus Christ, which constitutes obeying the commands of Ephesians 5:18 to be
influenced by means of the Spirit and Colossians 3:16 to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in your soul.

The commands are synonymous, since each bears the same results: fellowship with the Father. They are also synonymous because they both produce the results. Also, they are synonymous with each other because the Spirit inspires the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20-21) and gives understanding to them (John 16:13-16).

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

Ephesians 5:18-21, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

The Christians cannot “walk” according to the Spirit if he is not “filled” with the Spirit. The filling has to do with the mental attitude of the believer whereas walking has to do with his conduct. This is indicated by meaning of the verb pleroo in Ephesians 5:18 translated “filling,” which we will note.

The believer cannot walk by the Spirit unless he is filled with the Spirit. They are two sides of the same coin. “Walking” according to the Spirit has to do with the believer’s conduct, i.e. his words and actions whereas the “filling” of the Spirit has to do with the believer’s mental attitude. Since one’s mental attitude will determine one’s words and actions, we can infer that the walking by the Spirit is contingent upon being filled with the Spirit.

“Filled” in Ephesians 5:18 is in the passive voice while “walk” in Galatians 5:16 is in the active voice. The idea of “filled” meaning “influence” and the passive voice suggest the concept of submission to the Spirit.

The believer is to volitionally continue to release control of his life to the Spirit. He is allowed to take control and make Christ at home in the believer’s life (Eph. 3:16-17). In the filling of the Spirit we give up the right to run our lives, thus we submit to His authority. The filling of the Spirit is very much parallel with Romans 6:12-13.
The active voice plus the basic meaning of the word “\textit{walk}” places stress on actively choosing to conduct oneself by trusting in the Spirit. Both, the filling and walking by the Spirit are two sides of the same coin, and each has a different focus. Bringing one’s thoughts into obedience to Christ is being “filled” or more accurately “influenced” by the Spirit whereas “walking” according to the Spirit is the conduct that flows from this influence. Therefore, obedience to the Word of God will result in both being filled with the Spirit and walking according to the Spirit since obedience is essential to both.

Therefore, after confessing our sins, we are to obey the Word of God and, in particular, we are commanded to bring our thoughts into obedience to Christ, which constitutes obeying the commands to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) and to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in our souls (Col 3:16). Both will result in us experiencing fellowship with God.

The commands, \textit{“be filled by means of the Spirit”} and \textit{“let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you.”} are synonymous because the Holy Spirit speaks to the believer through the communication of the Word of God regarding the Father’s character and nature, will, provision for doing His will, and consequences for not doing His will (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29).

\textbf{Ephesians 5:18, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”}

In Ephesians 5:18, the word “\textit{filled}” is the verb \textit{pleroo}, used in a figurative sense to mean, “being totally and completely influenced” by someone. The Scriptures make it very clear what it means to be out of fellowship. For instance, when sin in the life of a believer prevents him from having fellowship with the Spirit, the believer grieves the Spirit. When sin in the life of a believer hinders the Holy Spirit from performing His post-salvation ministries on behalf of the believer, the believer hinders the Spirit.

The apostle Paul who wrote the Ephesian epistle spends a large amount of time in Ephesus. Ephesus was 1 of the 7 churches of Asia mentioned by the apostle John in the book Acts. Not only did Paul spend a lot of time there but John did as well. Ephesus was the gateway to Asia. Asia is now what is known as Turkey. The city of Ephesus was located on the western part of Turkey. It was situated at the mouth of the Cayster River. It was the entrance for shipping from the West and the point of departure for the caravans between the Ionian coast and the East. The highway led from Ephesus across central Asia Minor through the Cilician Gates to Antioch, and from there across Syria to the Euphrates valley, Persian and India. It had a large harbor.

The city of Ephesus had been founded by colonists from Athens in the 11th century B.C. They displaced the original inhabitants and began a Greek civilization on the Ionian coast. The strategic location of the city favored its growth and it
became a military prize for both the naval states of Greece and those who dominated Asia Minor thereafter, the Lydians and the Persians. Alexander the Great received the homage of the Ephesian rulers in 334 B.C. In 188 B.C. the Romans took it from Antiochus the Great and then in turn gave it to the king of Pergamum. The Romans got it back again and incorporated it into the province of Asia.

Ephesus became the chief city of the province. It was home to one of the 7 wonders of the world…the Temple of Artemis or Diana of the Ephesians. There was a great marble street in Ephesus, the Arkadiane. There was also the Odieon Theater, which served the city as a council chamber. A great library was located in the city and of course the great agora or marketplace. Carved into the great sidewalk leading to the building on the marble street is the mark of a bare foot, the ancient sign of direction to a house of prostitution—a reminder that Ephesus was a port city with many visitors and sailors. There was a stadium constructed during the reign of Nero. South of the stadium was the theater, set in the side of a mountain which was the scene of a riot when the apostle Paul was accused of ruining the business of the silversmiths in Ephesus who made a substantial prophet in relation to the worship of Artemis in Acts 19:23-24.

The silversmith’s union in the city, which made quite a profit from making idols of the fertility goddess Artemis, were enraged at Paul and his teaching against worshipping idols. The business community did not like Christianity because it cut into their profits. But the riot was dispersed by the town clerk and he rebuked them for their conduct. Paul went to Macedonia but returned at a later date. Asia and in particular Ephesus was a fruitful field for evangelism. In 3 years the entire region of Asia Minor heard the Christian message. Churches were founded in almost every city and town…large and small.

The city of Ephesus was steeped in paganistic worship as noted by Doctor Luke in Acts 19. This pagan worship entailed alcohol and sex and Paul in Ephesians 5:18 alludes to their former pagan practice. He tells the Ephesians not to permit themselves to get involved with drunkenness, which was a part of their former pagan worship of the Greek Dionysus. In order to avoid this they are to permit themselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. So it is important to keep in mind the pagan background of the Ephesians when we view this passage.

Ephesians 5:18, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Ephesians 5:18 can be divided into two sections: (1) Negative: prohibition (2) Positive: command. Ephesians 5:18 begins with the connective use of the conjunction kai, “and.” Then we the negative particle me, “not,” and with this 2nd person plural present passive imperative form of the verb methuskomai, which is the passive form of methuo. It is related to methuo, “to drink to intoxication.”
Both the active and passive forms appear in classical and LXX Greek, but only the passive appears in the NT. The passive form appears in the writings of Herodotus and Xenophon. The passive form means “to get drunk, to become intoxicated.” It is an inceptive or ingressive verb marking the process of entering into the state of being drunk with wine or intoxication. The word only appears 3 times in the NT (Lk. 12:45; Eph. 5:18; 1 Th. 5:7). All three passages warn about the dangers of drunkenness.

There was a problem with drunkenness in the ancient world just as there is a problem with drunkenness today in the 21st century. There were actually believers that were getting drunk at the Lord’s Table!

1 Corinthians 11:20-21, “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” The Scriptures warn against drunkenness many times.

Proverbs 20:1, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:20-21, “Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, {or} with gluttonous eaters of meat; For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe {one} with rags.”

Proverbs 23:29-35, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. They struck me, {but} I did not become ill; they beat me, {but} I did not know {it.} When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.”

Romans 13:13, “Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.”

1 Corinthians 5:11, “But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.”

1 Peter 4:3-4, “For the time already past is sufficient {for} {you} to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In {all} this, they are surprised that you do not run with {them} into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign {you;}.”
Galatians 5:19-21, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The Christians of the early church lived in the Roman Empire and spoke Koine or the common Greek and were raised as pagans worshipping the Greek and Roman pantheon of gods. One of these gods was called Dionysus. He was also called Bacchus or in Rome, Liber. Dionysus was the god of fruitfulness and vegetation, especially known as a god of wine and ecstasy. The worship of Dionysus flourished long in Asia Minor.

As we have already noted Ephesus was located on the western coast of Asia Minor or what is now Turkey. The worship of Dionysus flourished particularly well in Phrygia and Lydia. The cult of Dionysus was closely associated with that of numerous Asiatic deities. The followers of Dionysus included spirits of fertility, such as the satyrs and in his ritual the male phallus was prominent.

As the god of the vine, Dionysus or Bacchus, he was thought to communicate his power to his devotees through the intoxicating influence of wine, stimulating them to orgiastic excesses, wild dancing and music, and sexual promiscuity. They worshipped booze and sex. The Ephesians were very much exposed to this cult and it was apart of their pagan background. The worship of booze and sex is still around here in the 21st century. It is a part of our hedonistic western culture.

So the apostle Paul by employing this verb methuskomai is addressing the area of weakness of their old sin natures. This verb in the passive voice means “to get drunk, or intoxicated with alcohol.”

Now, the present tense of this verb methuskomai is an iterative present and along with the negative particle me it is describing an action that is to repeatedly or consistently not to take place. It is often found with the imperative mood since an action is urged to be done.

The passive voice of this verb in Ephesians 5:18 is significant in that it is a rare permissive passive. The permissive passive implies consent, permission, or cause of the action of the verb on the part of the subject. It indicates that the Ephesians are not to permit or allow themselves to be involved in drunkenness or continuing their pagan practices of getting drunk. The permissive passive is rare and is usually found with imperatives. Here we have an imperative of command and with the present tense. The present imperative and the negative particle me denotes a prohibition that is to be continuously, repeatedly or consistently obeyed.

Then we have a dative of material, which is the masculine singular form of the noun oinos, “with wine.” The dative substantive denotes the material that is used
to accomplish the action of the verb of *methuskomai* or quite simply wine is what will get the Ephesian believers drunk.

So the corrected translation of Ephesians 5:18 thus far, reads as follows: **“And do not permit yourselves to get into the habit of being drunk with wine.”**

Next, we have the preposition *en* plus the instrumental of cause, which is singular relative pronoun *ho*. We can translate the prepositional phrase *en ho*, **“because that.”** The preposition *en* plus the instrumental of cause is used to indicate the basis for the Ephesian believers to obey the prohibition and not to get drunk.

This prepositional phrase is followed by third person singular present active indicative form of the verb *eimi*, which is *estin*, **“is.”** The word for **“dissipation”** is the nominative feminine singular noun *asotia*.

The noun *asotia* refers to behavior, which shows lack of concern or thought for the consequences of an action, thus it means senseless deeds. In some languages *asotia* in Ephesian 5:18 may be rendered as **“what one does without being able to think about it,”** or **“what one does when the mind is absent.”** We would say that it is **“non-sensical behavior.”** Or we could simply say **“a waste,”** or **“stupidity.”**

This is a gnomic present. The present tense may be used to make a statement of a general, timeless fact. Drunkenness is being in a state of non-thinking or non-sensical behavior. It does not say that something is happening, but that something does happen. It expresses a general timeless fact! This is a stative active voice indicating that the subject exists in a state of non-sensical behavior or stupidity. This is a declarative indicative indicating a dogmatic statement of fact.

So the first half of Ephesians 5:18 reads as follows: **“And do not permit yourselves to get into the habit of being drunk with wine because that is non-sensical behavior.”**

Then we have the strong adversative conjunction *alla*, **“but rather.”** Next, we have the verb *pleroo*, which is found in the second person plural present passive imperative form.

In Ephesians 5:18, the word has the following senses: (1) To fill up a deficiency. (2) To be fully possessed by something. (3) To be fully influenced by something. (4) To be filled by something. (5) To be controlled by something.

Once again we have the permissive passive voice. The permissive passive implies consent, permission, or cause of the action of the verb on the part of the subject. It indicates that the apostle Paul wants the Ephesians to permit themselves to be influenced by the Holy Spirit.

We have another imperative of command and with the present tense. The present imperative denotes that the command of the action is to be an ongoing process. This is an iterative present describing an action that is to repeatedly or continuously take place.
So in other words, the apostle Paul is commanding the Ephesians to repeatedly or on a habitual basis permit themselves to be influenced by God the Holy Spirit. The iterative present does not imply that we are to perpetually permit ourselves to be filled with the Spirit but rather we should repeatedly or on a habitual basis permit ourselves to be influenced, guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This implies that the believer will sin at times as noted in 1 John 1:8-10. So we should translate *pleroo*, “Permit yourselves on a habitual basis to be influenced.”

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines the word “influence”: (1) capacity or power of persons or things to produce effects on others by intangible or indirect means. (2) Action or process of producing effects on others by intangible or indirect means. (3) A person or thing that exerts influence. If we were to paraphrase Webster’s definition of the word, we would say that Paul wants the Ephesian believers to permit the omnipotence (intangible means) of the Holy Spirit (Person) to produce Christ-like character (effects) in them.

Then we have the preposition *en* plus the neuter singular instrumental form of the noun *pneuma*, which refers to the Holy Spirit. Now, if we look at the New American Standard translation it appears that Paul is talking about content rather than means as I have translated it.

So how do we understand the word *pleroo* with regard to *pneuma*, “Spirit.” Is the Holy Spirit the content with which one is filled, or the means by which one is filled? Some understand the Spirit as the content with which one is filled with water like a glass, but grammatically this is not the case. It is better to understand the Spirit as the means by which one is filled, not the content.

The Greek is an inflectional language that uses various cases that determine how a word is being used in a clause or sentence. And it is a rule of Greek grammar that a verb may be used with more than one case to distinguish certain ideas or to make ideas clear.

In the Greek text, “with the Spirit” represents the preposition *en* plus the noun *pneuma* in the instrumental dative case. If we were to interpret this construction as referring to the Spirit as the content with which one is filled would be grammatically suspect. Why? Normally a verb of filling takes a noun in the genitive case to express the idea of content and not the dative instrumental. We don’t have a genitive of content here but rather an instrumental case.

For example, the noun in the genitive case refers to material, the content of the filling, as when the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume when Mary anointed the feet of our Lord in John 12:3. With the accusative case the noun in the accusative refers to the thing filled as when grief fills the heart in John 16:6. But when the noun is in the instrumental case it refers to the agent or instrument that causes the filling. The instrumental case indicates the means by which the action of the verb is accomplished.
Therefore, the prepositional phrase *en pneumati* indicates that the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit is “the means by which” the church age believer is to continually allow himself to be fully influenced, possessed or controlled by the Spirit.

So the corrected translation of Ephesians 5:18 is as follows: “And do not permit yourselves to get into the habit of being drunk with wine because that is non-sensical behavior, but rather permit yourselves on a habitual basis to be influenced by means of the Spirit.”

The apostle Paul is using a contrast in Ephesians 5:18. He is contrasting the mental state of someone who is under the influence of alcohol and drunk with that of one who is under the influence of the Spirit. The issue crystal clear: to be drunk with wine means to be brought under the influence of wine.

Visible characteristics begin to take place as a person comes under the influence of alcohol. In contrast, to be filled with the Spirit is to be fully influenced by the Spirit so the Spirit-controlled believer does things that are unnatural for him under the influence of the Spirit even as the drunken individual does things that are unnatural for him under the influence of the spirits. The comparison is a matter of influence or control.

A drunken person is controlled by alcohol, which he has consumed. Because of this he thinks in ways normally unnatural to him. Or he conducts himself in ways that are opposite of his norms and standards. Likewise, the believer who is under the influence of the Spirit acts in ways that are unnatural to him. In other words, the believer under the influence of the Spirit is going to act in ways that are contrary to his old Adamic-life.

The issue is not getting the Spirit within you, but rather of allowing the indwelling Spirit to take charge and move into every area of your life. So to be fully influenced by means of the Spirit means that the believer must voluntarily surrender his old Adamic-life in exchange for the new Christ-life. The believer must make a conscious decision to confess any known sins to the Father and then immediately apply the Word of God to his thought process.

“Grieving” the Holy Spirit is a sin that is directed towards His Person and takes place in the life of the believer when his thoughts, words and actions are in accordance with the cosmic system of Satan and the old sin nature. It prevents the Christian from being filled with the Spirit and from walking according to the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:17-32, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the
practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have {something} to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such {a word} as is good for edification according to the need {of the moment} so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

It is clear from the context that the lust patterns of the old sin nature are offensive to the Holy Spirit. The fact that Paul employs the adjective hagios, “Holy,” clearly indicates that sin grieves the Spirit since His holiness or integrity is violated by sin.

Sin is violates the perfect integrity of the Spirit who is our true teacher and mentor. In both the preceding and following contexts, the apostle Paul is encouraging believers in Ephesus to put off the old sinful patterns and to replace them with patterns of righteousness. He wants them to put off the old pre-salvation Adamic nature and put on the new post-salvation Christ-nature. The new Christ-nature received at the moment of salvation produces the righteousness of God whereas the old Adamic-nature can only produce human self-righteousness. So it is clear that living in our old Adamic-natures offends the perfect integrity of the Spirit.

The phrase “do not grieve” is composed of two words in the original language: (1) Negative particle me (2) second person plural present active imperative form of the verb lupeo. The verb lupeo in classical and LXX usage was a general term for “sorrow,” encompassing various expressions of grief.

Lupeo means, “to cause pain, sorrow, grief, distress” to someone. It may refer to outward mourning or simply to sad feelings. It is commonly used to designate heaviness of heart. In the papyri its use ranges from grief over the loss of a loved one to sadness over the loss of a cloak.
The verb *lupeo* appears 26 times in the Greek New Testament. In the New Testament it is used for all its variations. It denotes deep sorrow such as in the case of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:37). It was used for the disciples' reaction to our Lord's death in Matthew 17:23 and John 16:20. Here it denotes sorrow over sin by the Holy Spirit.

We must note that you cannot literally grieve the Holy Spirit. This is what we call in theology an anthropopathism. The negative mandate here in Ephesians 4:30 and the one issued in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 to not quench the Spirit's power are Anthropopathisms. An anthropopathism is language of accommodation through which infinite God reveals Himself to the finite man.

Anthropopathism is derived from the Greek: (1) *Anthropos*, “man.” (2) *Pathos*, “an inner function of the soul with overt manifestations.” Anthropopathisms ascribe to God human characteristics, which He does not have, in order to explain God’s policy or viewpoint to us in terms of human attitudes. The Bible ascribes the following human emotions to God that He does not possess in order to convey His attitude towards man in terms that man can understand.

