

What Does God Really Want? (Part 6)

The Work of the Holy Spirit

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Without the element that is given in this sermon, what God really wants absolutely cannot be done. The entire Old Testament is witness of this, and what we have been given by God can easily be taken in a rather downcast spirit because it seems as though the responsibility is so great, and what we are required to do is so difficult.

There are times I am sure that we feel that we have almost an unbearable load, making us to feel to some degree as though we are actually victims of God's grace. We are not alone in feeling things like this. I want you to turn to Jeremiah 20, because God leaves a record that those who are His servants do feel from time to time as though the load that they are carrying is too great.

Jeremiah 20:7 O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived. . .

Actually the word "deceived" there means "seduced."

Jeremiah 20:7 ...You are stronger than I, and have prevailed: I am in derision daily, everyone mocks me.

In other words, the way was far more difficult than Jeremiah thought it was going to be. God might have said some things to him in regard to painting a very wonderful picture of things that were going to come, and we are attracted by those things, and indeed we should be. Jesus warns us though that the way is narrow and difficult, and so our outlook has to be balanced by understanding what happened to those who went before us. Jeremiah is one of these.

Jeremiah 20:8-9 For since I spoke, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

He got to the place where he felt, "I'm going to explode if I don't do what God says that I

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am to do."

Jeremiah 20:10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Any feelings that you might have had this way I think are quite understandable, but there are other wonderful things to remember, such as that wonderful promise that God gives us in I Corinthians 10:13 that He will never give us anything that is too great for us to bear, but will always provide a way of escape. And God is faithful. He watches over us so closely that nobody is ever given a trial that is greater than he can deal with, whether the trial is one of overcoming a sin, or facing persecution, or tribulation. The Lord delivers us out from of all of them, as it says in II Timothy 3:10-11, and I am going to read those to you.

II Timothy 3:10-11 But you have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecution I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Now whether it is Jeremiah, or whether it is Paul, or whether it is you, it says that "through much tribulation you shall all enter the kingdom of God." Tribulation, in its simplest form, simply means pressure. Pressure is stress, and stress is wearying, and sometimes very frightening.

There are in this world a lot of things that we have to bear up under, to face, and one of the more difficult ones is stated in a series of verses very familiar to us and this is one of those that we can never get away from. It is ever with us wherever we go, whether we are in bed, whether we are at work, whether we are at services, whether we are driving our car, whether we are hunting or fishing. Whatever we do it is always there.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conduct in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

One of the things that we learned about the children of Israel in the wilderness is that in forty years they never really left Egypt. They were out in the wilderness. They were marching around. They spent time here, there, and everywhere, but Egypt never left them, and therefore everywhere they went, Egypt went.

Every morning they got up to a miracle. The manna was there every morning. At times there were special things that occurred as well. Water out of a rock. Who ever heard of such a thing? God fought their battles. The cloud was up there every day. The pillar of fire was there every day. And though they were under God's servant Moses, and though they saw multitudes of miracles, Egypt never left them. The spirit of the world was with them wherever they went.

One of the things that we gradually learn as we progress thorough Christian life, is how much we are held in thrall to the spirit of this world. So persistent and so pervasive is its influence, the slavery to it is broken only by acts of God, or otherwise we would never be able to escape it. However, its lingering effects continue to exert their influence over all the entire course of the remainder of our lives. Now it may no longer dominate or totally control what we think and say and do, but it is an ever-present reality exerting pressure, tribulation, to move us in the direction that it wants to go.

In Romans 7 we see Paul's record of this, and it again gives us hope, if I can put it that way, and I think that is a correct way to put it. If this can happen to an apostle whom we would certainly think is surely closer to God than we are, who surely has a greater measure of the Holy Spirit than we have, and yet Paul gives witness of the fact that he had to wrestle with this very same thing.

We also know, in another place, which we will mention a little bit later, Paul said, "I **know** that I have made it into the Kingdom of God!" This was before he was dead. He knew that he had made it. And despite having a witness like this in Romans 7, he was also a very confident man that he was able to do what God said that he could do.

Romans 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I.

How many times have you been victim of this?

