

## **Introduction**

The following article is an overview of some revelation that has positively affected my walk in the Lord. I came to a place in which I realized that my spiritual life had more or less become stagnant and I was caught in a vicious cycle (Hebrews 12:1). I believe that the Old Testament writings are often types and figures of New Testament spiritual realities and the Lord opened my eyes to my situation through the imagery of Israel being enslaved in Egypt all the way to their existence in the promised land of Canaan especially related to their not dispossessing the enemies in the land as the Lord told them to. Paul and the author of Hebrews used Israel's experience in the wilderness as an example and warning to us (1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and Hebrews 3-4). I always knew this in my "head" (objectively) but not in my "heart" (subjectively).

### **God Hears Our Cry & Brings Salvation**

Israel was God's chosen people (Genesis 32:28), but were enslaved in Egypt. They cried out to the Lord and He heard their prayer (Exodus 2:24-25). God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and sent Moses to deliver His people out of slavery. He told Moses His plan to bring a mighty hand against Egypt and deliver His people, and that they would even plunder the Egyptians in the process to supply their practical needs (Exodus 3:19-22). When Moses and Aaron arrived on the scene and relayed to the Israelites God's intention, the people "believed" and worshipped God (Exodus 4: 30-31). After Moses' audience with Pharaoh, the Israelites were punished and had to retrieve their own straw to make the bricks that formerly had been provided to them. They fell behind in their work and were beaten and maligned by the taskmasters. Their response was to blame Moses and murmur against him (Exodus 5). Moses pleaded with God and He encouraged Moses, saying, "Watch what I will do!" And God shared a high vision of how Israel would be His people and He would be their God, and they would enter the land promised to Abraham (Exodus 6:1-8).

Marvelous right? Yet Israel would not listen because their spirit was broken under the harsh treatment in slavery (Exodus 6:9). Suffering had caused them to lose heart and be in a state of unbelief. The beauty of God's judicial salvation is that it is a gift of God, not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). So, God continued His operation through Moses and the ten plagues were implemented. Both Egypt and Israel endured the first three plagues, but after that God made a distinction between them (Exodus 8:22; 9:4, 26). Israel now experienced God's saving grace firsthand while watching the affliction of the Egyptians.

### **We Must Receive, Believe, and Obey**

When God administered each plague, the children of Israel had an active role. They needed to obey God's word step by step or they would be subject to the dire consequences. Up to this point, they needed to stay indoors or keep their livestock inside, etc. However, for the tenth and final plague, they needed to obey in every detail, preparation, and participation of the Passover. God gave instructions for every aspect of living, eating, and preparing to exit Egypt. They even had to wipe blood all over their door posts in a specified way so the death angel would pass over

their house. They were given many non-negotiable details which God commanded and each Israelite needed to hear and obey in order to be saved (Exodus 12). The people cooperated with God and saw His miraculous and powerful hand as they plundered the Egyptians and headed towards the promised land! Their hearts were excited, their will emboldened, and their souls convinced that God was with them.

Then, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 14:6). In his fury, Pharaoh and his army pursued Israel to destroy them completely. Immediately the people lost heart. They blamed Moses, murmuring and grumbling, and proclaimed it would be better to return to Egypt and serve as slaves than to die in the wilderness (Exodus 14:10-12). However, God led the people (through Moses) to the Red Sea and they saw the waters divide such that there were mountainous walls of water on two sides and dry land in between. The people had to obey in faith to cross that dry land although they remained in fear and trembling, but then they watched as Pharaoh, his army, and all his chariots, horses and horsemen were decimated by the flood waters as they returned to normal. Once again, Moses records that the people feared the Lord and "believed" (Exodus 14:31).