The following is a brief list of Anthropopathisms found in the Word of God. Examples of Anthropopathisms: (1) God hates (Rm. 9:13). (2) Harbors jealousy (Ex. 20:5a; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 6:15a). (3) Changes His mind (Gn. 6:6). (4) Vents violent anger (Jer. 4:8; 12:13; 25:37; 51:45; Ezek. 5:15). These qualities are incompatible with God’s essence, but such statements are descriptive and gain the attention of the reader.

In Ephesians 4:30 the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit employs an anthropopathism, ascribing the human emotion of grieving to the Holy Spirit, which He does not possess in order to communicate the Spirit’s attitude towards us when we live in our old sin natures. He is using language of accommodation to communicate the Spirit’s attitude toward us when we sin.

So here in Ephesians 4:30 Paul is issuing a prohibition to not grieve the Holy Spirit. This prohibition is expressed by the negative particle *me*, and the present imperative form of the verb *lupeo*, which together means “**do not grieve.**” The particle *me* negates the verb *lupeo*, thus making this a prohibition. So Paul employs the negative *me* here with the imperative mood of the verb *lupeo* in order to prohibit or forbid the Ephesian believers from grieving the Holy Spirit.

Here the context clearly indicates that the prohibition makes no comment as to whether the Ephesian believers were grieving the Holy Spirit or not but rather Paul is simply expressing his desire that they do not et into the habit of grieving the Holy Spirit, which is a result of conducting oneself according to the lust patterns of the old sin nature. There is no indication in the entire Ephesian epistle that the Ephesians were living in their old sin nature or committing this particular act of sin. There is no implication whatsoever.
By issuing this prohibition, Paul is performing preventative maintenance. He is warning them ahead of time not to conduct themselves according to their old sin nature, which results in grieving the Holy Spirit. Paul is not telling the Ephesian believers to cease from this act that they were in already in the process of committing, but rather it is a prohibition designed to let the Holy Spirit perform His function of forming Christ-like character in the Ephesian believers.

He is not implying that they were already involved in this sin of grieving the Holy Spirit but rather he is expressing a general precept. This is a customary present tense used to express habitual action. The customary present tense of this prohibition expresses the idea Paul does not want the Ephesian believers to get into the habit of grieving the Holy Spirit. It denotes a general precept in order that the Spirit can continue building Christ-like character building in the Ephesian believers.

The corrected translation of Ephesians 4:30 is as follows: “Do not make it a habit to grieve the Holy Spirit by means of whom all of you have been sealed for the day of redemption.”

Please note that I say that Paul does not want the Ephesian believers to get into the habit of sinning. No believer can stop sinning altogether. As long as we have an old sin nature and live in the devil’s world we will be tempted to sin and we will sin. The Bible states that we are deceiving ourselves if we say we can stop sinning altogether while we still have an old sin nature and live in the devil’s world.

“Grieving” the Holy Spirit deals with the issue of known sin. All sin is rebellion but the issue here in Ephesian 4:30 is known sin. Or sin that we harbor in our hearts and aware of, but don’t confess. We cannot confess or acknowledge to the Father a sin we are not cognizant of or aware of. Known sin in the life of a believer in an anthropopathic sense grieves, pains, or offends the heart of the Holy Spirit or it violates His holiness or integrity. The Spirit is holy and thus abhors sin.

You must understand that the Holy Spirit desires to guide us and empower to do the Father’s will. He longs to transform us into the character of Christ. When He cannot, He is grieved because He is offended by sin, particularly by the sins of self-reliance and rebellion, which hinder His purpose in indwelling us. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we are not applying the Word of God to our thought process. We grieve the Holy Spirit when are conduct…our words and actions are contrary to the Word of God. Grieving the Spirit is when the believer does not think, speak or act in accordance with the mandates found in the Word of God, which is the mind of Christ.

There are several things that cause the believer to grieve the Holy Spirit. The first of which is legalism, which is man operating in the energy of his own resources, namely, his soul and his flesh. Legalism is seeking to do good deeds or religious works and then thinking this somehow merits God’s favor or gains His
approbation. In legalism, man’s faith is in his own abilities. The second thing that grieves the Spirit is license, which is the believer’s abuse of his freedom in Christ for self-centered reasons in the pursuit of their liberty. In Galatians 5:1-15, Romans 14-14 and 1 Corinthians 8 call attention to this licentious lifestyle.

There are also three powers which are vying to control our souls: (1) Cosmic system (Rm. 12:2). (2) Flesh (Ga. 5:16-17). (3) Devil (Eph. 6:10-18).

There are also four problems which hinders the Spirit’s work in producing Christ-like character in the believer: (1) Ignorance of God’s Word (Rm. 6:1f). (2) Bias: preconceived ideas from one’s background that blocks out the truth of Scripture (Mk. 7:6-13). (3) Unbelief or an attitude of self-dependence (Jer. 17:5; cf. Gal. 3:3, 5; with 5:1-5). (4) Rationalization: rationalizing our sins rather than confessing them (Ps. 32:3-5; 51; 6, 10, 16).

The desire for position, approbation, possessions, wealth, power, and pleasure are all lust patterns, which grieve the Spirit. They are products of Satan’s cosmic system and the old sin nature. They are all lies that people believe. We cannot find true happiness, significance and security in life by seeking pleasure, power, praise, position and wealth. These things became an idol in our souls and hinder the Spirit’s work in our lives, which is to produce the character of Christ in our lives. There is a whole in each of our hearts that only God can fill. There are a number of negative results that take place when we grieve the Holy Spirit.

“Grieving” the Spirit results in loss of fellowship. When the Spirit is grieved our prayer life is hindered (Ps. 66:18). So also is our witnessing (Acts 1:8) and our Bible study (1 Co. 2:10-16; Eph. 3:16f). So in other words all the Spirit’s dynamic ministries are affected when we grieve the Spirit. We waste our spiritual, mental and physical resources when we grieve the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

Grieving the Spirit on a habitual basis affects our health, integrity, human relationships and society as a whole. A lifestyle of always grieving the Spirit will result in divine discipline and eventually dying discipline. It will result in the loss of testimony in the Lord, which dishonors the Lord (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15-17; 4:15-16). A lifestyle of grieving the Spirit results in the loss of rewards (1 Jn. 2:28-3:3; cf. 1 Co. 3:11-15; 2 Co. 5:10).

“Quenching” the Spirit is another sin committed by the believer that prevents him from being filled with the Spirit and walking according to the Spirit. In the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:19, the prohibition to not “quench” the Spirit is a part of a series of exhortations which concludes Paul’s message to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-9 Paul praises the Thessalonians for their spiritual walk and witness. But he also challenges them throughout the rest of the epistle to continue to live obediently, orderly and in harmony with one another and with those in leadership.
These praises and challenges are given in the light of the rapture, which is the imminent return of the Lord mentioned in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians. Paul does not employ the adjective ἅγιος, “Holy” in the prohibition of 1 Thessalonians 5:19 because he is not emphasizing the effect that sin has upon the Person of the Spirit and thus our fellowship with Him, but rather it emphasizes the negative impact that sin has upon His various post-salvation functions that He performs on behalf of the believer.

Grieving the Spirit emphasizes the negative impact sin has on our relationship with the Person of the Holy Spirit, namely, our fellowship with Him while quenching the Spirit emphasizes the negative impact it has upon the Spirit’s work in our lives, which is to manifest the character of Christ in our lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything {carefully;} hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Do not quench the Spirit.”

The phrase “do not quench” is composed of two words in the Greek: (1) Negative particle me. (2) Second person plural present active imperative form of the verb ἱερέω.

The verb ἱερέω has the following meanings in classical literature and the Septuagint: (1) Of fire: “to quench, to be extinguished, to go out.” (2) Of fluids: “to suck dry, to dry up.” (3) Of men, plants, and cities: “to die, perish.” (4) Of foods in cooking: “to steam.” (5) “To still, to damp down, to restrain, to rest, to lie down, to abate.” (6) Of emotions and moods: “to still, to calm.” (7) “To suppress, to restrain, to fade, to die out, to disappear” of the influence of personality.

The verb appears 8 times in the Greek New Testament where it is always used in relation to fire, either in a literal or metaphoric sense. Here in 1 Thessalonians
5:19 we have the metaphoric usage of the verb. The English translations use the word “quench” to translate the word. This is a poor choice. The English word “quench” has the connotation in our day and age that is related to thirst. We are not talking about quenching the Spirit’s thirst here.

The term *sbennumi* in the Greek New Testament is always used of extinguishing a light or fire. In using the word here in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Paul pictured the Spirit of God as fire. One of the figures that is used for the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures is fire. John the Baptist is reported as having explicitly linked the coming of the Spirit with fire.

Luke 3:16, “John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

The “tongues of fire” that rested over the heads of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost was sign of the Spirit’s presence in the church. The Baptism of the Spirit thus was linked with fire.

Acts 2:1-4, “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as if of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

In the Old Testament, fire was a symbol of the Lord’s presence and the instrument of His power, either in the way of approval or judgment. The Lord pre-incarnate Christ appeared in the burning bush to Moses in Exodus 3:2-5, which we call in theology, a theophany.

Exodus 3:2, “The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.” The Exodus generation was guided at night by a pillar of fire.

Exodus 14:24, “At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion.”

Fire was also equated with the Lord’s judgment.

Numbers 11:1-3, “Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD; and when the LORD heard {it}, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed {some} of the outskirts of the camp. The people therefore cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD and the fire died out. So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of the LORD burned among them.”
God is compared to fire not only because of His perfect integrity but also on account of His anger towards sin.

Hebrews 12:29, “for our God is a consuming fire.”

What does Fire produce? Light of course. Light enables us to see where we are going. In the same way that the pillar of fire provided light and guided the Exodus generation through the darkness of the desert so the Spirit provides light for the church age believer’s soul in order to guide him through the darkness of the cosmic system. When we sin, we are extinguishing the light that the Spirit provides in our soul when we are in fellowship.

1 John 1:5-2:2, “Now, this is the proclamation, which we have heard issue forth from Him and we are imparting at this particular time for the benefit of all of you, namely that God (the Father) is light. In fact, there is absolutely no darkness inherent in Him, none. If, any of us enters into making the claim that we have been experiencing fellowship with Him and yet we have been living in the darkness (of the cosmic system of Satan), then we do lie to ourselves and furthermore, we unequivocally do not obey the truth. On the other hand, if any of us does at any time live in the light (in the presence of the Father by living according to the standards of His holiness) just as He Himself is in essence that light (holy), then, we do experience fellowship with one another (with the Father) and furthermore, the blood of Jesus, His Son does cause us to be purified from each and every sin. If, any of us enters into making the claim that we have never possessed a sin nature, then, we do deceive ourselves and furthermore, the truth is unequivocally not in us. If any of us does at any time confess our sins, then, He (God the Father) is faithful and just with the result that He forgives us our sins and purifies us from each and every wrongdoing. If, any of us enters into making the claim that we have never sinned, then, we make Him out to be a liar and furthermore His Word is unequivocally not in us. My little children, I am providing information in writing at this particular time concerning these things for the benefit of all of you in order that all of you might not enter into committing an act of sin. Now, if anyone does enter into committing an act of sin, then we possess as an Advocate with the Father, Jesus who is the righteous Christ. Furthermore, He Himself is the propitiation with regards to our sins. In fact, He Himself is the propitiation not with regards to our sins only in contrast with the rest of unregenerate humanity, absolutely not, but also with regards to the entire world, without exception and without distinction.”

Job 29:3, “When His lamp shone upon my head by His light I walked through darkness (of the cosmic system).”

Psalm 27:1, “The Lord is my light and my salvation whom I will respect.”

1 Thessalonians 5:5, “In fact, all of you are sons of light and son of the day.
We are never of darkness or of night. So then we should never sleep as the rest but we should keep on being alert and keep on being sober-minded.”

Not only are we depriving ourselves the guidance and direction of the Spirit when we sin but we are also hindering the Spirit’s work of manifesting the light of Christ in our physical bodies while we live in the midst of the darkness of the cosmic system of Satan. The light of Christ is the Person of Christ or more accurately, the character of Christ. When we are out of fellowship, the light of Christ, which refers to the character of the Person of Christ, cannot be manifested in our physical bodies.

Remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said in John 8:12, “Therefore, Jesus addressed them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. The one who keeps on obeying me (as a lifestyle) shall no never walk in the darkness, but will possess the light of life.”

The Spirit’s job during the church age is always to manifest the light of Christ through the body of Christ. The responsibility of us as members of the body of Christ is to manifest the Person of Christ. The Spirit enables us to, but this is hindered and brought to a complete stop when we sin and are out of fellowship. Paul exhorts the Roman believers to put on the armor of light.

Romans 13:12, “The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

When we are filled or under the influence of the Spirit, we can discern the lies from the cosmic system of Satan.

Ephesians 5:13, “But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.”

So the church’s function as the body of Christ is to manifest the Person of Christ or in other words, the Light of Christ. This is why Paul desired that Christ would be manifested in his physical body in Philippians 1:21.

Philippians 1:19-21, “In fact, I know without a doubt that this (situation) will result for my benefit in (soul) prosperity through your supportive prayer by means of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. According to my confident anticipation that I will be put to shame in nothing but with all courage, as always, even now, Christ will be glorified in my body whether by life or by death because as far as I am concerned to keep on living is Christ and to have died is profit.”

This is why Paul exhorts the Philippians in the following manner:

Philippians 2:14-16, “Keep on performing all activities without murmurs resulting from doubts so that you might demonstrate yourselves to be uncensurable and uncontaminated, students of God (the Holy Spirit), virtuous in the midst of a corrupt and depraved generation. Among whom you yourselves keep on appearing as luminaries in the cosmos by all of you
continuing to exhibit the Word of life as a boast for me on the day of Christ because I have not run in vain, nor have I worked diligently in vain.”

We know it is impossible for mortal man to extinguish the Holy Spirit of God so there must be a figure being employed here by the apostle Paul. The verb *sbennumi* is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 in a figurative or metaphorical sense of “hindering” the Spirit’s work in our lives.

Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary lists the following definitions for the verb hinder: (1) To cause delay, interruption, or difficulty in; check, retard, hamper (2) To prevent from doing, acting, or happening (3) To be an obstacle or impediment.

The verb “hinder” emphasizes causing harmful or annoying delay or interference with progress. When we sin and get out of fellowship, we are hindering the activity of the Spirit in our lives.

What is that activity? Well we know one of His activities is to provide light for our souls meaning guidance and direction in doing the will of God as we live in the darkness of the cosmic system of Satan. The other activity that the Spirit is performing in our lives after salvation as we noted in Paul’s use of the figure of fire and light is that He produces Christ-like character in us. When we sin and get out of fellowship we are in effect hindering the Spirit’s work of manifesting the Light or the virtuous character of Christ in our physical bodies!

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until the character of Christ is formed in all of you.”

The fruit of the Spirit is the production of Christ-like character.

Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Ephesians 5:9, “(for the fruit of the Light {consists} in all goodness and righteousness and truth).”

Hebrews 12:11, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

James 3:18, “And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

The Father is glorified when we develop more of the character of Christ in our lives.

John 15:8, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.”

When we sin and get out of fellowship, this activity of the Spirit of fruit bearing is hindered or prevented from continuing.”
If we paraphrase Webster’s definitions of the verb “hinder” and relate them to the Spirit’s work in our lives, we could say the following: (1) Sin causes a delay or an interruption of the Spirit’s work in producing Christ-like character in the believer. (2) Sin hampers the Spirit’s work of producing Christ-like character in the believer. (3) Sin prevents the Spirit from producing Christ-like character in the believer. (4) Sin is an obstacle or an impediment to the Spirit’s work of producing Christ-like character in the believer. (5) Sin causes harmful and annoying delay or interference to the Spirit’s work in producing Christ-like character in the believer. (6) Sin interferes with the progress of the Spirit’s work of producing Christ-like character in the believer.

The negative particle *me* negates the verb *sbennumi* and is used here to express a prohibition. Now the present imperative can express two different concepts: (1) Cessation of Activity in Progress: cessation of an act already in progress. (2) General Precept: Makes no comment about whether the action is going on or not.

There is no indication throughout the entire epistle that the Thessalonians were already living in their old sin nature or committing this particular act of sin. There is no implication whatsoever.

As in Ephesians 4:30, Paul is performing preventative maintenance by issuing this prohibition. Paul He is warning them ahead of time not to hinder the Spirit’s work in their lives. He is not implying that they were already involved in this sin of hindering the Holy Spirit but rather he is expressing a general precept. This is a customary present tense used to express habitual action. Paul does not want the Thessalonians to get into the habit of hindering the Spirit’s work in their lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Do not make it a habit of hindering the Spirit.”

We are hindering the Spirit’s efforts to bring us to Christ-likeness when we sin and get out of fellowship. In hindering the Spirit the stress is upon rendering inoperative the various post-salvation functions of the Spirit.

Post-Salvation Ministries of the Holy Spirit: (1) enabling power (Acts 1:8; Rm. 15:13, 19; Ga. 5:16; Eph. 3:16). (2) Mentorship or Guidance (Jn. 14:26, 15:26; 16:13-15; Rm. 8:14; 1 Co. 2:10-16). (3) Fellowship (2 Co. 13:14; Phlp. 2:1). All of these post-salvation ministries are essential in developing Christ-like character in our lives as believers.

Quenching or more accurately hindering the Spirit looks at the effect of sin upon the Spirit but from the standpoint of His work that He is sent to perform in our lives.

Philippians 1:6, “And I am confident of this very same thing that He (God the Holy Spirit) who began a good work in all of you will completely finish it up to the day of Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 2:12-13, “Therefore, my virtuously loved ones, in the same manner that all of you have consistently obeyed, not only when in my presence, but now, much more in my absence, you yourselves keep on executing your own spiritual life by means of respect (for God) and with trembling. Since God (the Holy Spirit) is the One producing in all of you not only the determination but also the (resultant) production for the attainment of the grace purpose (of God the Father in eternity past).”

When we are quenching the Spirit, we are denying ourselves the Spirit’s omnipotence, which is essential in developing Christ-like character in us, which is the Father’s, will for our lives.

Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Ephesians 3:14-16, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”

This enabling power of the Spirit provides the believer with divine omnipotence necessary to do the Father’s will. Remember, a Perfect plan designed by a perfect God demands perfect power. When we are disobedient to the Word of God and thus sin, we render inoperative the power of the Spirit in our lives, which power is designed to enable us to do the Father’s will. What is the Father’s will? That we bear fruit which as we noted is developing the character of Christ in our lives.

Quenching the Spirit not only deals with the rendering inoperative the omnipotence of the Spirit in our lives but also it refers to depriving ourselves of the mentorship of the Spirit.

Romans 8:14, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

John 16:13, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

The mentorship of the Spirit deals with the post-salvation ministry of the Spirit where He guides and instructs the believer into doing the will of God. The Spirit teaches and guides the believer in doing the will of God through the communication of the Word of God. Quenching the Spirit also involves loss of fellowship with God.

2 Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.”

Philippians 2:1, “Therefore, if...and there is, any encouragement in Christ, if...and there is, any motivation from divine-love, if...and there is, any fellowship through the Spirit, if...and there is, any compassionate affections.”
The Holy Spirit provides us the opportunity to have fellowship with both the Father and the Son as well as Himself. He provides the access to this fellowship. When we sin we are denying ourselves fellowship with the Trinity. When we are hindering the Spirit we are conducting ourselves contrary to the will of the Father.

Quenching the Spirit means that our thoughts, words and actions are contrary to the will of God. It means that we are obstructing the Spirit’s influence or work in our lives. We are not walking in agreement with the Spirit. We are working independently from Him. In the same way that grieving the Spirit prevents Him from influencing us so quenching or more accurately, hindering the Spirit does not permit the Spirit to influence our thoughts, words and actions. The Spirit is trying to conform our thoughts, words and actions to the image of His Son.

The Spirit is able to produce Christ-like character in the believer when he is filled with the Spirit. The Greek word for “fruit” is the word karpos, which is in the singular. The “fruit” of the Spirit is nine-fold. There are nine different manifestations of the Fruit of the Spirit and not nine “fruits” of the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit produces fruit in the believer. It is not the fruit of the believer, but the fruit of the Spirit.

Another sin that prevents the believer from walking by the Spirit is that of “lying” to the Spirit. The only place where lying against the Holy Spirit is mentioned, is in the book of Acts.

A married couple committed it during the early first century church, during the pre-canon period of the church age. The account of their sin against the Holy Spirit is noted in Acts 5:1-11. The book of Acts documents the transition period from the dispensation of the Mosaic Law to the mystery dispensation called the church age. Believers in the Old Testament dispensations were governed by the Law but during the church age, believers are governed by the Holy Spirit. This is never more evident as in this passage in Acts regarding the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 4:33-35, “And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”

This passage refers to the fact that the apostles were evangelizing their fellow Jewish countrymen in Israel. The church had just multiplied overnight to 3,000 persons on the day of Pentecost according to Acts 2:41 and more were being added by the day according to Acts 2:47, thus many needs were arising that needed to be met. Their fellow Jewish countryman and the synagogues would not aid those who were identifying themselves with Jesus Christ who was just recently crucified just a few months before on the 14th day of Nisan, which is the Passover.

So the church had to rely upon each other to meet each other’s needs. Their giving here is the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This is not communism that we see here in this passage where believers are selling their property to aid others. Communism is not only involuntary but tyranny itself. The selling of property here
by the disciples was voluntary and motivated properly by their love for the Lord and a product of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. This extraordinary generosity that is expressed here by the early church was a result of the fruit of the Spirit and not performed by human power.

Furthermore, according to Acts 2:42, the early church was continually devoted to the apostle’s teaching and to fellowship. One of the doctrines the Lord taught the apostles was giving. This the apostles passed onto to the rest of the church.

We must note that the Greek in Acts 4:34 does not mean that everyone sold his property at once. Rather, from time to time, as need would arise, someone would sell a piece of property…not all their property at once…please note that…They would sell off a piece of property off as needs would arise. So this was not a mass selling of all one’s property.

There are two words in the Greek that clearly indicate this: (1) Nominative masculine plural present active participle form of the verb poleo, “to sell.” (2) third person plural imperfect active indicative form of the verb phero, “to bring.”

The historical present of the participle poleo is used to describe a past event in narrative literature, which we have here, since Luke is narrating this event that took place early in the church’s history. The reason for the use of the historical present is normally to portray an event vividly, as though the reader were in the midst of the scene as it unfolds.

The key is the imperfect tense of the verb phero. It is what we call an iterative imperfect tense. The imperfect is frequently used for repeated action in past time. It describes an action that occurred at different time intervals in the past.

There are two types of iterative imperfect: (1) Iterative proper, in which the imperfect indicates repeated action by the same agent (2) Distributive, in which the imperfect is used for individual acts of multiple agents. Here we have a distributive iterative imperfect tense used for individual acts of multiple agents.

The distributive iterative imperfect tense of the verb phero indicates that at different time intervals in the early 1st century church individual acts of giving were performed by multiple individuals in the church. So this was done from time to time as needs would arise. This was not a mass selling of all one’s property as some suggest. This was not communism! What the disciples were doing was not imposed by law, rule, regulation or requirement, as is the case with communism but rather the beautiful outcome of a Spirit-filled life.

Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet. Barnabas is a central figure in the early church before Paul came on the scene. He was an associate of Paul. In fact, it was Barnabas who sponsored Paul.
The early church was suspicious of Paul because of his previous persecutions of the church. Everyone was frightened of him. But Barnabas demonstrating his leadership qualities, namely, his compassion, removed the disciples distrust in Paul. He secured the admission of the former persecutor to their fellowship. He was called Barnabas as a testimony to his eloquence.

The literal meaning of his name is “son of prophecy.” He was a Levite meaning he was descended from the priestly tribe of Levi. He was from the island of Cyprus and a cousin of the evangelist Mark. This account here in the book of Acts is the first time that we encounter him on the pages of Scripture.

We now come to the central characters of our study, namely Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Here we also have Satan infiltrating the church and influencing these two believers to lie to the Holy Spirit.

Remember what Peter said: 1 Peter 5:8, “Be of sober {spirit} be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Well, Satan is about to devour this married couple. They were not alert meaning that they were not of sober spirit or in other word, under the influence of the Spirit’s mentorship. Remember, that the early church had multiplied in the face of opposition from without. It never has been harmed or hindered from without but it has been perpetually harmed and its work hindered by perils from within. Satan could not destroy the church with opposition from without so he did what he has always done to churches, he seeks to divide from within.

Satan knows the following principle and knows it well: Mark 3:25, “If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”

He seeks to cause church members to live in their old sin nature to live for self. Satan causes personality conflicts, which in turn divide a church from within. He brings individuals into a local assembly that are legalistic and self-righteous in the hopes of dividing it.

Galatians 2:4, “But {it was} because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneak in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”

So here in Acts 5 we have Satan influencing two members of the early first century church and getting them involved in the sin of hypocrisy in the attempts to divide it. The Scriptures state that the church was unified.

Acts 4:32, “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one {of them} claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”

So here we have Satan looking to divide his enemy the church. The name “Ananias” means “God is gracious.” Ananias was certainly not gracious in fact he
was grieving the Holy Spirit by not allowing the Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit in his life, which will result in generosity.

The name “Sapphira” means “beautiful.” Sapphira did not live up to her name for she was ugly in her soul.

The phrase “kept back” is the third person singular aorist middle indicative form of the verb *nosphizomai*, “to misappropriate funds for one’s own benefit.”

This is an intensive middle emphasizing the part taking here by Ananias meaning that he kept back some of the money for himself. Ananias with his wife’s full knowledge misappropriated the money from the land they sold for their own benefit. They only brought a portion of the money they received from the sale of the land. They wanted to enjoy the acclaim of the church, as Barnabas did, without making a genuine sacrifice.

Now you might say what is wrong with them keeping some of the money back for themselves? There is nothing wrong with it. There was no regulation in the church that men should give, or that they should give at all. This was not a requirement for fellowship or for service. So what was their great sin? One must discover the nature of the sin by what Peter said both to Ananias and Sapphira.

The problem with these two individuals is that they were involved in hypocrisy. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was the sin of pretending that part of what they gave was all. It was the sin of attempting to appear what they really were not, of endeavoring to make it appear that they had done what they really had not. They were lying.

Ananias and Sapphira could have retained the proceeds from the sale of the property, of course, but in collusion with each other they had lied, saying they had given all the money when actually they had given only a portion of the money. They deliberately attempted to deceive the apostles and the rest of the church into thinking that they were giving all the money.

You see, they were wanted the approbation of the entire church since as we read in Acts 4:36-37 that Barnabas had sold some of his property and gave all the money to the aid of the church. These 2 did not do that since they only gave a portion of the money while all the time deceiving everyone into thinking that they gave it all. The terrible nature of the sin is not that of refusing to give, not that of only giving part, but that of attempting to make men believe that they had given it all, when they had only given part, and so that of lying to God.

The word for “hypocrite” in the Greek New Testament is the noun *hupokrites*. Our English word “hypocrite” is a transliteration from the Greek word. It is a compound word based on the verb *krino*, “to judge.”

*Hupokrites* primarily denotes “one who answers”; then, “a stage-actor.” It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical
devices for augmenting the force of the voice. Hence the word became used metaphorically of “a hypocrite.”

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was the sin of acting the part of gracious givers when in fact they were not. So the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was lying to the Holy Spirit and this sin was manifested in their hypocrisy before the congregation. One thing is for sure, they did not deceive God the Holy Spirit.

Luke is making a parallel between Ananias and Sapphira’s sin and Achan’s sin, which appears in Joshua 7. Luke’s use of the verb *nosphizomai* here in Acts 5:2, which in the Septuagint heads the account in Joshua 7:1-26 of Achan’s misappropriation of part of what had been dedicated to God. His use of the verb here implies that Luke meant to draw a parallel between the sin of Achan as the Israelites began their conquest of Canaan and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira as the church began its mission. Both incidents came under the immediate and drastic judgment of God and teaching a sobering lesson and this is very likely how the early church saw it as well.

**Acts 5:2, “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back {some} of the price of the land?’”**

The word for “filled” is the third person singular aorist active indicative form of the verb *pleroo*. The same verb that we noted in Ephesians 5:18. Here in Acts 5:3 we have the same *pleroo* being employed by the writer Luke, but this time we have Satan influencing Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit as a result of their hypocrisy. The Holy Spirit was not influencing, guiding or empowering these two to give to the church but rather Satan was influencing and the motivator behind this sin. They were not under the influence of the Spirit but under the influence of Satan.

Throughout history Satan has been influencing believers to act against God. He motivated David to take a census of the nation of Israel independently from God.

**1 Chronicles 21:1, “Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.”**

He also is influencing Peter to stop the Lord from doing the Father’s will and going to the Cross.

**Matthew 16:23, “But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.”**

**Acts 5:2, “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back {some} of the price of the land?’”**

The phrase “to lie” is the aorist middle infinitive form of the verb *pseudomai*. It means, “to communicate what is false, with the evident purpose of misleading.”

The middle voice is important because it effects the translation and therefore, the understanding of what went on in this particular situation with Ananias and
Sapphira. This is what we call a causative direct middle voice. The subject has something done for or to himself or herself. The cause here is volitional meaning that Ananias of his own volition committing the act of lying to the Holy Spirit, but the causative direct middle suggests that the prompting lay elsewhere and only that consent or permission or toleration was wrung from the subject.

So what the causative direct middle indicates is that Ananias of his own volitional lied to the Holy Spirit but that he was prompted or influence by Satan to do so! Instead of resisting Satan and submitting to the Holy Spirit, Ananias and Sapphira gave in to Satan and lied to the Holy Spirit.

Notice how Peter says that Ananias lied to God here in verse 4 and in verse 3 Peter says he lied to the Holy Spirit, thus affirming the Personality of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a Person as this passages clearly demonstrates and not a force. You cannot lie to a force but you can lie to a Person. This sin proceeds from the heart that is not under the influence of the Spirit but under the influence of Satan and the cosmic system and the old sin nature.

Ananias and Sapphira committed this act of sin because they received this thought from Satan and acted upon it. This is very important because it brings out the principle that the Satan and the kingdom of darkness are involved in thought projection. Paul calls thought projections from the kingdom of darkness “flaming missiles.”

Ephesians 6:16, “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil {one.}.”

Satan was projecting thoughts at Ananias and Sapphira. He was feeding their arrogance and they acted, thus they were still responsible for their actions. They chose to listen to Satan. If you are not under the influence of the Spirit it will bear out in your actions. The Lord noted the principle concerning the heart that is not under the Spirit’s guidance and direction.

Matthew 15:18-20, “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

Genesis 8:21, “The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.’”

Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Acts 5:5, “And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.”
The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. What has taken place is dying discipline. As Peter wrote later in his life, judgment begins “with the royal family of God.”

1 Peter 4:17a, “For {it is} time for judgment to begin with the household of God.”

Here we also have a classic case of the sin unto death mentioned by the apostle John.

1 John 5:16, “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not {leading} to death, he shall ask and {God} will for him give life to those who commit sin not {leading} to death. There is a sin {leading} to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.”

This discipline was severe because it was an example to the church, just as Achan was an example for the nation of Israel during the dispensation of the Law.

There elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

Acts 5:7-8, “Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, ‘Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?’ And she said, ‘Yes, that was the price. Then Peter {said} to her, ‘Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out {as well}.’”

The word for “test” here is the verb peirazo. In early Greek literature peirazo meant, “to attempt, to try.” At times it could mean, “to test or try the quality or character of someone or something.” In contexts of “testing” God or Christ, peirazo denotes the human efforts to “prove” God, which are actually signs of unbelief. God is not to be doubted because of His perfect integrity and veracity.

Unbelief doubts His perfect integrity. Ananias and Sapphira tested the Spirit to see how much they could get away with before He judges. The word here means that they were presuming on God the Holy Spirit. They were presuming on Him to see if He will perform His Word, or to stretch Him to the limits.

Acts 5:10, “And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.”

The word for “fear” here is the noun phobos. This word appears in verse 5 and here in verse 11 in order to emphasis the impact that their deaths made on the early church.

Phobos was used often in classical literature for “sudden and violent fear, fright, panic.” Throughout the classical period the word was used not only for
“terror” and “headlong flight” but “fear” or “apprehension,” whatever the cause. It was commonly used for fear of death. The word was sometimes used in the positive sense of “respect, awe,” or “reverence,” especially toward human authority or the gods.

In the Septuagint (LXX) phobos usually translates the Hebrew root yir`ah, “to fear, to be afraid.” In the LXX the word means “terror” when it relates to the enemies of Yahweh. It means “reverence, respect” when used in relation to the believer’s relationship to the Lord.

Phobos occurs 47 times in the Greek New Testament. It is used in a subjective sense meaning “fear, dread, terror.” It is also used in an objective sense meaning, that which strikes terror. Phobos is used of fears, apprehensions, and feelings of anxiety. It is also means reverence, respect when directed toward God. This same usage is employed when directed toward legitimate authority, the rank of a person or his dignity. Here in our passage in Acts 5 we have the church demonstrating reverence and respect for the Lord as a result of the death of both Ananias and Sapphira.

Now, you might of asked the question that I have asked, which is Ananias and Sapphira were not the only Christians to have lied to the Holy Spirit, why did God put these two to death? Quite simply, the church was in her infancy and as we have noted there was a great transition-taking place from the dispensation of the Mosaic Law to the mystery dispensation, we call the church.

The Holy Spirit was instrumental in this transition. In fact, He was orchestrating it. The fact that these two individuals were put to death for their lying to the Holy Spirit was to demonstrate that God was at work in this group called the church! They didn’t commit a sin that was any more grievous than what believers commit today. Believers in our day and age give with improper motivation and have approbation lust just like these two did, but the Holy Spirit was placing His mark upon the church. The fact that these two were disciplined manifested before all Jerusalem both unbelievers and believers, that God was indeed working in this new group, which we know as the church and that indeed a new dispensation was underway.

So by disciplining this couple, the Spirit revealed His displeasure with sin and it marked off the church as distinct from Israel for such discipline was not a work in Israel. Remember, God disciplines His children and not those who are not His. This principle is taught in Hebrews 12.

The fact that Ananias and Sapphira, two believers in the Lord Jesus Christ received dying discipline was a clear indication that God was working actively in the church as He was during the dispensation of Israel and in particular the Exodus generation where two million born-again believers received dying discipline from the Lord.
The Lord judges sin severely at the beginning of a new dispensation. At the beginning of the dispensation of the Law, the Lord severely disciplined believers in the 1st Client Nation to God, Israel. Just after the tabernacle was erected, God killed Nadab and Abihu for not following the proper protocol in worshipping Him in the Tabernacle. This is found in Leviticus 10. The Lord also killed Achan for disobeying orders after Israel had entered the Promised Land (Josh. 7). While God was certainly not responsible for their sins, He did use these judgments as warnings to the His people, and even to us (1 Co. 10:11-12).

1 Corinthians 10:11-12, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.”

So by severely disciplining Ananias and Sapphira the Lord by means of the Holy Spirit was actively governing this new group in Jerusalem called the church.

Now, conducting one’s life in submission to the Spirit not only demands the confession of sin when necessary to be restored to fellowship and maintaining that fellowship by bringing one’s thoughts into obedience to the Spirit but it also as we noted earlier demands being sensitive to the voice of the Spirit.

Our fellowship with God is comprised of four-steps: (1) communication, which requires that we listen to God, (2) comprehension, which requires that we understand what God communicates, (3) confidence, which requires that we trust in what God communicates, and (4) change, which requires that we be transformed by what God communicates. Without this process of communication, there simply cannot be any real spiritual change in the life of man. As a result, God is deeply concerned with how well we listen, when we do listen.