Romans 7:16-24 If then I do that which I would not, I consent [or affirm] unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells

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in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Paul referred to this influence in his life as "a law." Now he did not intend to say that it was a rule enacted by a state or some other authority, but rather as an ever-present influence that was exerting pressure on him to move him in the direction that **it** wanted to go.

If you look up the word "law" in a dictionary, you will find that one of the definitions for law is "a regularity in natural occurrences." A common example of this is the law of gravity. It is a regularity in natural occurrences. Now think of this. The earth is moving at great rates of speed in several different directions at one time. It is spinning on its axis at about one thousand miles an hour. At the same time it is in a journey revolving around the sun, and the entire Milky Way, within which the earth is, is also revolving. And at the same time the entire universe is expanding out from a central core. That is four different directions all at the same time.

Why do we not fly off in some direction? All of this is going on at tremendous speeds. It is because the law of gravity is exerting its influence constantly and holding us on the earth. This is because the mass of the earth, its sheer volume is so great compared to our puny weight, that it creates a continuous influence almost like magnetism—but we call it the law of gravity—that holds us to itself.

In the same manner the spirit of this world combines with our spirit and creates what we call "human nature," and it exerts its influence on the course of life. Paul calls this human nature "a law," because it is an ever-present influence putting pressure and exerting itself on life. It is, in this one sense, this law that keeps us from living this life perfectly.

You see, our mind is capable of capturing a vision of a goal—the goal of the Kingdom of God, the goal of being able to live life perfectly. We can perceive righteousness, and we can have a desire to keep His commandments faithfully to the level that He wants us to,

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but this law keeps exerting itself into the mix and asserting its will, and causing us to fall short of the glory of God, and so no wonder Paul called himself "wretched." On the one hand he had this beautiful vision of the way God is, and of what he wanted to do to be like Him, and yet this law, exerting its pressure, motivated him to do things that he did not want to do.

This does not mean that Paul was living continuously in sin with a hang dog, woe-is-me, pity-pot false humility at all, because he was not at all down on himself. He was a supremely confident man, with a bold personality who, in II Timothy 4, said he knew that he was going to be in God's Kingdom, that he had made it, that he had fought the good fight.

What that means is that even as Paul did it, so can we. There is no reason why we cannot be, on the one hand, supremely confident that we are going to be in God's Kingdom, and yet realistically understand that there are going to be times that human nature will exert its influence, and we will fall short. But we pick ourselves up, we repent, and we go on. We do not give up. We persevere. We endure. We bite the bitterness of our shame of having fallen short, but we go on.

Now Paul was wretched, but only in the sense of whom he was comparing himself against, and against the holiness of God everybody is wretched by comparison, and all fall short of the glory of God. So undoubtedly from time to time Paul was disappointed that he did not live up to what he knew that he was capable of, because he allowed human nature to gain the upper hand and reassert itself once again. This disappointment is something that we share with him and all others who are striving for God's holiness. The solution to this dilemma lays in the balance in us of the Holy Spirit as contrasted to human nature, and how we choose to use both of them.

We are going to go to the book of John, and listen to the testimony of John the Baptist and John the apostle about Jesus Christ, because when we put a few scriptures together it explains in broad generality why Jesus was as He was.

John 1:14-16 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John [John the Baptist] bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. [And now John the apostle's testimony:] And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

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Verse 15 could be translated, "He who is coming behind me has gotten ahead of me, for He existed before me." It is sort of a prelude to John's implying the difference between himself (John the Baptist) and Christ, that it was similar to the difference between the infinite Christ and the finite John the Baptist; between the Eternal—Christ; and the temporal, John the Baptist—as a comparison between light of the sun as compared to the reflected glory of the moon.

John the Baptist appeared in public before Jesus, but Jesus, who appeared after John, had gotten preeminence, or had preeminence rights ahead of John because of seniority, if nothing else, because He existed before John did. The implication is that He ranks far above John and everybody else as well. He existed from eternity as "the Word of God."

Something in verse 16 is very interesting. Remember, we are pursuing why Jesus was the way He was. It switches to the testimony of John the apostle, but the thought is actually an expansion of verses 14 and 15. It is not only expanding, but it also substantiates what is said there in verses 14 and 15.