## **Trusting God for Our Daily Sustenance**

Within a short time, the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt rather than starve to death in this desert!" (Exodus 16:1-3) The Lord instituted the daily dispensing of manna. Each family had to collect a particular amount of manna every day before the sun became too hot and melted it, and twice on the day before the Sabbath. This required obedience in faith, yet many disobeyed initially. God went on to provide water from the rock and even quail for meat (Exodus 16:4-36). The Israelites had to fight enemies existing in the land, depending on God's strength since they were not soldiers (Exodus 17). In each instance of God's provision, there was murmuring, grumbling, and unbelief by the people (Hebrews 3:7-4:13). God supplied everything they needed, and their clothes and sandals never wore out in 40 years (Deuteronomy 8:4; 29:5)! He led them with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22). God was with them and did miracles for them.

## **Unbelief, Rebellion, and Death**

The saga continues with the giving of the Ten Commandments, God's ordinances and statutes for human life and living as God's people (Exodus 19-23), and the provisions for building the tabernacle and establishing the priesthood to worship God (Exodus 24-31). What an amazing image of God's presence and speaking! Yet, Israel made a golden calf to worship as a substitute for God, falling back on Egyptian traditions (Exodus 32).

One of the greatest failures of Israel came after God instructed Moses to send out 12 spies to bring a report back to the people about the promised land (Numbers 13-14). Rather than expound on the vast abundance and splendor of the promised land and the wonder and grace of God being with them, they chose to focus on the giants and what they deemed as insurmountable obstacles. A rebellion arose to once again return to Egypt from which God had rescued and saved them. The people's rebellion caused God to swear that none of the adults who left Egypt, except Joshua

and Caleb, would enter the good land (Deuteronomy 1:35). They would perish in the wilderness ... and they did. 1 Corinthians 10:5 uses the phrase “overthrown in the wilderness”.

## **Not Dispossessing the Nations (Enemies Within)**

Only the next generation entered the promised land with Joshua and Caleb. Yet, they followed in their parents’ footsteps, continuing the same cycle of murmuring, rebelling, and living in unbelief. One of their most consequential failures was not destroying the enemies in the land. God told them that He would drive out all the Canaanites from the land (Joshua 3:10), but they did not cooperate with God, leaving many enemies in the land. They ended in idolatry and slavery again (Judges 1-2). God had instructed the Israelites to kill men, women, children, and even animals of these enemy nations (Deuteronomy 20:16-18; 1 Samuel 15:3; Numbers 33:52).

Not dispossessing the enemies in the land is a figure, a type, of us defeating and annihilating the flesh, the self, the natural understanding, the world and Satan within us. In the Old Testament, the Israelites had to destroy their enemies physically and literally. In the New Testament application, we must destroy these enemies within our heart. God has specifically commanded throughout scripture (Old and New Testaments) that we must cooperate and obey Him to crucify the flesh, deny the self, lay down our soul life, put off natural understandings, do not love the world, and resist God's enemy (Galatians 5:24; 6:14; Romans 8:13; Luke 9:23; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:14-16; 1 Peter 5:8-9). The Lord preached that it is better to enter life maimed than having eyes and hands, but receive judgment (Matthew 5:27-30; 18:9). This is not a literal command (to pluck out our physical eyes), but a spiritual command to soberly and completely deal with our flesh.

## **Disobedience Leads to Blindness, Deafness**

What happens when we disobey the Lord or are passive towards His commands especially related to our need to decimate the internal enemies (flesh, self, natural mind, world, Satan)? Judges 2:1-3 shows how the idols and influences of the enemies become a snare to us, leading us into idolatry and ultimately a life of captivity (Exodus 23:31-33; Deuteronomy 7:16; Joshua 23:9-13; Psalms 106:34-39). The Lord often warns us to be ready for His return, meaning we need to deal with all forms of snares (e.g. Luke 21:34). When we are disobedient or passive regarding the Lord’s word to us we become as those having eyes to see but cannot see, and having ears to hear but cannot hear (Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 8:18; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