The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize the importance of listening. The specific clause “hear the Word of the Lord” occurs thirty-two times in the New International Version and twenty-eight times in the New American Standard Bible. The word “hear” or phrase “listen O Israel” are found six times in the NIV and the NASB. Meanwhile, the word “listen” is found three-hundred-and-thirty-one times in the Bible and often refers to listening to the Lord. “Hear” is found three-hundred-and-forty-seven times and again refers to hearing God’s Word. We also find a number of phrases like “incline your ear” or “give ear” or “pay or give attention” and similar expressions used in various ways to encourage man to listen intently to God.

In the New Testament, the Lord warns us to carefully consider what we hear (Mark 4:24) and how we hear (Luke 8:18). The phrase “today, if you hear his voice” is found three times in Hebrews and once in the Old Testament (Heb 3:7, 15; 4:7; Psa 95:7).
Seven times, once in each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 we read, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.” In Mark 4:9, the Lord warned, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” and again in verse 23 He says, “if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

It is also very significant that one of the titles of the Son of God is the Greek term *logos*, which refers to some form of communication. It means “speech, word, saying, discourse” and, as the *Logos*, Jesus Christ is the living Word of God to man. Of Him, Moses wrote the following in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”

Not only is there a call to listen carefully to the Lord, but there is a warning about listening to the wrong voices or influences in the world (1 Jo 4:1-6).

1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

The point is simple, God has much to say to us, and, because He is all knowing and sovereign, it is critical that we listen carefully. But, as individuals with an old Adamic sin nature, even as sinners who have been redeemed, we are ever so prone to be distracted and drawn away with other things, even with good things.

The Bible is our index and guide to all the ways God communicates. If we are going to listen to God the Holy Spirit and discern His voice, we must learn the ways God speaks to us. It can be through a pastor-teacher, by a believer in personal exhortation or encouragement, through songs or music, through books, tapes, film, etc. Nevertheless, the primary method God chooses to speak to us, which is foundational to all other ways He communicates in the Church-Age, is through the local assembly, when the Church assembles for the hearing of the Word. Other things may be involved—prayer, singing, praise, and the Lord’s Table—but at the center is the proclamation of the Word (2 The 2:13; 1 Ti 4:11, 13; 2 Ti 4:1-4), which is most important.

One of God’s primary ministries is to communicate the Word, the completed canon of Scripture, through God the Holy Spirit, as He is the author of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

2 Peter 1:20-21, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Since the end of temporary, foundational, and miraculous gifts, God does not give special or new revelation through miracles, prophesies, or predictions, but through the Scriptures, which serves as our guide for belief and practice. This is the reason God gives us the Holy Spirit, to help us listen, comprehend truth,
worship the Lord, and be transformed by the Word. The Holy Spirit is the agent who makes the Word of God understandable.

The Holy Spirit is the resident teacher or mentor whom the Father sends, through the Son, to indwell every New Testament believer as God’s special anointing (John 14:16-20, 26; 15:26; 16:7-16; 1 Co 2:10-16; 2 Co 13:14; Gal 5:5, 16-25; Eph 3:16-19; 5:18; 1 Jo 2:20-27).

1 John 2:20, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.”

“Anointing,” in 1 John 2:20, is the noun chrisma and is a synonym for the Indwelling of the Spirit, who provides the believer the spiritual capacity or power to understand and apply spiritual phenomena for producing, in the believer, Christ-like character.

In its broadest sense, chrisma refers to anything smeared onto something else, such as coatings of plaster applied to a wall. It is used in the anointing of pots, when a glaze is applied to pottery before it is fired to give it color and finish.

Chrisma, therefore, denotes a scented ointment, consisting of an oil and herb mixture, used to anoint persons or things. It is used as the “spiced oil of anointing” to consecrate, or set apart for service, the priests of Israel and the tabernacle and its fixtures (Ex 29:7; 30:25).

In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were anointed with oil, symbolizing their empowerment by the Holy Spirit and authority to accomplish the appointed tasks given to them by God.

The word chrisma is John’s terminology for what Paul called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who serves as the believer’s true teacher and mentor.

Romans 8:9, “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

The Holy Spirit’s purpose during the Church-Age, therefore, is to indwell every believer in order to provide a temple for the indwelling of the Shekinah Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, which serves as the principle of victory over the indwelling old sin nature. He provides the believer the spiritual capacity to understand the Word of God, since the Spirit serves as the believer’s true teacher and mentor in place of the absent Christ.

The corrected translation of 1 John 2:20, from the original language, is, “All of you, without exception, possess permanently spiritual power [chrisma] from the Holy One [Lord Jesus Christ] so that all of you comprehend everything [pertaining to the doctrines of Christ].”
“Anointing from the Holy One,” in 1 John 2:20, refers to the permanent indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit, who is given to the believer by the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Holy One.”

In the time John is writing, there were Gnostic teachers claiming they exclusively possessed the capacity to understand spiritual phenomena. Therefore, it was imperative that John explained the truth, namely, that the Indwelling of the Spirit and His mentorship provide every believer with the spiritual capacity or power to understand and apply spiritual phenomena.

The Gnostic teachers proclaimed superior knowledge because they received a ritual anointing, which gave them gnosis, or knowledge. The apostle John, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, refuted their claims and asserted the spiritual truth that every Church-Age believer, without exception, receives at the moment of salvation the Indwelling of the Spirit, who provides the believer with the spiritual capacity to understand and apply truth, i.e. the Word of God, which is spiritual phenomena.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and empowered [chrio] us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”

1 John 2:26-27, “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the spiritual power which you received from Him [Christ] abides in you [indwelling presence of the Spirit], and you have no need for anyone to teach you; yes, because this same spiritual power [from the Indwelling of the Spirit] teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”

God also speaks through events and circumstances in our lives, particularly in special times of worship—singing, praise, prayer, teaching, in times of blessing, and in times of trial and adversity. Note that God can only communicate through these events when we rest in the promises and principles of Scripture. If we are not resting in God’s promises, we will fail to listen when God the Holy Spirit speaks and, thus, obstruct the lines of communication.

The Bible is full of illustrations of how God speaks through people, communicating His love, mercy, and grace. Whether in the form of encouragement, example, or rebuke, we should be conscious of the believers around us, understanding that God, who desires to speak with us, can direct what they say or do towards us. A few passages should illustrate this point.

1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”

Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.’

John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
Ephesians 5:19, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.”

Proverbs 27:5, “Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

1 Timothy 5:1, “Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, 2 the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Galatians 6:1-2, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

Listening to God the Holy Spirit in prayer demands that we are spiritually prepared to listen. Learning of any kind, especially in spiritual matters, involves active participation and concentration. God is very concerned with how we listen and worship. He is concerned with our mental attitude and spiritual state when we approach Him in prayer, not to mention when we study His Word. It is very simple to go through the motions of religious activity and deceive ourselves as James warns us in James 1:22-25.

James 1:22-25, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

James warns us about the difference between superficial and substantial listening. He counsels us in this passage to be mindful that we do not approach God unprepared, passive, or uninvolved. We need the kind of active listening that is diligent and eager to understand and respond to God’s Word. Only then, may truth so touch the heart that it initiates change, not by our own strength, but by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

1 Timothy 4:15 “Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all.”

It is easy to be absent in prayer, mentally and spiritually. We can play at prayer and do a kind of “nod to God” routine, making it physically appear that we are engaging in an intimate conversation with God, but, in actuality, are absent. The result of playing these prayer games is that we do not ever come close to truly hearing the voice of God because we remove our hearts from the Lord. This does
not mean we are required to feel emotion or some sort of sentiment when we pray; it only means that we should pray in a focused and prepared manner, taking into account everything we say.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, “Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.”

Isaiah 29:13, “Then the Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.’

Ezekiel 33:31-32, “They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them.”

A believer becomes a passive listener when he is unprepared physically, mentally, and spiritually to enter into pray and hear the Word of God. This generation is notorious for mental laziness. We have forgotten how to think and stay actively involved in the listening process.

So, how can we actively listen and avoid becoming passive and lazy? We need to concentrate, search, probe, question, think, interact, respond, and apply. God does not want pious, passive spectators, but involved listeners when praying and listening to the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 2:10-15, “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.”

The word “appraises” is the verb anakrino, which describes a lawyer in careful, diligent judicial investigation, who carefully thinks, actively searches, compares, and probes to get at the truth. In this context, the phrase “he who is spiritual” is the adjective pneumatikos and refers to a person who is in fellowship.
with God and, therefore, Spirit-influenced, who has grown spiritually, and who is also somewhat spiritually mature [note the contrast in 1 Co 3:1 to “infants in Christ”].

In such a person, with an active heart and mind, the Holy Spirit is free to work. Such a person is able to search, probe, compare, and apply God’s Word effectively.

1 Corinthians 2:16-3:3, “For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”

Since God communicates the Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we must be properly adjusted or in the right relationship to this divine mentor and teacher who indwells us. We must be conscious of our total dependence upon the Holy Spirit, our mentor, for insight to God’s Word. However, the believer who is out of fellowship will not and in fact, cannot effectively listen to God’s message. This type of believer is apathetic and cannot understand or respond to the things of God while under a condition of known sin in his life.

In 1 Corinthians 3:3, the Scriptures teach of other attitudes that make us unprepared and unworthy to approach God in prayer. Bad attitudes, such as envy, jealousy, resentment, pride, unbelief, self-centeredness, indifference, apathy, or preoccupation with other forms of sin grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30) and, undoubtedly, hinder much of His ministry in teaching and making the things of Christ understandable (1 Thess. 5:19). Therefore, for the soulish (psuchikos) believer, the Holy Spirit’s ministry changes from leading and teaching to convicting a believer of his condition.

What can we do to prepare our hearts to hear what the Lord seeks to reveal to us in prayer or in Bible class? We must examine ourselves first. The purpose of such self-examination is to confess any known sin to the Father and be restored to fellowship. The Father restores the believer to fellowship based upon the merits of Christ and His death on the cross.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32, “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we
are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”

Not only should we examine the sin in our lives, but we should also do some soul searching for the purpose of seeing our motives, our sources of trust, our sources of security, and ourselves as we really are. This should be done prior to personal study or prayer to prepare our hearts for hearing God, then should be maintained throughout our personal study and prayer, when the Spirit of God brings conviction or as our thoughts seek to intrude, distract, and hinder us from listening (Ps. 119:18; 139:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:28f).

People often arrive at church upset or frazzled because of something that happened at home or on the way to church. People sometimes preoccupy themselves with friends and forget the reason they came to church in the first place. Once they sit down, they do not consider the condition of their heart, or their need to secure spiritual focus and be sure the Spirit controls them. While people cannot see our hearts, God can, and He rejects worship from hearts that are removed from Him (Isa 29:13).

To truly listen to God the Holy Spirit in prayer and in the study the Word of God, we must be both spiritually and physically prepared. Certainly, without spiritual preparation, the best physical preparation in the world accomplishes little, but we too often overlook the need to be physically prepared in prayer.

The physical conditions of where you pray should be free of any distractions that might hinder your ability to concentrate. In addition, your own physical condition may become an obstacle in prayer.

For instance, if you wait until midnight to pray, there is a good chance you will fall asleep. Being tired does not excuse poor praying habits. This pertains to the worship service as well. If late night outings are causing you to be unprepared on Sunday morning to worship, you should re-evaluate your priorities. Likewise, if anything physically, or spiritually, causes you to be unprepared for prayer or worship and hinders your communication with God, then those things need to be done away with.

Preparation for worship starts at home, even the night before, by getting the little distractions out of the way. Get to bed early, get the kids’ clothes ready, and plan breakfast. For many families, getting to church becomes a frantic experience with Mom and Dad looking for socks and trying to feed Johnny. When the details get out of control, no one is prepared to listen to God.

Preparation can also include something as simple as having the children visit the restroom before service. The bottom line is listening to the Spirit is no small issue. If we are not prepared to listen, then we are merely playing church and withholding our hearts from the Lord.
Our activities for God then become an experiment in futility. Passive, uninvolved listening to the Spirit is inadequate and judged by God as futile religiosity. Believers are always to be on the alert, therefore, in prayer and in worship. Lethargic, half-hearted listening just does not cut it with God, nor will it result in spiritual deliverance.

When you pray or read or study the Word, put everything else aside and concentrate on what the Holy Spirit desires to communicate to you. Give Him your undivided attention. Think, I should pray on a consistent basis, I should pray in a place with minimal distraction, I should listen carefully, I should interpret accurately, I should read and meditate out loud and take notes and ask questions, I should apply doctrine in my life, for these are the kinds of things that make me an active participant.

Acts 17:11, “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

The reference to nobility in Acts 17:11 is ascribed to the Berean Jews who, in contrast with the Jews in Thessalonica, were teachable, open, and wise. They listened attentively as active participants and tested Paul’s teaching against the Scriptures with a noble and biblical attitude. They realized the authority for truth is the Word and, therefore, sought to set aside their own prejudices so God’s Word could speak for itself. The principle to be learned is that, when we pray or worship, God desires that we be Berean-like listeners, attentive and teachable, searching and probing the Scriptures for ourselves.

Therefore, in Romans 12:2, the object of this renovation is the believer’s manner or way of thinking, his thought process thus indicating that spirituality and fellowship with God as well as experiential sanctification is all based upon the believer’s manner or way of thinking. This transformation of the believer’s character or in other words the reproduction of Christ-like character in the believer begins with his or her thinking or thought process, their manner or way of thinking.
As we noted in our study of Romans 12:1, the apostle Paul appealed to his Christian readers in Rome on the basis of the merciful acts of the Father on their behalf to offer their bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing to the Father, which is their reasonable service to the Father. Then we noted in Romans 12:2 Paul’s prohibition to his Christian readers in Rome to not be conformed to the cosmic system of Satan. Also, in this passage, he issues a command on the heels of this prohibition to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

Next, we will note the purpose-result clause that appears in this passage, which teaches that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ by renewing their minds accomplishes what the Father intended in that it provides the believer the capacity to discern what the will of God is with regards to any situation. In this clause, he describes the believer doing the will of God as good, extremely pleasing to the Father and perfect.

**Romans 12:2**, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind…”

“So that you may prove” is composed of the preposition eis (εἰς) (ice), “so that” and the present active infinitive form of the verb dokimazo (δοκιμάζω) (dok-im-ad-zo), “may prove” and the accusative second person plural form of the personal pronoun humeis (ὑμεῖς), which is humas (ὑμᾶς), “you.”

*Dokimazo* comes from the *dokimos* word group and means, “to test, to accept as proved, to approve.” The stem word for this word group is *doke* (δοκή), “watching.”

*Dokimos* as an adjective both of person and object denotes one who is “tested in battle, reliable, trustworthy.” The verb *dokimazo* means “to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use,” thus “to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.”

In classical Greek, *dokimazo* was used for testing the genuineness of metals and coins as well as of the approval of candidates for the degree of medicine. The verb was a technical Greek expression found in an early manuscript, which referred to the action of an examining board testing to approve those who had successfully passed the examinations for the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Therefore, it refers to the act of testing or examining something for the purpose of approving it.
Persons could be put to the test or scrutinized, and if this person were approved, *dokimazo* could also describe that state of acceptance.

The Septuagint used *dokimazo* with reference to the testing of precious metals (Proverbs 8:10; 17:3; Zechariah 13:9), of people (Judges 7:4; Psalm 66:10 [LXX 65:10]; 139:1 [138:1]; of other objects (the ear “tests” words); Job 34:3); of the heart by the Lord (Psalm 17:3 [LXX 16:3]; 26:2 [25:2]); and of the Lord by people (Psalm 81:7 [LXX 80:7]; 95:9 [94:9]). It most often represents the Hebrew *bachan* (ḇāḵān), “test for genuineness by fire.”

The word was transferred to God, who tests men. In the Psalms, the prayer that God may test the one who is praying is an expression of complete trust.

The Greek New Testament usage of *dokimazo* was influenced by its Septuagint usage and appears 24 times in the Greek New Testament and was used mostly by Paul.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition lists the following meanings for the verb: (1) to make a critical examination of something to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine (2) to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing (Page 255).

Vine writes, “*Dokimazo*, primarily, of metals (e. g., the Sept. of Prov 8:10; 17:3), signifies ‘to prove,’ e. g., 1 John 4:1, more frequently to prove with a view to approval, e. g., Rom 1:28, KJV, ‘they did not like to retain God in their knowledge’; RV, ‘they refused’; marg., ‘did not approve,’ the true meaning. Their refusal was not the outcome of ignorance; they had the power to make a deliberate choice; they willfully disapproved of having God in their knowledge. In the next chapter, the apostle speaks of the Jew as ‘approving things that are excellent,’ 2:18. The Jew knew God's will, and mentally ‘approved’ of the things in which God had instructed him out of the Law. In Rom 14:22, he is said to be happy who ‘judgeth’ not himself in that which he ‘approveth’; that is to say, in that which he ‘approves’ of after having put the matter to the test. The KJV ‘alloweth’ has not now this meaning. As to the gifts from the church at Corinth for poor saints in Judea, those who were ‘approved’ by the church to travel with the offering would be men whose trustworthiness and stability had been proved, 1 Cor 16:3 (the RV margin seems right, ‘whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters’); cf. 2 Cor 8:22. In Phil 1:10 the apostle prays that the saints may ‘approve the things that are excellent’ or ‘things that differ,’ i. e., ‘approve’ after distinguishing and discerning. In 1 Thess 2:4, the apostle and his fellow missionaries were ‘approved of God to be entrusted with the Gospel’ (not ‘allowed,’ KJV). Not permission to preach, but divine ‘approval’ after divine testing is intended. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)
The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following meanings of the verb (105): (1) To test, assay metals (2) To prove, try, examine, scrutinize (3) To put to the proof, tempt (4) To approve after trial, judge worthy, choose (5) To decide upon after examination, judge of, distinguish, discern.

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Dictionary gives the following meanings (page 154): (1) To test, examine, prove, scrutinize (2) To recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.

The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains gives the following meanings for the verb dokimazo (volume 2): (1) To try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use (page 332) (2) To regard something as being worthwhile or appropriate (page 362) (3) To regard something as genuine or worthy on the basis of testing (page 364).