The apostle John confessed he, and of course others, had experienced the fruit of the fullness of Christ through His ministry to them in person. That is what he meant when he said, "And of his fullness have all we received." The "all we" is those who witnessed the ministry of Christ, and probably most specifically the other apostles as well as John.

Now what does this phrase "grace for grace" mean? In its simplest form, grace means favor. What he is leading to is that Christ was favored by God above all others.

Let me translate "grace for grace" into some other possibilities. It means literally "grace in place of grace," or it means "grace heaped upon grace," "favor heaped upon favor," or "gift heaped upon gift." If we want to make it a little bit more chaotic, we would say, "gift piled upon gift." Therefore the phrase is indicating fullness, but it is fullness with a very interesting twist.

What the apostle is picturing here is as though Christ was given a supply of grace. If you can just put it into something very common, it is as though He had received a package in the mail. Then after that one got there, a second supply arrived after the first. And then after that one got there, a third supply was on top of the first two. And then a fourth supply came on top of the first three. You get the point.

The apostle John was saying here that Jesus Christ was so gifted, so favored by the Father, that there was an endless supply of grace, as it were, that was flowing from the Father to the Son, and that Jesus Christ Himself became a huge reservoir of favor and

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gifts, that He was able to dispense to others, because He Himself was receiving a constant ever-increasing supply from the Father as well. It is a beautiful symbol to understand.

The phrase is vaguely familiar with the term in the Old Testament—"Song of Songs," or "Holy of Holies." It is expressing a superlative. "The best of the best." And so in this case it indicates an incessant and limitless reservoir, a limitless out flowing from the Father to Him and to those He chose to serve. That's how full of gifts that He was. Nobody even begins to compare, but what it does show are the possibilities. It shows what lies ahead for us, what God was willing to do for all that He did for this one Man who was His Son, and would become our Savior.

Turn to John 3:27. Again it is John the Baptist. This is an important key to this sermon.

John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

What does this word "nothing" imply? Is it everything in life? Is he referring only to spiritual things? I think that it is certainly far beyond spiritual things, because even in the trial for His life, in the apostle John's comments later on in this same book, Pilate said to Jesus, "Don't you know I can put you to death?" Jesus replied what John the Baptist said here. "You would not have the power to do that unless My Father gave it to you." Now if He is an example, is there anything in life that we have not received from above? Think about it.

John 3:28-30 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him [that is, to precede Him]. He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

So John the Baptist humbly submits to the preeminence of the Son. "He who was before, He came after me, but I recognize He's before me. He has the preeminence, and I will gladly give Him that position."

John 3:31-35 He that comes from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: he that comes from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard, that he testifies; and no man receives his

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testimony. He that has received his testimony has set his seal that God is true. For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God gives not the spirit by measure unto him. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

The Father dealt differently with Christ than He has dealt with every other man. Christ had access, as it were, to the fullness of God's Spirit, and that was given to Him in order for Him to fulfill the responsibilities that He had to perform for the work of God to go on, so He was given what was needed for Him to fulfill those responsibilities. I am leading to something here, because we are looking at the pattern. In order for Jesus to do what He had to do, He needed the fullness of the Spirit of God. Everything that could be crammed into a man was given to Him.

Now God deals fairly with everybody. Do you think that He will do anything different for you or for me? No. He will provide everything we need to fulfill our part in the body. The Spirit will not be given to us without measure, because we do not need that for what God is preparing us for, and for that which we have to carry out within the work of God today.

But God never shortchanges anybody. It is one of the reasons why I said in regard to the calendar issue that it is not in God's nature not to supply us with a calendar. He always gives His children everything they need, and since we needed a calendar, He provided one that He is satisfied that we use. There is nothing complicated about that, and the church has been using it for centuries.

But the calendar is just one thing. There are many things that pertain to eternal life that we need, but everything we need is available to us, and as I am going to show you, it is available to us **before** we need it. It is already been provided so that we do not meet situations unarmed, as it were; unprepared, because He has prepared us to be able to do it. This does not guarantee that we are going to do it perfectly, but we can do it. That is the important thing, and we should not get down on ourselves, and we should not get down on God. This is a joy to understand. It gives confidence to life to know that He is with us to that extent. He does not play dirty. He always enables us to do what He appoints us to do.