## **Recognizing a Tree by its Fruit**

As 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3-4 depict, my Christian experience is similar to Israel: experiencing miracles of God and His daily provision, protection, and power, yet when the trials and suffering come, I murmur, reason, rebel, and display works of the flesh and not fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:13-26). Where is Christ’s love manifested from my regenerated spirit and transformed soul to love God, to love my neighbor, and to love my enemies? It has always been lacking. God is so gracious and merciful, but He expects us to hear Him and obey His word

through His Spirit (not our self-effort). When we don't, we experience the first three hearts described in Matthew 13. Our hearts become hard (Hebrews 3:7-13), full of rocks and thorns and useless things, with little soil for the seed of God's word to grow and take root in the depths of our soul. We are supposed to be God's farm, His cultivated land (1 Corinthians 3:1-17), producing much fruit (John 15). Instead, I found myself barren and dealing with the same sins, weaknesses, and fleshly character that I had since my youth (Hebrews 12:1; 5:11-14). I spent my life reading the Bible, pursuing Christian activities, going to meetings, preaching the gospel, praying, even serving the Lord full-time for close to a decade, and whatever else I could do, but the result was always the same: outbursts of anger (Ephesians 4:31), sarcasm, cynicism, foolish jesting, lust and passions overcoming me (Ephesians 5:3-5), forcing my will on others (1 Peter 5:2-3), considering myself more excellent and better than everyone else and despising others (Luke 18:9-14; Philippians 2:3-4), etc. I cried to the Lord to do whatever it takes to conform me to His image. He gave me the following:

## Our Purpose or Calling in Christ

The Lord has called each of us to run "the race":

**“Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold. And everyone who contends, exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible. I, therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, because after preaching to others, I do not want to become disqualified.”**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

All of us run on a racecourse and God expects us to run with purpose, discipline ourselves with self-control, and run to receive His prize, which is the **“well done, good and faithful servant”** (Matthew 25:21, 23) in the Lord's presence. Notice, it is possible to be disqualified from the race. The apostle Paul, who wrote over half the New Testament, realized that he could be disqualified if he did not run properly.

**“Therefore, let us also, having such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin, which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race set before us.”** Hebrews 12:1

We do not choose the race or the racecourse, God does. We often deceive ourselves, thinking that life is our choice, we are free to do as we please if it is not sinful. Scripture shows otherwise (Galatians 5:13-26). God chose us (John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4). God called us (Ephesians 1:18; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:9), and God set us to run. And God prepared a specific racecourse or path for us to follow based on His living and operative Word. The only true choice we have is obedience by faith in Christ, not our own faith or ability. Paul wrote that **“To whom we present ourselves as slaves to obedience, his slaves we are whom we obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.”** Romans 6:16

We choose God or we choose “not God”. In God’s eyes, everything other than Him is serving sin as a slave.

**“We are His (God’s) Masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”** Ephesians 2:10

God prepared our race, our course, beforehand. All our good works, all the racecourse, was created in Christ Jesus. Our only choice is to cooperate with God through obedience by His grace.

### **What is the Race (What is the Central Focus of a Believer)?**

**<sup>17</sup>So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles (unbelievers) do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.**

**<sup>20</sup>But you did not so learn Christ <sup>21</sup>If indeed you heard Him and were taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>that you put off your former way of life, the old man, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;<sup>23</sup>and be renewed in the spirit (attitude) of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new man, created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality. Ephesians 4:17-24**

- 1) Unbelievers live according to their minds, not by regenerated hearts in Christ.
- 2) Unbelievers’ minds (understanding) are darkened because their hearts are hard (e.g. like concrete for soil ... nothing can penetrate or grow).
- 3) Unbelievers have lost sensitivity ... so don’t be surprised when awful things happen. The unregenerate, hard-hearted person is capable of horrific deeds and actions.

If we are honest and have our spiritual eyes opened by the Spirit of God, we will realize and confess that the residue of the “old man” operates in us even after regeneration.

- 4) We learn Christ by hearing Him. It is important to note that hearing Christ is in our hearts, not our minds:

Hebrews 3:7 says **“Today if you hear my voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation in the wilderness”** relating to Israel wandering for 40 years in disobedience to God. To live Christ begins with hearing the Lord’s voice in our heart and obeying it through the Spirit, not our own effort (Philippians 3:9; 1 Peter 1:22). It’s that simple.