In Luke 12:56, dokimazo meant, “to interpret” the signs of Israel’s impending fifth cycle of divine discipline. It is used in reference to the confession of sin and meant, “to examine oneself” (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

The believer’s works will be “tested” by fire at the Bema Seat Judgment to determine if they were performed by divine power or human power (1 Cor. 3:13). The believer’s divine-love is also “tested” (2 Cor. 8:8). Bible doctrine resident in the hearts of believers is said to be “tested” (1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Pet. 1:7).

In several passages, dokimazo means, “to choose” in the sense that believers are “to choose” God’s will, purpose and plan for the church, which is being conformed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:10).

Ephesians 5:7-10, “Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), choosing what is pleasing to the Lord.”

In Philippians 1:10 dokimazo refers to the capacity “to approve, to choose, to select, to recognize” that which is essential or what really matters in life after distinguishing and discerning.

Philippians 1:9-10, “Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge so that all of you might continue to choose the essentials in order that all of you might be sincere and without offense for the day of Christ.”

“The essentials” are the means by which the Father accomplishes His will for the believer, which is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Paul identifies “the essentials” in Philippians 3 where he expresses to the Philippians his objectives in life.

Philippians 3:10-11, “that I come to know Him experientially and the power from His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings by my
becoming like Him with respect to His death. If somehow (by becoming like Him with respect to His death), I may attain to the exit-resurrection, namely, the one out from the (spiritually) dead ones.”

“That I come to know Him experientially” refers to experiencing fellowship with Christ after salvation by being obedient to the Lord’s command to self-sacrificially love his fellow believer as Christ self-sacrificially loved the believer.

The believer who experiences fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is enabling God the Holy Spirit to reproduce in him the life and character of Christ (Gal. 5:22-23).

“The power from His resurrection” refers to experiencing divine omnipotence by appropriating by faith the Spirit’s revelation in the Word of God of the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, which results in experiencing identification with Christ in His resurrection.

“The participation in His sufferings by my becoming like Him with respect to His death” refers to experiencing identification with Christ in His death by means of undeserved suffering.

“I may attain to the exit-resurrection, namely, the one out from the (spiritually) dead ones” refers to experiencing identification with Christ in His resurrection, which is accomplished by applying the Word of life, which enables the Spirit of life to reproduce the character and life of Christ in the believer.

The phrase “namely, the one out from the dead ones” refers to 2 categories of spiritual death: (1) Real spiritual death: unregenerate people (2) Temporal spiritual death: regenerate people who our consistently out of fellowship with God.

Philippians 3:10-11 indicates that “the essentials” refers to an experiential knowledge of Christ, which involves: (1) Experiencing fellowship with Christ (2) Appropriating by faith in the Word of God the Spirit’s revelation of the power that has been directed toward the believer through His union and identification with Christ in His resurrection and session (3) Experiencing identification with Christ in His death through undeserved suffering that results in the believer being identified with Christ in His resurrection experientially (4) Experiencing identification with Christ in His resurrection.

This is the third time that we have seen the verb dokimazo in the Roman epistle. In Romans 1:28, the verb dokimazo means, “to approve after testing according to specifications (determined by the human race).” The meaning of the verb dokimazo is emphatically negated by the emphatic negative adverb ouk should therefore be translated “never.” Together, the verb dokimazo and the emphatic negative adverb ouk express the fact that the human race “never approved of God so as to worship and serve Him after putting Him to the test according to their own specifications.”

Romans 1:28, “Furthermore, just as, they never approved of God for the purpose of retaining (Him) in the realm of knowledge, God, as an eternal
spiritual truth, gave them over to a disapproved intellect in order to habitually do improper things."

In Romans 2:18, the verb *dokimazo* refers to the fact that the unregenerate, self-righteous Jew claimed to be able to “discern” the essentials, which refers to the commands to love God with one’s entire being and one’s neighbor as oneself. They claimed to “discern” the essentials in the sense that they perceived by their intellect and recognized, apprehended clearly and could distinguish mentally what the essentials were after being instructed orally in a detailed, systematic and repetitious manner in their homes from their parents and synagogues from their rabbis.

**Romans 2:18, “And know His will through instruction and can discern the essentials because you have received oral instruction in the past in a detailed, systematic and repetitious manner by means of the Law and continue to do so.”**


Robert Mounce defines the word in Romans 12:2 as meaning “to approve as the result of testing.” (The New American Commentary, volume 27, page 233; Romans, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995)

Kenneth Wuest says that the word means “to put to the test for the purpose of approving, and finding that the thing tested meets the specifications laid down, to put one’s approval upon it.” (Word Studies of the Greek New Testament, volume 1, page 208; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Romans, 1955.)

In Romans 12:2, the verb *dokimazo* means “to discern” what is the right decision to make when faced with a particular decision or choice after testing the various choices or decisions that could be made to determine if they are in accordance with the will of God. It means “to discern” in the sense of perceiving by the intellect and recognizing, apprehending clearly and distinguishing mentally what is the right decision to make when faced with a particular decision or choice after testing the various choices or decisions to determine if they are in accordance with the will of God. So Paul is commanding his Christian readers in Rome to permit themselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit by renovating their mind so
as to discern the will of God when faced with a particular decision to make after testing the various choices to determine if they are in accordance with the will of God. He is saying that the believer can discern the will of God in the sense of the correct decision to make in any given situation, as a result of having their character transformed into the image of Christ by having their mind renovated.

The renovation of the mind is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the believer who prayerfully obeys His voice, which is heard through the Word of God. Therefore, Paul is saying that the believer can only discern what the will of God is in any given situation through having their character transformed into the image of Christ by renovating their mind. This renovating of the mind is by learning the will of the Father from the Holy Spirit who teaches the believer the will of God through the Word of God and prayer.

Discernment refers “to the capacity to perceive clearly and hence to understand the real nature of something.” It is concerned with practical matters like speaking (10:14; 11:9; 12:23; 22:12) and general prudence and discernment concerning how to live rightly in relationships.

Discernment can be referred to as “tact” and the ability to understand relationships and situations with a view to practical action. Tact is a keen sense of what to say or do to avoid giving offense and is the skill in dealing with difficult or delicate situations.

Discernment refers to the faculty to discern, discriminate, and have acuteness of judgment and understanding in any given situation. We must learn discernment from the Holy Spirit who teaches us discernment by making the Word of God understandable and guiding us in its application.

Psalm 119:66, “Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments.”

Spiritual discernment refers to the ability to separate, distinguish between what is God’s will and what is evil in any given situation.

Hebrews 5:12-14, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

Spiritual discernment refers to the power or ability to grasp and comprehend what is obscure to the soulish man (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). It stresses accuracy in reading character or motives and the Holy Spirit provides the believer with this ability as the believer obeys the Spirit and follows His guidance and direction that appears in the Word of God.
Hebrews 4:12, “The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart.”

In Philippians 1:9, Paul prayed that the Philippians divine love might be accompanied by discernment.

Philippians 1:9, “Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge.”

In Romans 12:2, the infinitive form of the verb dokimazo is articular and is employed with the preposition eis, which governs it. Together, they form a “purpose-result” infinitive.

If you recall the conjunction hina can introduce a purpose and a result clause, which we have seen several times in the Roman epistle. Purpose emphasizes the “intention” of the action of the main verb whereas result emphasizes the consequence of the verbal action that is “not intended.”

Now sometimes hina and sometimes the infinitive can introduce a clause that indicates both purpose and result meaning that it indicates both “the intention and its sure accomplishment.”

Commenting on this, Moule writes, “the Semitic mind was notoriously unwilling to draw a sharp dividing-line between purpose and consequence (Idiom Book, page 142).

In Romans 12:2, the prepositional phrase eis to dokimazein denotes purpose-result clause introduces the divine purpose with regards to the Christian and since that purpose never fails of fulfillment, it points us to the result as well. The verb dokimazo functions as a “purpose-result” infinitive indicating that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ by renovating their mind accomplishes what the Father intended in that it provides the believer the capacity to discern what the will of God is with regards to any situation.

The present tense and active voice of the verb is “stative” emphasizing that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ by renovating their mind accomplished what the Father intended in that the believers “exist in the state of” possessing the capacity to discern the will of God in any given situation.

The personal pronoun humeis is a reference to Paul’s Gentile and Jewish Christian readers in Rome. This form of the personal pronoun humeis is used in a distributive sense meaning that Paul is addressing “each and every one of” his Jewish and Gentile Christian readers, which emphasizes that this is the will of God for all Christians regardless of race or gender or social status. The word functions semantically as the subject of the infinitive dokimazo.
We will translate *eis to dokimazein humas*, “in order that each and every one of you may discern.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern…”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“What” is the nominative neuter singular form of the interrogative pronoun *tis* (τίς) (tis), which refers to the will of God in any particular situation or in other words, decisions that are in agreement with the will of the Father.

The word is used to form an indirect question and functions as an accusative direct object meaning it is receiving the action of the verb *dokimazo*. It functions as a nominative subject meaning that it is performing the action of the verb *eimi*, which is omitted due to Paul’s use of the figure of ellipsis. It is the subject even though the noun *thelema* is articular since the rule of Greek grammar is that when you have both an articular noun and a pronoun in the nominative case in the same sentence, the pronoun has greater priority and will be the subject even though the noun is articular. An articular noun would normally indicate that it is the subject.

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what…”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“The will of God” is composed of the articular nominative neuter singular form of the noun *thelema* (θέλημα) (the-lay-mah), “the will” and the articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun *theos* (θεός) (theh-os), “of God.”

By far the most common Greek noun for “will” in the Septuagint and New Testament is *thelema* meaning, “will, desire, determination, purpose.” The noun *thelema* is attested from Antiphon the Sophist onwards but is used very rarely in secular Greek, correspondingly the word denotes “intention, wish,” then predominately it means “will.”

In classical Greek, the term *thelema* is rare and means “purpose” or “wish, desire.” The word is also used for the sexual desire of the male.

The word appears almost 50 times in the Septuagint. Of these 25 are canonical. The noun is used to translate the following Hebrew words: *Chaphets* (21 times, as a verb and adjective) and *ratson* (9 times).
In the Septuagint, *thelema* is used of the will of God in Psalm 103:21 (LXX: 102:21) and Isaiah 44:28. It is used especially for doing the will of God in Psalm 103:21, 143:10. It is interesting that in the non-canonical writings of 1 and 4 Maccabees that doing God’s will or desire becomes an important theological theme.

The noun *thelema* appears 64 times in the Greek New Testament where it is a theologically significant word.

Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament gives the following definitions of the word (volume 2, page 137): (1) Represents both (objectively) what is willed and (subjectively) the act of willing. (2) Refers to male sexual desire (3) The will of God (4) The will of Christ (5) The will of the devil (6) The human will.

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon gives the following definitions for *thelema* (page 285): (1) One what one wishes or has determined shall be done (objectively, thing willed) (2) Of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ (3) Plural, commands, precepts (4) Act of willing, will, choice (5) Inclination, desire.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition: (1) what one wishes to happen, objective sense, what is willed (2) the act of willing or desiring, subjective sense, will (Page 447).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following meanings for the noun *thelema* (page 192): (1) Will, inclination, bent (2) Resolve (3) Will, purpose, design (4) Will, sovereign pleasure, behest.

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains gives the following definitions for *thelema* (volume 2): (1) That which is desired or wished for – ‘wish, desire’ (page 289). (2) That which is purposed, intended, or willed – ‘will, intent, purpose, plan’ (page 358). (3) Desire for sexual gratification – ‘sexual desire, physical desire’ (page 292).

The theological emphasis lies primarily in Paul and the writings of John. The noun *thelema* is used predominately in the Greek New Testament for the Father’s will.

The word is used of the Father’s will for His Son Jesus Christ, which was to die a substitutionary spiritual and physical death on the Cross (Matt. 7:21; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; Heb. 10:7, 9). It is used of the God the Son willingly becoming a human being in order to execute the Father’s plan for the Incarnation in Hebrews 10:5-10.

Hebrews 10:5-10, “Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, ‘SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. THEN I SAID, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS
WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL *(thelema)*, O GOD.’ After saying above, ‘SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them’ (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL *(thelema).’ He takes away the first in order to establish the second.”

The noun *thelema* is used of our Lord’s agony in the garden of Gethsemane in parallel passages in Matthew 26:42 and Luke 22:40-42.

Matthew 26:42, “He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will *(thelema)* be done.’”

Luke 22:40-42, “When He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will *(thelema)*, but Yours be done.’”

Mark 3:31-35, “Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.’ Answering them, He said, ‘Who are My mother and My brothers?’ Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will *(thelema)* of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.’”

The noun *thelema* is also used in John 4 where the incarnate Son of God reveals the fact that the will of the Father for His life was to proclaim the Gospel to the unbeliever (Jn. 4:30-38). The Lord in John 5:30 states that doing the will of the Father for His life meant self-sacrifice. Even though He was a perfect Man and the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ did not demand worship and adoration, as was His prerogative as deity but rather set aside His prerogatives in order that He may please the Father and by pleasing the Father He would serve not only God but also all mankind.

John 5:30, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will *(thelema)*, but the will *(thelema)* of Him who sent Me.”

This same principle is reiterated by our Lord in John 6:38-40. In Galatians 1:3-5 states that the will of the Father for the incarnate Son of God was that he might rescue the human race from the cosmic system to which they are enslaved from the moment of physical birth where everyone person is born physically alive but spiritually dead.
Galatians 1:3-5, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.”

The noun *thelema* is also used of the Father’s will for the sinner who has been declared justified by Him through faith in His Son Jesus Christ to become conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:17; 6:6; Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Pet. 2:15; 3:17; 4:2, 3, 19).

It is used by the elect angels and regenerate humanity in heaven after the rapture of the church who proclaim in unison that the Lamb of God is worthy to receive glory since everything exists because He sovereignly willed to create everything.

Revelation 4:11, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

The noun *thelema* is also used in relation to the Father’s will for every church age believer. The noun *thelema* is employed 4 times by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:1-14, which speaks of the work of God the Father in eternity past on behalf of every church age believer.

Ephesians 1:1-14, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at located in Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to all of you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Worthy of praise and glorification is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in the Person of Christ. When He elected us to privilege in Him before the foundation of the world for the purpose of being holy and blameless before Him. By means of divine love He has predestined us for the purpose of adoption for Himself according to grace purpose of His will. For the praise of the glory of His grace by means of which (grace) He has graced us out in the Person of the Beloved. In whom (the Beloved) we have the redemption through His blood (Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death), the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. From which (riches of His grace) He has directed infinite wealth toward all of us by means of all wisdom and perfect judgment. When He made known to all of us the mystery of His will according to His grace purpose, which He (the Father) purposed in Him (Christ). With respect to the dispensation of the fullness of the times to unite all things in the Person of Christ those in heaven and those on earth by means of Him (Christ). In whom also we have obtained an inheritance when we were predestined according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will. For the purpose of us being for the praise
of His glory, those of us who have confidently placed their trust in the Person of Christ. In whom (the Person of Christ) you have confidently placed your trust after hearing the word of truth, namely, the gospel of your salvation, in the Person of whom (Christ), in fact, when you had trusted, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit who is the Promise who (the Holy Spirit) is the guarantee of our inheritance until the deliverance of the purchased possession (church) for the praise of His glory.

The second passage that we will note concerning this word thelema in relation to the will of the Father for the believer is John 1:13. We see in this passage where the will of the Father is that if anyone accepts Christ as Savior that they would become a child of God as a result of the new spiritual birth, which we call in theology regeneration.

John 1:11-13, “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will (thelema) of the flesh nor of the will (thelema) of man, but of God.”

The noun thelema is employed by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:17 and 6:9, which in context addresses the issue of our conduct as believers and how we are to interact with each other.

Ephesians 4:17-6:9 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were
sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things, which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will (thelema) of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will (thelema) of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”
The word *thelema* appears in several passages, which deal with experiential sanctification, and in particular avoiding sexual immorality.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7, “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.”

1 Peter 4:1-2, “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”

The noun *thelema* is also used in relation to the prohibition not to love the things of the cosmic system of Satan.

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18 we find again the noun *thelema* in relation to rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-18, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

The noun *thelema* is used in 1 Peter 2:15 where the will of God is related to respect for authority and in particular submission to the civil authorities.

1 Peter 2:13-15, “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

*Thelema* is also used in a passage in 1 Peter 3, which deals with undeserved suffering.
1 Peter 3:8-18, “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, ‘THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.’ Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will (thelema) it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

The noun thelema is used in relation to the believer’s prayer life.

1 John 5:13-15, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence, which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”

We should pray for each other that we will execute the will of God.

Colossians 4:12, “Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.”

The noun thelema is also used in relation to the teaching of the Word of God, which reveals the will of God is made known to men.

John 7:14-17, “But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. The Jews then were astonished, saying, ‘How has this man become learned, having never been educated?’ So Jesus answered them and said, ”My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will (thelema), he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.”
In Romans 1:10, the noun *thelema* refers to the geographical will of God for the apostle Paul meaning the geographical location where God wants Paul to be.

Romans 1:9-10, “In fact, God is my witness whom I at the present time serve by means of my human spirit in the proclamation of the gospel concerning His Son, how on a habitual basis I mention of all of you always, during my prayers by making specific detailed requests that if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you”

In Romans 2:18, the noun *thelema* refers to what God directly required of the citizens of Israel, which was revealed through 613 commands (365 prohibitions and 248 commands) of the Mosaic Law.

Romans 2:17-18, “Now, if-and let us assume that it’s true for the sake of argument-you do identify yourself by the name ‘Jew’ and you do rely upon the Law and do boast in a relationship with God. And know His will through instruction and can discern the essentials because you have received oral instruction in the past in a detailed, systematic and repetitious manner by means of the Law and continue to do so.”

In Romans 12:2, the noun *thelema* refers to the will of the Father with regards to what He desires of the believer in a particular situation or when faced with a particular decision. When the believer renovates his mind by learning and obeying the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the Word of God, he acquires the capacity to discern what the Father desires of him in any given situation. This renovation of the mind through the Spirit and the Word gives the believer the capacity to discern what to think, say and do in any given situation.

The Scriptures speak extensively of the will of God.

Mark 3:35, “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Ephesians 6:5-6, “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Colossians 4:12, “Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.”