Once again here we are looking at the testimony of John the Baptist, and once again he is making a contrast between himself and Christ. Once again he is affirming that there is a huge difference between Christ and himself, and again it is implied that this is the same with Christ and all other men as well.

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All authority has been delivered into the hands of the Son. That is what verse 35 is saying. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hands." The unspoken implication is that other men do not have that authority, and neither have they been given the spirit to its fullness. As I said just a little bit earlier, we have been given what is needed for us to carry out our responsibilities.

John 2:11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

I touch on this because of the word "glory," because glory is frequently used by the Bible's writers to indicate the way that He lived His life. That statement by the apostle Paul in Romans 3:23—"All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God"—is simply another example of the way that word "glory" is used, and the way it is being used right here.

Now the signs and the miracles of Jesus that the apostles witnessed were a manifestation of the way that He lived. In other words, He was able to do miracles because of the way that He lived. If He had not lived the way that He had lived, then the Father would have never done the miracles through Him.

The point of all this so far in this sermon is that everything—the way He lived, His sinless life, His graceful, outgoing, caring personality, His insightful discernment into the hearts of men, His ability to prevent arguments, to refute the twist of reasonings of human nature, and the astounding miracles—was all the result of the fullness of God's Spirit in Him.

This same factor is the key, the answer. It is the solution to how we are to fulfill our stewardship responsibilities before God. We have to have a measure of God's Spirit allotted to us, and we must use it to its fullness. Now think about this. Is this not the lesson of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25? A conclusion can be reached to this point that we are then responsible only for what we have been given, and judging ourselves against others becomes very risky business because others may not have the same measure of the Spirit. They may have more, they may have less. They may have different responsibilities within the body.

II Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. . .

Is that not what we want? We want to live a godly way. We want to be in the image of God. "He **has given** unto us all things." That is written in the past perfect tense, indicating that they were in a state that began somewhere in the past. The same thing applies to us. We have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness

II Peter 1:3-4 We have been given all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

As long as a person does not have any measure of the divine nature, there is no hope that he will ever be in the image of God, because he cannot live like God. Being only in possession of human nature, he cannot live any other way. Now that may be an oversimplification, but it is nonetheless a true statement. But we **have** been given a measure of the divine nature by means of God's Spirit, because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts. What this points out is that the Spirit of God is that which enables us to see things from God's perspective, to think like God, and therefore to live like God, and have character and attitudes like God, because we can draw on that divine nature.

The Revised Standard Version translates verse 3 this way: "His divine power *has* [past tense] granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence." God has provided us, and will continue to provide us with everything necessary to a godly life.

We undoubtedly feel weak. We see through a glass darkly. We only know in part, but He wants us to know that we have been provided with everything necessary for each of us to live to the level that He expects of us. *We can do it.* God never plays dirty. He does not put us in any situation that is over our head. He always plays fair because He does not want to lose us, and with victory over things—overcoming—comes joy in life. He wants us to live a full and an abundant life, and that comes from winning.

We are going to turn to another scripture that begins to explain and lays a foundation for why we are the way we are. Go now to II Corinthians 3. Notice the confidence here.

II Corinthians 3:12-15 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is

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abolished [or that which is passing away]: But their minds were blinded: for until this day, [in Paul's day; first century;] remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament: which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, [meaning broadly the Old Testament, but even speaking of it in terms of time, Moses living 1500 years before Paul, and here it was in Paul's day] the veil is upon their heart.

The same thing is true today. *To this day* people's minds are blinded, and I think that if there is anything that it is blinded to it is the Old Testament, which I think is kind of interesting.

II Corinthians 3:16-18 Nevertheless when it [my margin says *anyone*] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all [Christians], with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We are changed to God by the Spirit of the Lord. We have been given, provided, all that is needful to fulfill our responsibility. We already have enough of the measure of God's Spirit to carry out our functions within the body to overcome, because God gives the Spirit. He gives the power. He gives the enabling before we actually need it so it is there.