- 5) Christ teaches us within (in our hearts)

**“As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But His anointing teaches you about all things ... abide in Him”** 1 John 2:27

What does the anointing teach us? According to 1 John 2:27 we are to abide in Him (John 14:20; 17:21), which is to experience what Christ went to the cross and rose from the dead for. Christ died and rose from the dead to produce an abiding place which is within us (John 14:2, 23). It is not about us going to heaven someday, but about Christ bringing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into us. Today we only experience a foretaste as a pledge, (Ephesians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 13:7-13; 2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:10) but one day we e.g., will have eternity abiding in our hearts in full!

What does this abiding place look like practically? According to Ephesians, Christ within us will teach us to “**put off the old man**”, **be renewed in our mind**, and “**put on the new man**”. This is what it means to “**work out our salvation**” in Philippians 2:12. God is the Author and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), but He expects us to seek and find His grace to accomplish our responsibility according to His operation of grace within us. Putting off the old man, being renewed in our mind, and putting on the new man are the THREE main responsibilities we have as believers in Christ. To fulfill these responsibilities, we must live according to the Lord's speaking in our hearts and by abiding in the Lord's presence throughout every day of our lives.

## Putting Off the Old Man

Christians may believe that putting off the old man, being renewed in our minds, and putting on the new man is automatic based on Christ's death and resurrection. It is not. Christians may believe that by going to church, reading the Bible, praying, preaching the gospel, and doing other Christian activities that putting off, renewing the mind, and putting on happens like spiritual osmosis ... spontaneously or automatically. It does not. We must work out our own salvation which means we are taking an active role in this process by the Spirit's leading and empowerment.

### Emptying

Living a life in Christ by faith is not only mystical, but practical. Although prayer by faith is the foundation and avenue of all our living (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16), our cooperation and obedience to the Lord are needed to produce the deeds, actions, and good works that God ordains (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:12). But before we can put on the good works of Christ, we must put off the old things that are occupying our being.

So, what do we put off?

**“Get rid of all bitterness, anger, wrath, rage, along with every form of malice.”**

Ephesians 4:31

**“Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”**

1 Peter 2:1

**“For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”** Romans 8:13

**“Put to death, therefore, your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and greediness, which is idolatry.”** Colossians 3:15

This is a short list of fleshly, soulish, natural things that need to be put off in Christ (see also Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Colossians 3:5-9). You may ask, “Didn’t Christ’s death take care of all these negative things?” The answer is “yes and no”. Yes, His judicial redemption has crucified the old man (Romans 6:6), but we have a responsibility to cooperate with Christ to dig out these negative things in our being as these verses indicate. It is based on our obedience (Romans 6:16-22). Christ paved the way and laid the foundation, but we need to do our part based on His grace within us.

**“The man who hears My (Christ’s) word and does them is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep and laid a foundation...”** (Luke 6:47-48)

We may dismiss the list of negative (fleshly) things because we think they do not relate to us. Consider, however, reactions that we have to people or to circumstances (illness, trials, tragedy, etc.). Possibly an excuse flies out of our mouth without thinking, or we become overly anxious and fearful, or we get angry, or we laugh at someone’s expense. There are hundreds of ways we react in our daily life as we confront situations and people. Reactions are involuntary, meaning they arise from deep within our being without being processed through our mind. Just like a knee-jerk reaction physiologically.

**“Pursue peace with all people ... looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble ...”** Hebrews 12:15

Whenever we have a reaction, there is a root cause. Something deep within us is touched and causes a reaction. For example, a person has appendicitis, and someone touches their belly. They may scream out in pain, buckle over, and groan. The symptoms (reactions) resulted from the problem within (root cause or source). Likewise, we have fleshly, soulish, and natural reactions because of root problems inherent with our flesh, soul-life, and natural understanding. The negative things within us surface when we deal with people and events. This is God’s way of shining light on us so we can deal with the negative things and remove them.