1 Thessalonians 4:3, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18, “in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 2:13-15, “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

1 Peter 4:1-2, “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”

1 John 2:17, “The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

The believer who is obedient to the Father’s will is being conformed to the image of Christ, which is the Father’s will for the believer (Rm. 8:29; Eph. 4:11-16; Philp. 3:3-14).

Romans 8:29, “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The believer must be aware of the fact that Satan, his cosmic system, and the enemy within, his old sin nature will be obstacles in obeying the Father’s will.

1 Peter 5:8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

The fact that true joy and happiness is related to the will of God is illustrated in a parable our Lord gave called the Parable of the Talents. A parable is a fictitious or made up story designed to teach a lesson through comparison. It is like an illustration for the points in a sermon. It conveys its message of truth through analogy, through comparison or contrast.

Matthew 25:14-30, “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your
master.’ And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

One question Christians (especially new believers) often ask concerns knowing the will of God. What does God want me to be? What does He want me to do? Usually these questions revolve around such issues as an occupation or some of the other details of life, namely, a marriage partner, where to live, what school to go to, or what church one attend. As you think about God’s will what comes to mind? It has been my experience that many people generally focus on certain things that they desire rather than what God desires. This is reflected in their prayer life. They pray for things that they desire rather than what God desires for them. This is because they lack the divine perspective and the reason why they lack the divine perspective is that they are ignorant of the Word of God. We often think we know what is best for ourselves, but only God knows what’s best for us.

Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Jeremiah 10:23, “I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.”

Isaiah 55:6-13, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. For you will go out with joy and

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be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, and it will be a memorial to the LORD, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”

Too often believers are ignorant of the Word of God because they simply are arrogant and seek to live independent of God or they are distracted by the details of life, such as the job, the business, the family, the wife, the husband, the kids. They are either ignorant or they ignore the more basic and important areas.

For example, guidance or finding God’s will is often restricted to such things as: (1) Whom do I marry? (someone who will make me happy and who is perfect, of course). (2) Where do I work? (where it will be wonderful, challenging, and financially rewarding). (3) What car should I buy? (one that never breaks down). (4) What house should I buy? (one next door to Christians so I won’t have to witness). (5) Should I go to college, and if so, where should I go? (where I can make all A’s, meet the right person, or get away from mom and dad). (6) What kind of pastor does God want our church to have? (someone who can walk on water, leap tall buildings, and fly faster than a speeding bullet).

As is obvious, when such a list is the primary focus guidance becomes something people want for their own happiness and fulfillment so life will flow along smoothly like an interstate highway. Certainly we should seek God’s guidance and pray about such things as James warned us when he wrote, “Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that’” (James 5:15).

In a similar fashion, Paul wrote, “always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now by the will of God, I may succeed in coming to you” (Rom. 1:10), and Proverbs 16:3 says, “Commit your works to the LORD, and your plans will be established.”

A brief look at those passages where God’s will is specifically mentioned however shows that our own happiness and the details with which we are so often occupied are secondary, never primary. Such an occupation or attitude typifies the shallow thinking of a society that is out of touch with the purposes of the living God and how He works. We are a consumer-oriented society bent on our own comfort and pleasure, whereas God has much greater goals in mind. We are a very selfish society in many ways.

Just a brief glance at the passages that we noted earlier where the words “will of God” are found quickly show us God’s primary concern is in the realm of the spiritual and concerns the viewpoint and operational will of God or Christ-like change.
The essential foundation for discovering and doing God’s will is devotion to God and a desire to do His will—to please and glorify Him.

Psalm 25:12, “Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.”

2 Corinthians 5:9, “Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”

Psalm 37:4-5, “Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.”

1 Thessalonians 4:1, “Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God just as you actually do walk, that you may excel still more.”

James 4:3-4, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

2 Timothy 2:4, “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

The believer who does the will of God is one who is pleasing to the Lord, which involves discovering and doing what pleases the Lord by living in the light of the Word. Pleasing the Lord means doing His will.

1 Thessalonians 2:4, “But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts.”

Galatians 1:10, “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

The Scriptures emphatically states that God cares about each of us and wants to direct our lives. His plan for our lives is infinitely superior in every detail than our own plan for our lives since God is perfect in wisdom. God’s plan for our lives is superior because He has an omniscient knowledge of all the facts concerning our lives and He has the omnipotence to accomplish this plan for our lives.

The greatest historical piece of evidence regarding God’s desire to guide our lives is the Cross of Christ and equally as great is the Scriptures. He has given us the Bible that we might know His will, purpose and plan in all areas of life. This means knowing God and the life He has for us to live. Christ is our life.

Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”
Colossians 3:2-4, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

The responsibility of each of us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is to entrust our way to God for His guidance and direction.

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

James 1:5, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

1 Peter 5:6-7, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

The believer who does the will of God is one who is pleasing to the Lord, which involves discovering and doing what pleases the Lord by living in the light of the Word. In order to please the Lord we must do the following:

Mark 12:29-31, “Jesus answered, ‘The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

John 14:23, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”

The apostle Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God’s desire for the unbeliever is to get saved but the second half of the verse expresses God’s desire after one has been saved.

1 Timothy 2:4, “who wants all men to be saved and to come to an experiential knowledge of the truth.”

John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”

Colossians 1:9-12, “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining
of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.”

“Knowledge” is the noun epignosis and, in the context of Colossians 1:9, refers to an “experiential knowledge” of the Father’s will. Paul prayed that the Colossians personally encounter the will of the Father, as the Holy Spirit—through the process of experiential sanctification—reveals it in the pages of Scripture. He prayed that the Colossians gain knowledge or practical wisdom from observing and encountering the will of the Father. God wants us to have an experiential knowledge of Christ meaning He wants us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

An experiential knowledge of Christ takes place when the believer applies the mind of Christ to his own special set of circumstances in life. God wants us to be conformed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.”

To be conformed to the image of Christ means that God wants us to be like His Son in thought, word and action. The believer must apply the mind of Christ in order for the believer to experience this being conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the primary objective of each member of the Trinity. This was the number one objective of Paul’s life. It is expressed by him in a great passage in Philippians 3. May I say to you that God’s will for your life and my life is to become like the Lord Jesus Christ in thought, word and action. The apostle Paul expresses the following in Philippians 3:1-14.

Philippians 3:1-14, “From now on, my brothers, all of you begin rejoicing and continue doing so because of the Lord: writing these same things for all of you is in fact never bothersome for me but safe for all of you. Beware of those dogs, beware of those evil workers, beware of the mutilation because we are the circumcision those who are serving (God the Father) by means of the Spirit of God, who are priding themselves in the nature of Christ Jesus, who have no confidence in the flesh. Although I myself having confidence in the flesh, if anyone of the same race (i.e., Jewish) claims to have confidence in the flesh and some claim to have confidence in the flesh, I more. With respect to circumcision: eighth day, descended from the nation of Israel, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew (speaking Jew) from Hebrews (Hebrew speaking parents), legalistically: a Pharisee, zealously persecuting the church, self-righteously religious: I conducted myself irreproachably! Nevertheless, what pre-salvation distinctions were assets for me, these I have come to regard
as a liability because of the Christ. Furthermore in fact, yes without a doubt, I continue to regard each today as a liability because of the incomparable knowledge pertaining to Christ Jesus, my Lord because of whom I have renounced all of them, even regarding all of them as piles of excrement in order that I might gain Christ-likeness. So that I might be identified with Him, not by possessing my own legalistic righteousness, but rather faithful Christ-likeness, the divine righteousness based upon doctrine that I come to know Him experientially and the power from His resurrection and the participation in His sufferings by my becoming like Him with respect to His death. If somehow (by becoming like Him with respect to His death), I may attain to the exit-resurrection, namely, the one out from the (spiritually) dead ones. (I am) not (saying) that I have already achieved this, or I have already been brought to completion, but rather I am sprinting, if (by sprinting) I also may have captured the prize for which I also have been captured by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not evaluate myself to have captured the prize, but I am in fact continually concentrating on one thing, namely, by forgetting the past and by extending myself forward towards the future, bearing down upon the objective. I am sprinting towards the finish line for the prize, which is God the Father’s invitation to privilege residing in the Person of Christ Jesus.”

God’s goal in saving us, and that of Christ Himself, is not just heaven. Though heaven is assured for believers through the finished work of Christ, God’s desire is to make us like His Son. But in order for us to be conformed experientially to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must grow by eating our spiritual food, namely the Word of God, which is the mind of Christ.

Matthew 4:4, “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

Growing and reaching greater levels of maturity (another word for Christ-likeness) is God’s primary will for all believers. As that occurs, all the other aspects of God’s will fall into place to the degree we are experiencing His life in ours.

2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

As in the case of having assurance in life, knowing what the will of God is for your life is contingent upon the believer first knowing the teaching of the Word of God. The need and goal of growth and maturity are expressed in a number of New Testament passages.

Ephesians 4:11-16, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping...
of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

There are other passages in the New Testament, which emphasize spiritual growth or growing up to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:2, “And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation.”

Hebrews 5:11-6:1, “Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.”

1 Corinthians 14:20, “Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking. Instead, be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.”

Philippians 1:9-11, “Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge so that all of you might continue to choose the essentials in order that all of you might be sincere and without offense for the day of Christ by all of you being filled with the fruit produced by righteousness, which is by means of the nature of Jesus who is the Christ for the ultimate purpose of glorifying and praising God.”

The need for growth and maturity, or spiritual transformation, is called experiential sanctification, which we have noted in detail in our studies of Romans. The Word of God is the foundation and the light that illuminates our path in this journey to arrive at the divine objective for our lives, which is Christ-likeness. If we are to become like the Lord, we must adhere to His teaching.

Psalms 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
This pursuit of knowing the Savior through experience is not without obstacles and distraction. We can become engulfed in the day-to-day concerns of raising a family and seeking to cope with the never-ending details of one’s work and ministry. But not only that, the constant pull on us from the cosmic system of Satan can have an equally negative impact on our pursuit of attaining Christ-likeness.

God wants every church age believer to experience what God has made him positionally at the moment of salvation through the Baptism of the Spirit, namely, to be identified with Christ in His death and resurrection.

The means that God the Father employs in order that the believer might experience identification with Christ in His death and resurrection is the Cross. We must die to self and live to God. This experiential identification with Christ in His death and resurrection starts with the Cross. Everything in our spiritual life pivots off the Cross. We must die to self and live to God.

Matthew 16:24-27, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.’”

Galatians 6:14, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

1 Corinthians 15:31, “I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.”

Romans 6 teaches the principle of experiencing that which is true positionally about us as believers, namely identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. The prayer of the apostle Paul for himself and those of his flock was that they re-produce Christ-like character.

Philippians 1:20-21, “According to my confident anticipation that I will be put to shame in nothing but with all courage, as always, even now, Christ will be glorified in my body whether by life or by death because as far as I am concerned to continue living is Christ and to have died is profit.”

Ephesians 3:14-19, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and
height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

Galatians 4:19, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.”

The goal that God has set before each one of us is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ in thought, word and action. That is our goal, plain and simple. It sounds like a peaceful, relaxing, easy objective. But stop and think. He learned obedience by the things He suffered. So do we. He endured all kinds of temptations. So must we.

1 Peter 2:21, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”

Hebrews 12:1-3, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

To be like Christ is our goal. But it is neither easy nor quick nor natural. It’s impossible in the flesh, slow in coming, and supernatural in scope. The Christian way of life is supernatural way of life and demands a supernatural means of execution.

The two great divine provisions, the Spirit of God and the Word of God are the means that God has provided each church age believer so that the believer might attain the Father’s objective for their life, which is Christ-likeness. The believer who is advancing to spiritual maturity and thus having the Christ-like character formed in him will grow in virtue-love which has a 2-fold direction (John 13:34-35; Phlp. 1:9-11): (1) Vertical: Unconditional personal love for the Father and occupation with the Person of Christ as motivational virtue. (2) Horizontal: Impersonal unconditional self-sacrificial love for all mankind, especially for all believers as functional virtue. The believer who fulfills the divine mandate of operating according to virtue-love will be identified as a student of the Lord Jesus Christ according to John 13:34-35.

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

So in order to execute God’s plan for our lives…or in other words to do His will…to be pleasing to Him…we must understand that God wants us become like His Son…He wants us to develop the character of Christ in our lives. After we are
saved the divine objective is that we are conformed to the image of Christ experientially meaning we are identified with Christ in His death and resurrection experientially. We are all positionally conformed to the image of God’s Son meaning we are identified with Him positionally in His death and resurrection. What I mean by positionally is that God looks at us and sees His Son but experientially this is not the case. We are in the process after salvation of experiencing identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

After salvation, God wants us to experience that which is true of us positionally. Eventually, we will ultimately be identified with Christ in His death and resurrection at the rapture of the church when we will receive our resurrection bodies.

Philippians 1:6, “And I am confident of this very same thing that He who began a good work in all of you will completely finish it up to the day of Christ Jesus.”

God the Father wants us to experience identification with Christ in His death and resurrection in order to develop the character of Christ in our lives.

God the Father has given the believer two great divine provisions in order to develop Christ-likeness in the believer: (1) Word of God (2) Spirit of God.

There are various Old Testament Hebrew words and Greek New Testament word groups are related to the subject of the will of God. It is significant that the phrase “the will of God” is never found in the Hebrew Old Testament. There is no one Hebrew word for “will.” The principal expressions used in the Hebrew Old Testament are the following:

Chephets (noun) (gheh-phetz), “desire, delight, pleasure.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose (chephets) under the heaven.”

Isaiah 44:28, “It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire (chephets).’ And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’”

Isaiah 46:9-10, “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure (chephets).’”

Chaphets (verb) (ghah-phetz), “to be pleased, to delight.”

Numbers 14:8, “If the LORD is pleased (chaphets) with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us -- a land which flows with milk and honey.”

Psalm 22:6-8, “But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the
lip, they wag the head, saying, ‘commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver
him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights (chaphets) in him.’”

Psalm 40:8, “I delight (chaphets) to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is
within my heart.”

Isaiah 53:10, “But the LORD was pleased (chaphets) To crush Him, putting
Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His
offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will
prosper in His hand.”

Ratson (noun) (rah-tzohn), “favor, pleasure, will.”

Ezra 10:11, “Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your
fathers and do His will (ratson); and separate yourselves from the peoples of
the land and from the foreign wives.”

Psalm 19:14, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable (ratson) in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.”

Psalm 40:8, “I delight to do Your will (ratson), O my God; Your Law is
within my heart.”

Psalm 103:21, “Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him,
doing His will (ratson).”

Psalm 143:10, “Teach me to do Your will (ratson), for You are my God; Let
Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

Ratsah (verb) (raw-tsaw), “to be pleased, to delight.”

Proverbs 16:7, “When a man's ways are pleasing (ratsah) to the LORD, He
makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

Isaiah 42:1, “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom
My soul delights (ratsah). I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth
justice to the nations.”

Ezekiel 20:40, “For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,
declares the Lord GOD, ‘there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will
serve Me in the land; there I will accept (ratsah) them and there I will seek
your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.’”

The terminology pertaining to the doctrine of divine guidance, i.e. the will of
God in the Greek New Testament is more uniform. As we noted earlier in our
study of Romans 12:2, by far the most common Greek noun for “will” in the
Septuagint and New Testament is thelema. The cognate verb of the noun thelema
is thelo, “to wish to have, to desire, to wish, to purpose to do, to be willing.”

The verb thelo appears in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 where the Lord quotes Hosea
6:6. In these passages, the Lord informs the legalistic, self-righteous, religious
Pharisees that God’s desires that we extend mercy and compassion towards one
another. The will of God is that we are compassionate and merciful toward one
another.
The verb *thelo* is also used in relation to the gift of eternal life in John 5:21 where the Lord Jesus Christ sovereignly gives eternal life to whoever expresses faith in Him for salvation.

**John 5:21-24**, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes (*thelo*). For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

The verb *thelo* also appears in 1 Timothy 2:4 where it is used to express God’s desire for all men to be saved and come to an intimate personal experiential knowledge of Christ.

**1 Timothy 2:4**, “who desires (*thelo*) all men to be saved and to come to an experiential knowledge of the truth.”

The verb *thelo* appears in John 17:24 where the Lord Jesus Christ in His Great High Priestly Prayer or as some theologians call, His Upper Room Discourse expresses His desire to the Father that we His disciples reside with Him in heaven in order to see the glory He has always possessed as the 2nd Member of the Trinity.

**John 17:24**, “Father, I desire (*thelo*) that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

The verb *thelo* is also used in James 4:15 where James emphasizes the importance of the believer recognizes or acknowledging the sovereignty of God in our lives.

**James 4:13-15**, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills (*thelo*), we will live and also do this or that.’”

The verb *thelo* appears in Romans 9:16 of human desire. In Romans 9:18, the word means “to choose” since it refers to the exercise of God’s sovereign will in extending grace to those who accept by faith His Son Jesus Christ as their Savior. It is found in Romans 9:22 where it means “to choose” and refers to the Father “sovereignly choosing” to demonstrate His wrath and make known His power.

The Greek New Testament employs another word group in relation to the subject of divine guidance and the will of God for our lives. It is composed of the
following: (1) *Boule*, “purpose, counsel, decision.” (2) *Boulema*, “counsel, design.” (3) *Boulomai*, “to intend, purpose, want, desire.”

The noun *boulema* is used once in the Greek New Testament in relation to the subject of the will of God, which denotes the concept of a planned course of action. Paul uses the word in Romans 9:19 for the “divine decree,” which is God’s eternal and immutable will, regarding the future existence of events, which will happen in time and regarding the precise order and manner of their occurrence.

The word is used in relation in Acts 2:23 of the well-thought-out decision from the sovereign will of God the Father in eternity past to send His Son to the Cross.

*Acts 2:22-23*, “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know -- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan (*boule*) and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

The fact that Jesus Christ was delivered over to the Jews and the Romans to be crucified by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God simply means that God has agreed to permit His Son to die on the Cross. This is reiterated by Peter and John used this word when speaking to the Sanhedrin.

*Acts 4:27-28*, “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel (*boule*) predestined to occur.”