Now let us look at this series of verses a little more closely. First I am going to give you the way the Living Bible, a paraphrase, translates verse 18.

II Corinthians 3:18 (TLB) "But we Christians have no veil over our faces. We can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord, and as the spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him."

Is that not clear? This is where we are aiming as we go back as to why we are able to read God's Word and pick up the knowledge that is necessary within the truth of God that enables us to be changed and to become just like the mind of God.

Much of chapter 3 is concerned with a tremendous advantage that Christians have over others regarding understanding God's Word. It may not be as plain as I have stated, but that is what it says in these scriptures.

Go back now to verse 15, which says, "But even unto this day *when Moses is read*"—when the Old Testament is read. We might say "the law of God." You can tell by just knowing that nominal Christians out in the world hardly have an idea of what the law of God is about. They think it is done away. You cannot do away with something that is eternal. You cannot do away with something that reflects the very behavior of the Great God of heaven and earth. He is eternal. It is His law. It is a description of Him. That law is in the image of what He is. You cannot do away with something like that. They do not seem to have the vaguest idea of what is going on, and so when they read the Old Testament, a veil is over their heart, or mind.

It is the privilege of the Christian to look at the unveiled and unclouded glory of the gospel.

II Corinthians 3:12-14 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end [to the goal, to the purpose] of that which is passing away. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament: which veil is done away in Christ.

Why is this so? Men have read the Bible long, frequently, and I would have to say thoroughly, and yet they do not understand it. It is because their minds are blinded. It is something that is beyond them. Now when they turn to God, the blindness is removed. The turning to God indicates a change of mind. A change of heart has taken place. That is what the verses are telling. "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart."

So if somebody begins to understand the Bible, and the pieces begin to come together correctly, it means that a change has taken place in the heart, and that change is what is making it possible for God's Word now to have effect on the way they look at things, and in the way that they conduct their lives.

This change of heart has already taken place within you and me, and that is why we can reflect the mind of God in our lives just like we are really good mirrors. We are going to look at this process. We are very familiar with it, but we have to see what has happened to us, and why the world is the way it is, and filling in the details as to how we have been empowered.

Let us go back to John 6:44. In one sense this is so clear.

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John 6:44 No man can come to me, except. . . .

No man. And as long as a person does not come to God, he will never have the blindness removed.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except [the one exception is] the Father which has sent me draw him.

There are no exceptions to this. None whatsoever at all. Of the billions who have ever lived on earth, only those that the Father draws can come to the Son. It is faith in the Son and acceptance of His sacrifice which opens up access to the Father, and understanding. With access to the Father comes the Holy Spirit. Now we are going to see this thing unfold.

John 6:44-45 No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God: Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me.

The qualifying there is those "that have **heard** and **learned** of the Father" come unto the Son. So there are qualifiers. One of the things I am getting at here is the privilege that has been extended to you and to me, that we have been personally handpicked by the Great God of heaven and earth—the Creator. This was not haphazard in any way that He has personally and purposefully inserted Himself into our lives.

Let us go now to Ephesians 2. This is something that is directly connected to John 6:44 and the "no man can come to me" statement.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Nobody comes to Christ unless they are handpicked. Nobody comes to Christ except that they learn of the Father. Everybody is saved by grace. Now perhaps this will help you to understand what is being said here, because the key to understanding verse 8 is perhaps something that is hidden in the Greek grammar. It is the word "that." ". . .and

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that not of yourselves."

What is "that" referring to? You might find this technicality kind of interesting. It cannot refer to either "grace" or "faith," and this is because of the rules of Greek grammar, that in order for a word to modify, it has to be the same gender as the word that it is modifying.

Greeks have three genders: male, female, and neuter. "Grace" and "faith" are both in the feminine gender; "that" is neuter, so "that" cannot refer to either grace or faith being specifically the gift. It cannot refer to "you have been saved," because that phrase is a masculine participle.