**“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, His (God’s) son, cleanses us from all unrighteousness ...”** 1 John 1:7

Christ as light is always exposing us. We shouldn’t excuse our reactions or justify them, but walk in the light and allow the Lord to shine. His blood is available to cleanse us. And there is a lot of unrighteousness to cleanse!

Sometimes, God does a miracle and removes a huge barrier in our lives, but most of the time, the Lord works organically. He is the Gardener who cultivates His garden, which is us (1

Corinthians 3:9; John 15:1-2). However, we need to cooperate by recognizing our reactions and allowing God as light to lead us to the root cause so we can dig them out by His grace.

### Vessels

How do we remove all these negative things from our being? To answer this, we need to understand that God made each of us as vessels to contain Him.

**“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”** 2 Corinthians 4:7

**“If a man therefore anyone purges himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and useful to the Master, and prepared unto every good work.”** 2 Timothy 3:21

Paul spoke of **“vessels unto honor and dishonor”**, **“vessels of wrath”**, and **“vessels of mercy”** (Romans 9:21-23).

Again, notice the need to remove the negative factors that hinder our running the race God set before us.

We are vessels made to contain God. Therefore, there must be space or room to contain Him. Before regeneration, we were filled with offenses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and lived according to our self-life. We were filled with flesh, self, natural understanding, worldliness, and Satanic elements. There was no room or space for God. Therefore, we need to be emptied, to have some space created, in order for God to come into us.

God initiates the emptying: **“God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** 2 Corinthians 4:6

Observe where He shines: in our hearts, not our minds. This shining is God’s appearing to us to create some space for Him to enter into us. We need to cooperate to receive Him into our hearts. This is why Paul told us that **“Confess with our mouths, and believe in our hearts that Jesus is Lord.”** (Romans 10:9)

The Lord told us **“If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.”** (Luke 9:23) To deny our self is to begin the process of cooperating with God to remove the negative things from our being. It is to empty ourselves. Without emptying, there can be no filling, because we are already full. A vessel (e.g. a cup) can only contain so much. Then, it overflows.

Do we realize that the Lord Jesus, God embodied in the flesh, emptied Himself? He was God, but as a man He needed to be emptied so that He could bring divinity into humanity and humanity into divinity. **“But He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”** (Philippians 2:7) Jesus as a man also took the lead to



deny Himself. This is best documented in the garden of Gethsemane when He asked the Father if the cup of death could pass from Him. He said, “**Not My will, but Yours be done**” to the Father (Luke 22:42; Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36). This was emptying Himself of His own Human will to be filled with the Father’s will.

If we perceive that the process of putting off the old man begins with emptying, how do we empty ourselves? How do we remove or rid ourselves of bitterness and malice, for example, two of the greatest perpetrators of strife and division among God’s people?

I will offer two steps: 1) venting, and 2) purging. Both steps are necessary for us to empty, to make space, for God to come into us so we can grow healthy in Christ.

## Venting

Christians may believe that venting our bitterness, anger, emotions, frustrations, defeats, rage, evil speaking, mistakes, etc. is not healthy or righteous. We may think that we are not supposed to allow any corrupt words to proceed out of our mouths (Ephesians 4:29). That is correct, but it has a context. There is a time and a place and a need for venting all the negative things (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). The New Testament often tells us to confess (our sins, our offenses toward others, etc.), which is a form of venting beginning with God (1 John 1:9). The scripture tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves and more so to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Offenses come from friends, brothers, and enemies (Matthew 18:17; Proverbs 27:17; Jeremiah 12:6). People may do negative things to us, maybe even horrific things to us. So do the ones we love the most because we all still possess the fallen human nature, the old man. Possibly the deepest hurt originates from ones we love (Psalms 55:12-14). Therefore, negative things arise in our hearts. These things must be emptied, or they will remain in our hearts.