Paul employs the noun *boule* when addressing the pastors in Ephesus.

*Acts 20:27*, “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel (*boule*) of God.”

Both noun *boule* and the verb *boulomai* are employed in Hebrews 6:17.

*Hebrews 6:17-18*, “In the same way God, desiring (*boulomai*) even more to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel (*boule*), interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.”

The verb *boulomai* appears in Matthew 11:27.

*Matthew 11:27*, “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills (*boulomai*) to reveal Him.”

The word is found in Luke 22:42.

*Luke 22:41-42*, “And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing (*boulomai*), remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.’”
The verb *boulomai* is also used of the Father’s deliberations or counsel in eternity past to give us eternal salvation by means of the Gospel or Word of Truth.

**James 1:18**, “In the exercise of His will (*boulomai*) He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”

It is also used of God’s desire that all men be saved.

**2 Peter 3:9**, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing (*boulomai*) for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Then, we have the third word group that is used in relation to the will of God, which is composed of the following: (1) *Eudokeo* (verb), “to be well pleased in something or someone or to do something.” *Eudokia* (noun), “grace purpose, good pleasure, gracious will.”

*Eudokia* refers to the grace purpose of God the Father in eternity past.

**Philippians 2:12-13**, “Therefore, my virtuously loved ones, in the same manner that all of you have consistently obeyed, not only when in my presence, but now, much more in my absence, you yourselves continue executing your own spiritual life by means of respect (for God) and with trembling. Since God (the Holy Spirit) is the One producing in all of you not only the determination but also the (resultant) production for the attainment of the grace purpose of God the Father in eternity past (*euodokia)*.”

The noun *euodokia* is used of the gracious purpose of God the Father in eternity past who predestined us to adoption as adult sons into the royal family of God.

**Ephesians 1:5-9**, “By means of virtue-love He has predestined us for the purpose of adoption to Himself according to the gracious purpose (*euodokia*) of His will so that we might praise the glory of His grace by means of which grace He has blessed us in union with the Beloved One. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace from which grace He has caused to abound toward us infinite wealth by means of all wisdom and understanding when He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His gracious purpose (*euodokia*), which He has purposed in Him.”

The verb *euodokeo* is used of God being well-pleased in saving those who believe the Gospel message.

**1 Corinthians 1:21-24**, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased (*euodokia*) through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to
those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and
the wisdom of God.”

The use of euodokeo in Luke 12:32 indicates that the will of God is that we be
given a kingdom.

Luke 12:31-32, “But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to
you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly
(euodokeo) to give you the kingdom.”

Paul uses the word of God’s being well-pleased to reveal Christ in his life.

Galatians 1:15-16, “But when God, who had set me apart even from my
mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased (euodokeo) to
reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.”

The verb euodokeo is employed in Colossians 1:19 which reveals that it was the
Father’s good pleasure that the hypostatic union take place.

Colossians 1:19-20, “For it was the Father's good pleasure (euodokeo) for
all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to
Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I
say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

The word was used in Matthew 17:5.

Matthew 17:5, “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed
them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with
whom I am well-pleased (euodokeo); listen to Him!’”

2 Peter 1:17, “For when He received honor and glory from God the Father,
such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My
beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased (euodokeo).’”

The noun euodokia is used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:12.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, “because of which we also make it a habit to pray
for all of you always, in order that our God might count all of you worthy of
your calling, and that all of you might fulfill totally the Father’s generous
grace purpose (euodokeo) and the work of the Christian faith by means of
divine power so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and
you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Then we have the fourth word group composed of: (1) Prothesis (noun),
“purpose.” (2) Protithemi (verb), “to purpose, set forth, design.”

Ephesians 1:7-11, “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the
forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace from which grace He
has caused to abound toward us infinite wealth by means of all wisdom and
understanding when He made known to us the mystery of His will according
to His grace intention, which He has graciously purposed (protithemi) in Him.
with reference to the dispensation of the fullness of the times to gather
together in the Person of Christ those who are in heaven and those on the
earth in Him. In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance when having been predestined according to a predetermined plan originating from the One who works all things according to the purpose (prothesis) of His will.”

Romans 8:28-30, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (prothesis). For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

Romans 9:11, “for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose (prothesis) according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls.”

Ephesians 3:8-11, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose (prothesis) which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2 Timothy 1:8-11, “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose (prothesis) and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.”

The noun prothesis in these passages, the word refers to that which is planned or purposed in advance. It refers to the “divine decree,” which is God the Father’s eternal plan in which He has rendered certain all the events of the universe, including both angelic and human history-past, present and future.

Then, we have the following word group that is directly related to the will of God, which is composed of: (1) Euaresteo (verb), “to be well-pleasing.” (2) Euarestos (noun), “well-pleasing.”

Ephesians 5:6-10, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of
the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is well-pleasing (euarestos) to the Lord.”

Romans 12:1-2, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, well-pleasing (euarestos) to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing (euarestos) and perfect.”

Romans 14:14-18, “I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is well-pleasing (euarestos) to God and approved by men.”

2 Corinthians 5:9, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing (euarestos) to Him.”

Philippians 4:18, “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing (euarestos) to God.”

Colossians 3:20, “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing (euarestos) to the Lord.”

Hebrews 11:5-6, “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because god took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing (euaresteo) Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Hebrews 13:12-16, “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city, which is to come. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased (euaresto).”

Hebrews 13:20-21, “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in
us that which is well-pleasing (euarestos) in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The last word that we will note in the Greek New Testament that is used in relation to the sovereign will of God appears in 1 Peter 2:5.

1 Peter 2:5, “you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices extremely well-received (euprosdektos) by God through the doctrine of Jesus Christ.”

“Extremely well-received” is the adjective euprosdektos. There is one all-inclusive will or purpose of God concerning all that ever was or will be from the beginning of human history until its termination on the last day of the Millennium. God has known every thought, decision, and action that has ever occurred or will occur; all these things come into being through Him.

John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

Colossians 1:16-17, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Psalm 148:1-6, “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away.”

“The will of God” refers to His sovereign decision as to what would come into existence; in other words, the divine decrees. The decree of God is His eternal, holy, wise and sovereign purpose, comprehending at once all things that ever were or will be in their causes, courses, conditions, successions, and relations and determining their certain futurition (i.e., that they will certainly take place).

The divine decrees are actually one decree but because of the limitations of our human brain we often use the plural, decrees, to express the many facets of God’s plan. The decree of God is His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of events, which will happen in time and regarding the precise order and manner of their occurrence.

The will of God in common usage refers to what God desires of an individual or group in a particular situation. The will of God in relation to the divine decrees refers to the decision God made in eternity past, from His attribute of sovereignty,
which established that certain things would actually come into being while other things would not.

The will of God is His sovereign choice as to what will take place in time. Human beings and angels have a volition that is free to choose to obey God’s will or reject it. Many things occur as a result of angelic and human free will acting contrary to God’s desires.

God in eternity past decreed that angels and human beings would have volition and that would be allowed to make decisions contrary to the sovereign will of God and without compromising the justice of God. The divine decrees are the eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all the events of the universe, including both angelic and human history-past, present and future.

The decree of God is the chosen and adopted plan of all God’s works. The decree of God is His eternal purpose, according to the counsels of His own will, whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatever comes to pass. The decree of God is the sovereign choice of the divine will (His attribute of sovereignty) and mentality (His omniscience) by which all things are brought into being and controlled, made subject to His pleasure, and producing His glorification.

Isaiah 46:3-11, “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth And have been carried from the womb; Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you! I have done it, and I will carry you; And I will bear you and I will deliver you. To whom would you liken Me and make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike? Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh silver on the scale hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; They set it in its place and it stands there. It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress. Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.”

Proverbs 8:15-16, “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly.”
Job 23:13-14, “But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him.”

The will and purpose of God originated within Himself long before any creature of any kind existed.

Ephesians 1:3-5, “Worthy of praise and glorification is the God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ because He has elected us to privilege by means of Him before the foundation of the world for the purpose of us being set apart and virtuous before Him. By means of virtue-love He has predestined us for the purpose of adoption to Himself according to the gracious purpose of His will.”

His will is always consistent with His perfect essence. Essence means “inner nature, true substance, a person’s qualities or attributes.” The will and purpose of God—that is, the divine decree—was objectively designed for His own glory, pleasure, and satisfaction. God did not decree Himself to be since God existed prior to and outside of the decrees, so that divine decrees do not act upon God; He acts upon the decrees. God’s decrees are efficacious—having the power to produce the intended effect. They actually determine all that ever was or will be and include the following: (1) God’s directive will (2) God’s permissive will (3) God’s overruling will.

These three categories of divine will describe the manner in which God’s sovereignty controls history. They show how divine sovereignty actually deals with human volition.

The will of God (as to what would exist, i.e., the divine decree) calls for God’s will (His attribute of sovereignty) to function toward us in certain ways: (1) Directly stating what He desires of us (2) Permissively allowing us to our own way (3) Overruling our decisions—not letting them have their intended results—in order to protect us and the rest of mankind from our own negative volition and to preserve and perpetuate His own marvelous plan.

An example of the directive and permissive will of God in Scripture is found in the book of Genesis where Adam and the Woman disobey the directive will of God and God permitted them to have their own way. An example of God’s overruling will in Scripture is found in 1 Samuel 25. In 1 Samuel 25 we studied where David was prevented by the Lord from killing a man named Nabal for whom David and his troops offered protection for from the Bedouin Arabs. Nabal’s ungratefulness enraged David and set off to kill Nabal but the Lord used Nabal’s wife Abigail to prevent him from performing this evil.

1 Samuel 25:23-26, “When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the
ground. She fell at his feet and said, ‘On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal.’”

1 Samuel 25:32-34, “Then David said to Abigail, ‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male.’”

The doctrine of divine guidance can also be approached from the following standpoint: (1) Geographical will of God: Where does God want me to be? (2) Operational will of God: What does God want me to do? (3) Viewpoint will of God: What does God want me to think?

There is a specific geographical location where God wants us to be in order to perform that which He has planned for us from eternity past. There are many examples in Scripture, which teach this principle. For instance, in Acts 10 and 11, God wanted Peter to leave Joppa where he was residing and go to Caesarea where a Roman centurion named Cornelius, a Gentile was residing. God had prepared Cornelius and his family to hear to the Gospel for their salvation. If Peter did not go to Caesarea as commanded by the Holy Spirit he would have been out of the geographical will of God for his life.

The Scriptures record in Genesis 12 the account of the father of our faith, Abraham who was also out of the geographical will of God for his life at time during the course of his post-salvation experience. The directive will of God for his life was that he stay in the land of Canaan, but because of a famine Abraham went down to Egypt. He did not trust the Lord and went to Egypt, which is a picture of the world, the cosmic system of Satan. Abraham got into trouble in Egypt because he is out of the geographical will of God. Out of fear that the Egyptians might kill him in order to take his beautiful wife Sarai, Abraham requests that Sarai tell the Egyptians that she was his sister.

The permissive will of God permitted Abraham to make the wrong decision to go to Egypt. The overruling will of God overruled Abraham’s negative decision in order to protect him and his wife Sarai.
A classic example in Scripture of a believer being out of the geographical, the viewpoint and operational will of God is that of Jonah. The Lord wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach the Gospel for their salvation, but instead because of Jonah’s personal hatred of the Ninevites, he went deliberately disobeyed the directive from God. Jonah was out of the geographical will of God in that he went to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh…Tarshish was in the exact opposite direction from that of Nineveh. He was out of the viewpoint will of God in that his attitude toward the Ninevites was not according to divine viewpoint, where 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God desires all men to be saved…Jonah did not desire the Ninevites to be saved. Jonah was out of the operational will of God because he did not do what the Lord had commanded him, which was to preach the Gospel to the unsaved Ninevites. He was out of the geographical and operational will of God because he was out of the viewpoint will of God. You will be in the wrong place and doing the wrong thing if you do not have divine viewpoint, which is acquired by learning and applying the Word of God, which is the mind or thinking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Romans 12:2, the apostle Paul is addressing the viewpoint will of God with the believers in Rome. It refers to the will of the Father with regards to what He desires of the believer in a particular situation or when faced with a particular decision. When the believer renovates his mind by learning and obeying the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the Word of God, he acquires the capacity to discern what the Father desires of him in any given situation. This renovation of the mind through the Spirit and the Word gives the believer the capacity to discern what to think, say and do in any given situation.

The noun *thelema* functions as a “predicate nominative” meaning that it is making an assertion with regards to no particular decision that a believer might make during the course of his life after his conversion, namely that the decision is according to the will of the Father.

In Romans 12:2, the noun *theos* refers to the Father since the articular construction of this noun in the New Testament commonly signifies the first member of the Trinity. The word functions as a genitive of possession meaning that it produces the noun *thelema*, “will” to which it stands related indicating that the will in question is “belongs to” the Father. We will translate *theos*, “God the Father’s will.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what God the Father’s will…”
Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“Is” does not translate a Greek word but is correctly added by the translators since they correctly interpret Paul as deliberately omitting the third person singular present active indicative form of the verb *eimi* (εἰμί) (i-mee) due to his use of the figure of ellipsis.

The word means “to be identical with,” or “to be equivalent to.” The word functions as a copula uniting the subject, which is the interrogative pronoun tis, “what” and the predicate nominative, which is the noun *thelema*, “will.” Therefore, the verb *eimi* denotes that the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ by the renovation of this thinking gives him the capacity to discern that a particular decision he makes is “equivalent to” or identical with” the Father’s will.

The present tense of the verb is “gnomic” used of a general timeless fact indicating an eternal spiritual truth or spiritual axiom. This indicates that Paul the transformation of the believer’s character into the image of Christ by the renovation of this thinking gives him the capacity to discern that a particular decision he makes is “as an eternal spiritual truth” identical with the Father’s will.

The active voice is “stative” indicating that the subject exists in the state indicated by the verb *eimi*. The subject is no particular decision that a believer might make after his conversion. This indicates that this decision by the believer “exists in the state of being” the Father’s will.

The indicative mood of the verb is “interrogative” meaning that it is employed with the interrogative pronoun tis, “what” to form an indirect question.

We will translate *eimi*, “is, as an eternal spiritual truth.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will...”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“That which is good” is the articular nominative neuter singular form of the adjective *agathos* (ἀγαθός) (ag-ath-os).

The adjective *agathos* appears throughout Greek literature, both classical and Hellenistic. It came to be associated with that which was perfect or excellent and with that which distinguished itself by its value or worth.
The Attic authors and philosophers commonly used *kalos* or *agathos* to explain the total summary of the qualities, which an Attic man of honor displayed. It was used in a substantive sense meaning to do what is “good.”

Although there is at times some semantic overlap with *kalos*, there are some different nuances between the two. First of all, *kalos* suggests aesthetic beauty, usefulness, fitness while *agathos* acquires philosophical and ethical connotations. The word assumes a predominately religious meaning in the Septuagint where it denotes the “goodness” of God as demonstrated by His deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians (Exodus 18:9; Numbers 10:32; Hosea 8:3).

*Agathos* was used to identify God and to describe His creation and works in the Septuagint and Greek New Testament and expresses the significance or excellence of a person or thing.

In the Greek New Testament, the adjective means, “what is intrinsically valuable, what is intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent.”

*Agathos* is used in the New Testament primarily of that which is divine in quality and character and is beneficial to others.

Vine commenting on the word, writes, “*Agathos* describes that which, being ‘good’ in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect; it is used (a) of things physical, e. g., a tree, Matt 7:17; ground, Luke 8:8; (b) in a moral sense, frequently of persons and things. God is essentially, absolutely and consummately ‘good,’ Matt 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19. To certain persons the word is applied in Matt 20:15; 25:21,23; Luke 19:17; 23:50; John 7:12; Acts 11:24; Titus 2:5; in a general application, Matt 5:45; 12:35; Luke 6:45; Rom 5:7; 1 Peter 2:18. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition lists the following definitions: (1) pertaining to meeting a relatively high standard of quality of things (2) pertaining to meeting a high standard of worth and merit (Pages 3-4).

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon defines *agathos*: (1) of a good constitution or nature (2) useful, salutary (3) of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy (4) excellent, distinguished (5) upright, honorable; benevolent, kind, generous; a good thing, convenience, advantage, goods, riches; of the benefits of the Messianic kingdom; what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God (page 2-3).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following meanings, “good, profitable, generous, beneficent, upright, virtuous” (page 2).

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains list the following meanings for the noun: (1) positive moral qualities of the most
general nature – ‘good, goodness, good act’ (volume 2, page 743). (2) pertaining to having the proper characteristics or performing the expected function in a fully satisfactory way – ‘good, nice, pleasant’ (volume 2, page 623). (3) pertaining to being generous, with the implication of its relationship to goodness – ‘generous’ (volume 2, page 570). (4) (occurring only in the plural): possessions which provide material benefits, usually used with reference to movable or storable possessions rather than real estate – ‘goods, possessions’ (volume 2, page 562).

This is the thirteenth time that we have seen the adjective *agathos* in our studies of the book of Romans (2:7, 10; 3:8; 5:7; 7:12, 13 twice, 18, 19; 8:28; 9:11; 10:15).

In Romans 2:7, the word refers to that which is divine in quality and character and describes the work of God in conforming the believer into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ in time resulting in Christ-likeness or spiritual maturity, the maximum production of Christ-like character in the believer in time. This divine work began the moment the believer expressed faith alone in Christ alone and continues after salvation in the believer who obeys the Father’s will, which is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the communication of the Word of God and which work will be completed at the resurrection of the church.

**Romans 2:7,** “On the one hand, according to perseverance, which produces work that is divine in quality and character: glory and honor and immortality for the benefit of those who as a lifestyle make it a top priority to diligently and tenaciously pursue after eternal life, sparing no effort for it is of the highest value.”

In Romans 2:10, the adjective describes the work the Christian produces, which is “divine in quality and character” since it is produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit when the believer is obedient to the Word God and which obedience is motivated by love for the Lord and is reflected in one’s thoughts, words and actions.