So what is the answer here? The word "*that*" is referring to the whole bag. It is referring to everyone of them. It refers to "you are saved." It refers to the *whole* collectively. It refers to grace, and it refers to faith, and what the apostle is saying is that there is no part of salvation that is of ourselves. Every aspect of salvation is the gift of God—the whole thing, from the very beginning to the very end.

Now what does this mean again in practical application? It means in order for us to be saved, to do any part of what God wants us to do within His creative efforts, every bit of it has to be supplied to us, that no man is going to boast in His presence.

Let us go now to I Corinthians 2:9. Here we see the operation that takes place that puts us in a position to use our free moral agency in relation to God in a way that we could never do until John 6:44 occurred.

I Corinthians 2:9-11 But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.

We would never get it except God provides the means for us to think within certain parameters that we never would have thought of before until we were predisposed to do it.

I Corinthians 2:12-14 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given

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to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

As long as we are operating only on human nature as a natural man, we will never ever get it. NEVER! From the get-go! Our salvation is something that God provides, and even if He is the One who initiates the beginning of a relationship between Him and us, He is also the One that leads the whole way, almost as it were dragging us along the path in His wake as He goes along. But of course we know He does not treat us in that manner. I am using a dumb illustration there to try to help us to see that all along He keeps providing one thing after another, just as He did with Christ, only a smaller amount. Gift after gift after gift; one supply; another supply; another supply. Whatever is needed, He provides it.

This is why we can see with plainness, while others are blinded. It is because a miracle has been worked in our minds by the Creator who has given us of His own nature, that we can be in His image.

Let us touch base on another very familiar scripture:

Romans 2:4 Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

So God, by His Spirit, initiates our interest—*true* interest—in truth about Him, and about the Son and about the Kingdom of God. And we hear the gospel. Now we are empowered to believe it. We begin to see it in relation to ourselves. We begin to understand it in relation to our life personally. The goodness of God is providing repentance, and we repent because we believe, and we believe because He called, because He drew us.

The human spirit, combined with Satan's spirit, produces human nature which hardens itself against God. We are thus kept from hearing and understanding and assimilating its principles and being converted. It is not until God's Holy Spirit bearing the divine nature—the love of God; not the hatred of God—is introduced into that mix that makes up a man's heart. And the blindness begins to be removed, and conversion into the

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image of God begins.

We have been given the divine nature by means of the Spirit of God that we might know the things of God. It is this process in which the Holy Spirit is central, which enables us to carry out our function within God's creative works—His spiritual creation.

Let's go now to Acts 1 to a little example that involves the day of Pentecost.

Acts 1:4-8 And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, says he, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water: but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own power. But you shall receive power [Now just again picture this. Before the Holy Spirit is needed, it is given.], after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

It might be good to reflect on how confused and uncertain and unsure and hesitant they were on so many occasions. In fact, right after His death, the "I go fishing" thing took place. But Jesus said, "You shall receive power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and you shall witness." This is a key statement to understanding where empowerment to do God's will comes from. It was His will that they witness of Him through the preaching of the gospel, but it was not until they were empowered to do so that the witnessing became effective.

Acts 2:14-17 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

When God empowered them, the witnessing became effective, and Peter made it clear

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to those who heard him on that day that the empowerment came by the means of God's Holy Spirit, and what those people witnessed was the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

Now let us make this more personal by going back to Exodus 31.

Exodus 31:1-3 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name, [by personal appointment when He does it by name. God singled this person out.] Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

Do you see how Bezaleel is empowered to do this work? This is the process that is at work in you and me. The Spirit comes **first**, and we are enabled, we are empowered before it is actually required for us to do anything.

Exodus 31:4-6 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you.

Exodus 35:30-35 And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD has called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship: And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work, and he has put in his heart that he may teach [an additional gift that comes] both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them has he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

Exodus 36:1-2 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted

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man in whom the LOORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LOORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man in whose heart the LOORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.

The key to understanding this in a personal way is that these people were involved in building the Tabernacle, which like the Temple is a type of the church, and we are to understand that we too, in like manner, have been appointed by God personally to work in edifying—building up—the church. He empowered them with wisdom, and that means skills, or strength of capacity at performing some operation.