One of the default actions we take when suffering comes is to flee. We ask God to take the pain away, to allow us to fly away and rest from all that troubles us (Psalms 55: 6-8). We suppress whatever causes pain, discomfort, and suffering. Suppressing our human feelings when bullied, misunderstood, taken advantage of, humiliated, ignored, defeated, betrayed, abused, etc. will lead to problems because bitterness will arise and fester. Think about it, if I am full of bitterness, how can I love my neighbor or myself? Forget about loving an enemy. Bitterness is a festering poison that infects and spreads throughout my soul. That poison needs to be removed. So, the first step in removing the poison, in emptying, is to vent or to validate our feelings.

Unfortunately, all-too-often we are taught to suppress our feelings. We are told we cannot feel what we truly feel because of submitting to authority, due to fear by intimidation, or due to the timing of a disturbing event. For instance, it is not proper to vent in a public setting. Blaming God for the death of a loved one at the funeral will only cause improper roots of bitterness to grow. It is also not proper to vent at the offender out of anger. This stirs up strife, enmity, and hatred. We deal with hormones, the opposite gender, homosexuality, transgender, abortion, world politics, and so much more in an evil age. Questions arise in our hearts, and if not dealt with properly in the light of Christ, will produce improper roots and therefore, our viewpoint or perspective becomes biased and tainted. Then reactions arise when we are triggered because those roots are touched. Suppressing our feelings involves sedation, a means, strategy, or

technique to cover what is within. Suppressing means we do not allow ourselves to feel angry, to feel hurt, to feel devastated, to feel hate, to feel sadness, to feel fear, etc.. This leads to sedation which comes in many forms like drugs, sex, alcohol, parties, peer pressure, Christian activity, becoming OCD, and the list goes on. Sedation may numb the hurt, but that is a temporary solution.

In contrast to suppression, we must learn to identify the negative things within our being, to clarify them, and then allow ourselves to fully feel them. Just read the Psalms! They are full of venting. The Psalmists were experts at validating their feelings in a proper way.

## **Purging**

While venting is important, it is not enough; it is only the first step in emptying. On one hand, it is easy for a bitter person to vent. The problem is they vent all the time, over and over, here and there and everywhere. So, they end up spreading their bitterness, their poison, to others, especially to the ones they love the most. Often, venting becomes a projection of one's pain onto others, which causes much interpersonal trauma. On the other hand, once we vent in a proper way, which includes the proper setting and the proper timing all in the Lord's light, we need to cooperate with God to purge that poison. This can be difficult because we have been taught to analyze and to use our minds in everything. Purging bypasses the mind.

**“For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds. As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing that rises up against the knowledge of God and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.”** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Satan's stronghold is our mind! Our reasonings need to be overthrown. Our thoughts need to be taken captive unto obedience to Christ. Our ungodly reactions arise from not dealing with root causes and our mind becomes polluted, prejudiced, and overly narrow. We develop blind spots which deny facts and truth because of our negative, raging emotions. On one hand, venting does incorporate the mind to analyze and assess things according to our own perspective. If we only vent, however, we remain on Satan's turf, which is our mind. Therefore, we must get beyond our mind, we have to bypass our mind, in order to empty the negative things. Purging bypasses the mind. Purging will release our bitterness, release our anger, release our wrath and rage, release our strong emotions triggered within us. The deeper we purge, the better. This is to allow the God opportunity to empty the negative things from within us.

What does purging look like? Purging, true emptying, may be accomplished in many forms. For some, yelling out, screaming, and assertive articulation empties them. For others, visualizing their hurt and dealing with it empties them. Still others, may simply use intentional, deep, cleansing breathes without analysis, without consideration. The type of purging depends on each person and the Spirit's leading.

How do we purge in Christ? First, we must identify our triggers. Consider the trigger as God's light shining to expose something dark within us that needs purging (Ephesians 5:8-13; 1 John 1:5-10). What “set” you off? What riled you? What caused a strong emotional feeling within

you? Usually we feel angry, sad, frustrated, hateful, anxious, bitter, confused, humiliated, etc. Don't suppress these emotions. Vent them in a proper place, at the proper time. Allow the trigger to be your catalyst, the energy, to drive the purging process.