**Romans 2:10,** “But not only this, there will be glory and honor and peace for the benefit of each and every one who works hard to accomplish the good, which is divine in quality and character, for both the Jew first and also the Greek.”

In Romans 3:8, the adjective *agathos* is in the plural and refers to “blessings” that result from perpetrating evil acts since the verb *erchomai* emphasizes the results from performing an action.

**Romans 3:8,** “Furthermore, what is the conclusion that we are forced to? (As we have been slanderously charged with in the past and continue to be up to the present moment and as some have in the past alleged we say and continue to do so up to the present moment), ‘Let us perpetrate evil acts in order that blessings might result.’ No! Their condemnation is, as an eternal spiritual truth, deserved.”
It appears in Romans 5:7 where it describes a person who is generous, helpful, considerate and sympathetic towards his fellow human being, which causes those who have benefited from his gracious actions to have personal love and affection for him.

Romans 5:7, “For, it is unlikely, anyone will die as a substitute for the benefit of a righteous person. In fact, possibly, someone might also have the courage to voluntarily die as a substitute for the benefit of the good person.”

In Romans 7:12, the adjective describes the tenth commandment as being “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent” since it originates from the perfect character and nature of God. The word describes the tenth commandment as having man’s best interests in mind and is not designed to hurt him.

In Romans 7:12-13, the adjective was used to describe the tenth commandment as being “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent” since it originates from the perfect nature of God.

Romans 7:12-13, “Therefore, indeed, the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy. Furthermore, the tenth commandment is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy and in addition righteous as well as good. Therefore, did that which is good cause temporal spiritual death in me? Absolutely not! On the contrary, the sin nature caused temporal spiritual death in me in order that the sin nature would be exposed by repeatedly producing temporal spiritual death in me by means of that which is good in order that by means of the tenth commandment, the sin nature would demonstrate itself extraordinarily sinful in character.”

In this passage, it expresses the perfect character and nature of God and His attitude towards His moral rational creatures. The word describes the tenth commandment as having man’s best interests in mind and is not designed to hurt him.

In Romans 7:18, Paul used the word to describe himself and in particular his physical body as indicated by the qualifying or epexegetical statement τούτ’ ἐστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ μου, “that is, in my flesh.”

Romans 7:18, “For you see, I know as a fact through experience, namely that absolutely nothing good, as an eternal spiritual truth, dwells in me, that is, in my flesh because the desire is, as an eternal spiritual truth, present in me, however, the capacity to produce that which is perfect, is, as an eternal spiritual truth absolutely not.”

It is used with οὐ to describe Paul’s physical body as not having anything “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality” in it since the
sin nature indwells it. Then in Romans 7:19, the adjective *agathos* is used of obedience to the Law, which is indicated by the verb *poieo*, “I do.” It therefore describes from God’s perspective that obedience to the Law is “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent” since it is in conformity to God’s sovereign will.

**Romans 7:19**, “For you see, the good that, I habitually desire to do, I by no means habitually accomplish. On the contrary, I habitually practice the very evil that I by no means habitually desire to do.”

In Romans 8:28, the adjective *agathos* means, “divine good of intrinsic quality and character” and refers to conforming the Christian into the image of Jesus Christ as indicated by the prepositional phrase *kata prothesin*, “according to His purpose” that appears in Romans 8:28 and by Paul’s statements in Romans 8:29-30.

**Romans 8:28-30**, “In fact, we know without a doubt that for the benefit of those who are characterized as divinely loving God the Father, He (the Spirit), as an eternal spiritual truth, always works each and every circumstance together for the good, for the benefit of those who are, as an eternal spiritual truth, the chosen ones, in accordance with His predetermined plan. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

In Romans 9:11, the adjective *agathos* means, “good” and is used of Esau and Jacob before they were born referring to actions that are in obedience to the revealed will of God and which would merit approval from God.

**Romans 9:11**, “For you see, when they had not yet been born nor practiced anything good or evil in order that God the Father’s predetermined plan, which is in accordance with election would remain immutable. Never based upon meritorious actions as constituting its source, but rather based upon the one who effectually calls is the one who constitutes its source.”

In Romans 10:15, the adjective *agathos* is used with reference to the gospel and describes it as being “divine in quality and character.”

**Romans 10:14-15**, “Therefore, how will they, themselves, call on Him in whom they never exercised absolute confidence in? Consequently, how will they exercise absolute confidence in Him whom they never heard of? Consequently, how will they hear apart from someone, as an eternal spiritual truth, publicly proclaiming as a herald in a dignified and authoritative manner to them? Consequently, how will they publicly proclaim as heralds in a dignified and authoritative manner, if they are not commissioned? As it
stands written for all of eternity, ‘How beautiful are the people, who themselves proclaim the good news, which is divine in quality and character.’”

In this passage, the adjective describes the gospel of Jesus Christ as being “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent” since it originates from the perfect character and nature of God. It expresses the perfect character and nature of God and His attitude towards His moral rational creatures.

The word describes the gospel as having man’s best interests in mind and is not designed to hurt him. The adjective describes the gospel as being “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent” since it originates from the perfect nature of God.

Now, in Romans 12:2, the adjective agathos is describing a decision made or an action performed by the believer after his conversion that is in accordance with the Father’s will. It describes this decision or action as being “intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent.” This decision is agathos because it is in accordance with the will of the Father. It is good in that it fulfills the purpose of Christ’s crucifixion, spiritual and physical deaths, His resurrection and session as well as the purpose of the various ministries performed by the Holy Spirit on the believer’s behalf. It is good in that it fulfills the Father’s eternal purpose for the believer electing and predestinating them. It is good in that it fulfills the purpose for which the Father delivered the justified sinner from the sin nature, personal sins, Satan and his cosmic system, i.e. salvation. It is good in that it fulfills the purpose for which the Father set apart him to do His will exclusively, sanctification.

Also, the article is “anaphoric” meaning that the adjective agathos indicating that its synonym was used in the previous context, which was thelema, “will.” It also has a demonstrative force to it and should be translated, “that which is” as the New American Standard Updated Version correctly renders it.

The word functions as a “nominative in simple apposition” meaning that it stands in apposition to the predicate nominative thelema, “will” and further “describes” performing the will of the Father. We will translate the articular form of the adjective agathos, “that which is good.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will, that which is good...”
Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“And” is the “adjunctive” use of the conjunction kai (καί), which introduces another word that further describes performing the will of God “in addition to” the previous description provided by the adjective agathos, “good.” We will translate kai, “as well as.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will, that which is good as well as…”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“Acceptable” is composed of the nominative neuter singular form of the adjective euarestos (εὐαρέστος) (yoo-ar-es-tos).

We studied this word in detail in Romans 12:1.

Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I appeal to each and every one of you spiritual brothers and sisters on the basis of the merciful acts produced by God the Father to offer your bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing and beneficial to God the Father, which is your reasonable service.”

In Romans 12:1, the adjective euarestos means “extremely pleasing” and is used with reference to the believer pleasing the Father by offering his body to the Father as a sacrifice by appropriating by faith the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God, namely that he is crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ. This enables the believer to experience eternal life and sanctification. This sacrifice is extremely pleasing to the Father because it is offered up to Him in the power of the Spirit, which is accomplished by the believer who appropriates by faith his new position in Christ. It is extremely pleasing to the Father because it is according to the Father’s will that the believer appropriate by faith the Spirit’s teaching that the believer is crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ. Therefore, we will only note its usage in Romans 12:2.

In Romans 12:2, the adjective euarestos refers to those decisions and actions made by the believer after his conversion that are “extremely pleasing” to God the Father since they are in accordance with His will. It is extremely pleasing to the Father when the believer makes a decision or performs an action that is according to His will since it fulfills the purpose of Christ’s crucifixion, spiritual and physical deaths, His resurrection and session. It also fulfills the purpose of the various ministries performed by the Holy Spirit on the believer’s behalf. It also fulfills the
Father’s eternal purpose for the believer electing and predestinating them. It also fulfills the purpose for which the Father delivered the justified sinner from the sin nature, personal sins, Satan and his cosmic system, i.e. salvation. It also fulfills the purpose for which the Father set apart him to do His will exclusively, sanctification.

The adjective euarestos functions also as a “nominative in simple apposition” meaning that it stands in apposition to the predicate nominative thelema, “will” and further “describes” a decision by the believer that is according to the will of the Father. We will translate euarestos, “extremely pleasing.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will, that which is good as well as extremely pleasing…”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“And” is once again the “adjunctive” use of the conjunction kai (καί), which introduces another word that further describes performing the will of God “in addition to” the previous description provided by the adjectives agathos, “good” and euarestos, “extremely pleasing.” We will translate kai, “and in addition.”

Corrected translation thus far of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will, that which is good as well as extremely pleasing and in addition…”

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“Perfect” is the nominative neuter singular form of the adjective teleios (τελειος) (tel-i-os).

Teleios (also in the form teleos) is a highly complex and versatile adjective in classical Greek. It was a significant term in Greek philosophical and ethical discussions.

Delling lists the following meanings for the adjective (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, volume 8, pages 67-79): (1) “Whole,” of sacrifices, “without blemish,” “complete” in compass with no part outside, nothing which
belongs left out (2) Perfect, e.g. in the stages of learning-beginning, advance and maturity (3) “Actualized.”

It is used of materially exhaustive investigation by Plato (Resp. VIII, 545a) of the cosmos which contains all kinds of living creatures (Tim. 41c). The word is used of completing a “full” year in its measure and the course of a “full” human life (Aristotle, Eth. Nic. I, 6, p. 1098a, 18). It is used of a “complete” eclipse by Philo (Vit. Mos. I, 123).

Also, of the soul’s “full” faculties. Anything that has reached its telos, “end, conclusion” is teleios, “complete, perfect” (e.g. unblemished sacrificial animals, Homer Iliad, 1, 66). Both a doctor and a thief can be perfect according to Aristotle (Metaph. 4, 16p, 1021b, 15 ff.).

Aristotle states that teleios is “that beyond which there is no further advance in excellence or quality in its genus, which lacks nothing of its own excellence. In this sense the word is not primarily ethical. It is purely formal and may refer to a physician, a flautist, an informer, or a thief (Metaph. IV, 16, p. 1021b). It is was used to describe someone who has “reached the limit of one’s professional ability” by Plato (Leg. I, 643d). A citizen “in the full sense of the word” is one who know how to rule and to be ruled with justice. Plato also used the word in a negative sense (Leg. III, 678b). It was used in the antithesis of “perfectly good” and “perfectly bad” (Philo Mut. Nom. 227).

The adjective can mean “actualizing” where it is commonly used of a divine attribute meaning “mighty, efficacious” (Aeschylus Eum. 382). Herodotus employed the word in the biological sense meaning “full-grown, mature” (Herodotus I, 183).

For Plato the teleos…anthropos is he who has attained phronesis, “firm and true views,” insight and philosophical knowledge, and the goods which these things carry with them (Leg. II, 653a). He states in Phaedrus how this perfection is attained, “The man who by recollection of what he once saw in God’s proximity presses on to the world of ideas and thus reaches up to true being, he alone is teleos (249c), for the soul was truly telea before it acquired an earthly body (246b-c).

When Plato describes the cosmos, εἰκῶν τοῦ νοετοῦ θεός αἰσθητός, αὐτὸ τελεώτατος in Tim. 92c, or as the self-sufficient and most perfect God in 68e, this includes the idea of completeness, as elsewhere; the cosmos should be as perfect as possible seeing it consists of complete parts, 32d. In Aristotle or in his school the reference is to the τελεία ἄρετή which is present when an ethical choice is made μετὰ περιονήσεως (Eth. M. II, 3, p. 1200a, 3f.).

Phronesis for its part is one of the virtues which is teleia only in conjunction with others. Thus righteousness can be called teleia only in a specific sense and not an absolute ouch aplos, since on the one side it is not just practiced by man in
relation to himself but also in relation to others, and on the other it is the employment of perfect *arete* (Eth. Nic. V, 3, p. 1129b, 25-33).

Stoicism develops an Aristotelian principle when it stresses the fact that only he who has all the moral talents *aretas* is *teleios*, and only the deed which accords with all the *aretai* in which they all cooperate is *teleia* (Plutarch Stoic. Rep. 27, II, 1046e, f).

Philo states that “the perfect man must be pure in word and deed and his whole conduct” (Vit. Mos. II, 150). For Philo the one who lives in full purity already receives in the body a share in eternal life (Spec. Leg. II, 262).

The *teleios* regards the ethically beautiful alone as a good (Sobr. 15); all the notes of the good sound together in him, thought, word and deed being in harmony (Poster C. 88).

Philo also states that “the perfect man is neither God nor man, he stands between unbegotten and corruptible modes or the progressing man stands between the living and the dead” (Som. II, 234). He understands that none but God is *teleios* in any matter (Rer. Div. Her. 121). The perfect is not to be found in anything created except by the working of God’s grace (Plant. 93).

Liddell and Scott lists the following meanings (Greek-English Lexicon pages 1769-1770): (1) Perfect (a) of victims, entire, without spot or blemish (b) Perfect, of full tale or number, or performed with all rites (c) In dialects, fully constituted, valid; authoritative, final (d) Of animals, full-grown (e) Married (f) Of persons, accomplished, perfect in his kind, in relation to quality (g) Of things, serious, dangerous, absolute, complete, fully inundated (h) Of prayers, vows, etc., fulfilled, accomplished (i) Of numbers, full, complete, great (b) Of the gods, having power to fulfill prayer, all-powerful (c) Last (10) A royal banquet (11) The full point (12) Name of a month at Epidaurus (13) Adverb *teleos* finally, absolutely, with full authority; completely, absolutely, thoroughly (14) Comparative and superlative adjective.


Two Hebrew terms (or their cognates) usually stand behind teleios: (1) *Shelem* (2) *Tamim*. The basic idea is “whole, complete, unblemished” (of sacrifices, e.g. Exodus 12:5; cf. Judges 20:26). In Ezra 2:63 the articular expression *hoi teleios* functions as a substantive meaning “the perfect ones” apparently referring to the
Urim and Thummim, which was the tangible means of discerning God’s will that was part of the high priest’s breastplate (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21). A frequent union of teleios with kardia, “heart” in speaking of an attitude before God, suggests the relational dimension of teleios intrinsic in Hebrew thought (1 Kgs. 8:61; 11:4; 15:3 [LXX 3 Kgs. 8:61; 11:4; 15:3]). It is virtually synonymous with dikaios, “righteous” when it is used to describe Noah’s character before God (Gen. 6:9).

The adjective teleios appears 19 times in the New Testament.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition: (1) pertaining to meeting the highest standard, perfect (2) pertaining to being mature, full-grown, mature, adult (3) pertaining to being a cult initiate, initiated (4) pertaining to being fully developed in a moral sense, perfect, fully developed (Pages 995-996).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised lists the following (page 400): (1) Brought to completion; fully accomplished, fully developed (2) Fully realized, thorough (3) Complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited (4) Full grown, of ripe age (5) Fully accomplished in Christian enlightenment (6) Perfect in some point of character, without shortcoming in respect of a certain standard (7) Perfect, consummate (8) Comparative, of higher excellence and efficiency.

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon (page 618): (1) Brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect (2) Substantively, that which is perfect: consummate human integrity and virtue; the perfect state of all things, to be ushered in by the return of Christ from heaven (3) Of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature (4) The perfect, i.e. the more intelligent, ready to apprehend divine things; of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity; in an absolute sense of God.

Louw and Nida list the following New Testament meanings (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, volume 2): (1) Pertaining to being perfect in the sense of not lacking any moral quality – ‘perfect’ (page 746). (2) Pertaining to being truly and completely genuine – ‘genuine, true’ (page 675). (3) Pertaining to having no defect whatsoever – ‘perfect’ (page 706). (4) Pertaining to that which is fully accomplished or finished – ‘complete, finished’ (page 658). (5) Pertaining to being mature in one’s behavior – ‘mature, grown-up’ (page 753). (6) Pertaining to an adult human being – ‘grown person, adult’ (page 105). (7) One who is initiate into a religious community of faith (a meaning which reflects the occurrence of teleios as a technical term for persons initiated into the mystery religions) – ‘initiated’; mature spirituality or a state of being spiritually mature (page 124).

The adjective teleios is used of mature spiritual Christ-like character and integrity (1 Co. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phlp. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; He. 5:14; Jam.
1:4; 3:2). It is used of the absolute perfection of God (Mat. 5:48). The adjective is used of the status of the ultimate sanctification of the believer in a resurrection body (1 Co. 13:10). The word used of the gifts from God which are perfect because they originate with Him (Jam. 1:17). It is used of the perfect character of the “law of liberty,” which again because it is an attitude that originates in the mind of Christ (Jam. 1:25).

*Teleios* is used in Matthew 19:21 by our Lord who challenges the rich young ruler to sell his possession and follow Him in order to attain perfection in the absolute sense. It is used of the tabernacle in heaven, which is perfect because was created by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Heb. 9:11). The apostle John uses the word of *agape*, “love” that is matured in the believer (1 Jo. 4:18).

In Romans 12:2, the adjective *teleios* means “perfect” in the sense that it meets the highest standard, which is the Father’s will. The believer’s decision or action that is in accordance with the Father’s will is perfect in the sense that it cannot be improved upon and fulfills the purpose for which God saved, sanctified and justified the believer. It also fulfills the purpose of Christ’s crucifixion, spiritual and physical deaths, His resurrection and session as well as the purpose of the various ministries performed by the Holy Spirit on the believer’s behalf. It also fulfills the Father’s eternal purpose for the believer in electing and predestinating them. It also enables the believer to experience the purpose for which the Father delivered the justified sinner from the sin nature, personal sins, Satan and his cosmic system, i.e. salvation. It also enables the believer to experience the purpose for which the Father set apart him to do His will exclusively, sanctification.

It functions also as a “nominative in simple apposition” meaning that it stands in apposition to the predicate nominative *thelema*, “will” and further “describes” a decision by the believer that is according to the will of the Father. We will translate *teleios*, “perfect.”

Completed corrected translation of Romans 12:2: “Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father’s will, that which is good as well as extremely pleasing and in addition perfect.”