He gave them understanding, which means discernment and the ability to arrange or connect knowledge, meaning, specific acquaintance to do cunning works, inventions. By inspiration, by God's Spirit, God added to the natural ability, and so they were empowered to execute God's design in building *the church*. That is in there for our admonition so that we will understand that every one of us has been handpicked, and that we have been given of God's Spirit, empowered to fulfill our responsibility. The gifts, the ability—the power is already there—and it can be drawn upon. We have the responsibility within our stewardship to use it properly.

The Keil-Delitzsch Commentary, Volume 1, Page 248 makes this comment regarding Exodus 36:1:

The idea is this. Bezaleel, Aholiab, and the other men who understand, into whom Jehovah has infused wisdom and understanding that they may know how to do, shall do every work for the holy service with regard to all that Jehovah has commanded.

(Pardon me for using the word Jehovah, but that is what they used in their commentary.)

In every situation, God provides the gift before it is actually needed so that when it is needed, everything is prepared for the person to do as he has been commissioned to do. No gift, which is in practical reality a tool to do a work, is given after the fact as though it was an afterthought or some oversight that occurred, and God was suddenly trying to make up for it. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows exactly what He wants done. He knows exactly whom He wants to do it, and He empowers that

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person to carry it out.

Let us go back to the New Testament again.

James 1:12-18 Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished brings forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will [on His own initiative] begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures [or His creation].

Verse 18 is the conclusion of a thought that actually began back in verse 12. How does one resist and endure temptation? How does one overcome sin? The first step is to not err in thinking that God in any way leads us into sin. He tests us, but He does not try us with evil intent, but rather it is through spiritual gifts—every good and perfect gift. It is through spiritual gifts from Him that we are enabled to meet and overcome the challenges of sin. We are to understand that every good gift, including life itself, is given for the purpose of enabling us to do God's will so that we might be the firstfruits in His Kingdom.

How can we increase more of God's Spirit, because He wants to give us more and more? There are two simple steps. They are simple to say, but not always simple to do. These two things are two of the greatest challenges of life. But these two things, if they are done, will insure a constant flow, as it were, of God's spirit.

Acts 5:29-32 is that place where Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than men," and "God gives His spirit to those who obey Him." That is Step 1, but Step 1 cannot be done without Step 2, and Step 2 in many ways is the most complex of the two. Step 1 in many ways can be viewed as being an outgrowth or a fruit of Step 2. Step 2 is that we must seek God.

"Seek God" does not mean that we are to look for Him as though He is lost, or as if He was some kind of a mystery that had hidden itself, and we were trying to locate it or find it. "Seek God" means to pursue after Him in order to be like Him. It means to pursue the

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relationship that has begun with an acquaintance with Him—an acquaintance that is provided through His drawing us, and granting us repentance. We repent because we believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and this gives us access in to the Father. [Romans 5:1-2]

Now do you stop a relationship just when you become acquainted? No. You pursue, you seek to be like Him, because He is going to marry those who are just like Him. This is where those things that have to do with an intimate communication come to the fore: prayer, Bible study, meditation, occasional fasting. The fruit of that is obedience. It is when you and I are in God's presence that the Spirit flows.

If you can just think of that in practical human terminology, that the farther you are from someone, the less their spirit affects you. The closer you are to somebody, the more their spirit affects you. The same principle is at work with God. That is why access is opened up into His presence, as it were, and the means to get into His presence is through the blood of Jesus Christ, and then pursuing God, seeking God in prayer, in Bible study, drawing in the knowledge of the mind of God, coming to know Him. To know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to obey Him.

As I said, the second one is much more complex, and the first one is the fruit of the second, but we start where we are and we make a serious attempt to spend time every day in prayer; not once a day, twice a day, but Paul said to never cease praying. We are always on the edge, on the cusp of communicating with God. We are always looking at things through His eyes, from His perspective. The Spirit of God flows. We become like Him.

These are two simple steps to say; two difficult steps to put into practical application. But this is the key to meeting our stewardship responsibility. This is the key to living positive confident lives, to always be in contact with God, taking advantage of His drawing us to Him, using the time and energy to communicate with Him, that we might be like Him.