Let me illustrate using the flu. When we contract a stomach flu, the symptoms become obvious: body ache, discomfort, and fever (hot and cold flashes). These are like the venting mechanisms of our body. The body is allowing itself to feel all the emotions of the sickness. The nausea builds and builds until a literal eruption, vomiting, occurs. There is no thought involved with vomiting, it just issues forth from the buildup of venting pressure. Usually, we have little control of the vomiting, it explodes out of our being, proving it is not a conscious, thought-driven process. Likewise, we find a time and place to vent based on being triggered by a person or event. The emotion of that trigger provides the energy for us to vent, to fully express our feelings. When the emotional nausea builds and builds to the point of utmost anxiety, fear, anger or frustration, we allow the body to vomit, to release all of it. We scream, we growl, we groan in a violent way, like vomiting, to release the poison.

## **Forgiveness**

Emptying involves venting and purging. We are vessels, containing the flesh, the self, the natural mind, elements of the world, and even the Satanic nature. If we want to grow in Christ and be transformed, we must make space by emptying these things. This is not "once for all," but an ongoing, daily process. The spiritual building up process can only occur after we empty, not before. Just consider your life. Do you have sins that keep cycling and continually returning? Are you continually defeated by certain sins or situations? This is because you are trying to change yourself by your own effort and you are not using God's grace to empty, to make room, so He can come in to fill that area of your heart.

Once we empty, growth can begin. The first stage of growth in Christ requires forgiveness. Paul wrote that we put off the old man before we put on the new man. First, we learn to vent and purge, to empty. Then, we need the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2). Our mind, our thinking, needs a complete and thorough overhaul. This begins with forgiveness.

One of the biggest signs of spiritual growth in a believer is a new mindset. We thought a certain way in the past and now we think very differently. We all create stories or narratives in our mind based on our culture and our experiences. These stories or narratives will never change without the emptying because they are set in our minds. Consider some dark points in history. There were born again, Bible believing, Christian's on both sides of the civil war in the United States, justifying killing each other. Many Christians led the crusades to murder Muslims in the dark ages, denying religious freedom to Muslims, but demanding it for themselves. Many leaders and members of the Ku Klux Klan were Christians. Many Christians in Germany supported Hitler's supremacist regime that mercilessly slaughtered millions of Jews and others. History proves that Christians are capable of horrific things. Why? Because of the stories or narratives they created in their minds.

Everyone experiences trauma and pain in life. It is unavoidable and often God sent (Matthew 7:24-25; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Some trauma or pain is due to our own choices because we

sinned or made a mistake (1 Peter 2:20), but other trauma and pain is “inflicted” or put on us from others, from circumstances, or from events outside our control. Just as in human life we experience growing pains, so also in spiritual life we endure growing pains. Our reaction to pain produces a mindset, a story that we live by. Pain left undealt with, especially when produced by injustice or inequity, will produce bitterness, hatred, and malice in our hearts. Therefore, God commands us to forgive.

**“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”** Matthew 6:14-15

Verse 15 has always bothered me, that is, until recently. This is because I did not truly forgive others, especially those who I felt wronged me or abused me. I held a record of their offenses. It made me hesitate to be honest with them and it was easier just to avoid them. It caused me to feel the victim all the time. I was also quite judgmental towards others who were different from me. Paul wrote that **“Love keeps no record of wrongs”** (1 Corinthians 13:5). This has become a litmus test to me, helping me know whether I have forgiven someone or not. If I think of past offenses or bring them up constantly then, I have not forgiven, I am keeping a record of wrongs.

**“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.”** Ephesians 4:32

**“Bear one another and forgive one another. If anyone has a complaint against anyone, even as God forgave you, so also, should you forgive them.”** Colossians 3:12

If a person or event triggers you, issuing in anger or passivity or any other reaction besides God’s love, then forgiveness has not taken place or been completed. We must realize that it is a blessing when we can “see” our bitterness, anger, rage, hate, malice, envy, jealousy, etc. towards others. This is God exposing us and bringing the negative factors to the surface (Ephesians 5:13). Now, we must decide to cooperate with God and deal with these things, ultimately, ending in forgiving the offender.

Forgiveness clears the ledger, the record, of the pain and past offenses. We let go of every offense forever. When we face the offender or event in the future, there is no longer the baggage of the past (1 Corinthians 13:5). We are no longer the victim, living in fear or bondage (Romans 8:14-18; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Forgiveness is a deliberate, intentional, decision to willingly forgive the offense or offender for what was done to us. Forgiveness is ONE directional. It does NOT depend on the offender. When someone wrongs us, they create a debt in us that they can never repay. Even if the offender could “see” what they did and all the magnitude of it, and repent, they can never repay what they took from us by the offense(s). They can never undo it. There is a debt that can never be settled EXCEPT by ONE person ... the person who holds the debt ... ME.

Forgiveness is NOT an emotion, but a balanced-sheet transaction as in business. The person who holds the debt, forgives each individual debt, item by item, and lets them go. This breaks the

energetic bond between the debtor and the offended (you). The offender (debtor) never feels the pain of the debt. The offended (you) bears the pain of it and the results of it. Forgiveness is for us, not them, to free us from the debt. Forgiveness requires belief in God. The lack of forgiveness is due to unbelief. We don't believe that God's grace is sufficient (Hebrews 3:18-19).

We often need to forgive those who do not repent for their offense inflicted upon us. Yet, the Lord says to "love our enemies" and "bless those who curse us." Forgiveness is one fruit that manifests God's life and love in our hearts. If we do not forgive, we limit God's life and love.

## **Healing**

Another important aspect of preparing ourselves to receive the Lord's life for growth and transformation is healing. Consider everything we've talked about in this message from a medical standpoint. Suppose you have cancer and need surgery. The surgeon must pierce and divide your body (venting) and then remove the cancer (purging). This completes the emptying process. But that only affords the beginning of new growth to replace the cells that cancer had overtaken. Your body needs to be sanitized so infection does not set in. We use sterile equipment and antibiotics. This is forgiveness. Then, you need to heal.

Healing takes time and is a process. No one breaks a bone and heals the same day. It takes 6 to 8 weeks. Spiritually, the process is similar. Once we empty something through the light and grace of Christ, and once we forgive the offense, we need to heal. Healing often includes having to face the same offense again, allowing the new body tissue to grow. It is not the same as before, however, because the Lord has helped us remove the bitter poison roots, to forgive the offense, and now we have a new start.

Louis Zamperini was an Olympic runner who entered WWII and was taken captive. As a POW, he was brutally and inhumanely treated for close to five years. He had PTSD, became an alcoholic and was on the brink of losing his marriage, his family, and his sanity. Christ appeared and he received Christ into his heart. Through Christ he emptied himself of the alcohol, the hatred, the demon images in his mind that had been beaten into him, and he forgave his captors. But he needed complete healing in order for growth to occur. The Lord led him to Japan, to his captors. He faced over 50 of the men who had mistreated him for years and expressed his forgiveness. This could not have been easy, but it was a major part of Zamperini's healing process.

## **Putting on the New Man**

The goal of putting off the old man is for putting on the new man. Simply stated, this is to put on Christ. Christ wants us to have the fruit of the Spirit, which are just His attributes lived out of our human virtues: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). If we are growing properly in Christ, this actually means He is growing within us. We will have faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, godliness, brotherly love, and love as described in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Emptying, forgiving, and healing all require God's light, God's life, God's grace, God's holiness and righteousness. Putting on the new man continues that same process and God's attributes get added to our human virtues.

## **Summary Outline**

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#### **A. Israel from Egypt to the Good Land**

#### **B. My Experience and Lack of Christ**

### **II. Putting off the Old Man**

#### **A. Based on Christ's Death and Resurrection and Our Cooperation**

#### **B. Emptying**

##### **1. Venting**

##### **2. Purging**

### **II. Putting on the New Man**

#### **A. Forgiveness**

#### **B. Healing**

#### **C. Growth in life**