

A JOURNEY OF CLEAR VISION

Embracing the Joy in Our Salvation, But Being Honest About
What Daily Hinders Our Walk

BY BRYAN GILDE

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**OUR MAXIMUM JOY AND GLORY COMES IN HEAVEN,
BUT IT STARTS AND INCREASES FROM THE DAY WE
ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.**

**ENEMIES: 1) FLESH
2) WORLD
3) DEMONIC FORCES**

ALL SOURCES OF EVIL

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graph TD; A[1) FLESH] --- C(( )); B[2) WORLD] --- C; D[3) DEMONIC FORCES] --- C; E[ALL SOURCES OF EVIL] --- C; F[ENEMIES] -.-> C; G[ALL SOURCES OF EVIL] -.-> C; H[Which God Uses for His Purposes] -.-> C;
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War-Time Mentality

Which God Uses for His Purposes

honestly, they are true and real sources of evil, so do not live your life as if they do not exist! Yet, if God has taken the worst possible evil (His Son on the cross), and brought the greatest good out of it (the redemption of all His people), then he can certainly use *any evil* in the world for His good purposes. God is good, Amen!

War-Time Mentality! – Only when we see that there is a real battle between the top and bottom halves of this diagram, will we have a war-time mentality. We must fight with all that we are to live for God and die to self. This is done daily by living out the Christian discipline, in grace, in the present reality of His Kingdom. This brings the greatest possible joy while we tarry in this world. Spiritual warfare, as we now see, is not only against demonic forces, but it is against the flesh, the world, and demonic forces! Do not let one enemy trick you into thinking his allies are nothing to worry about! There are many books you could and should read about how to wage this war. But I earnestly hope you are now better equipped to fight the battle.

Do not love the world or 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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life (possessions)--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (I John. 2:15-17)

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil. 2:12-13)

As a Christian pastor who has grown up in the institutionalized, western, American, and post-modern age church I have often found my theology anorexic because I am so busy being a supposed “doer of the Word” (Js. 1:22-24). But the doer of the Word must *first* be one who has looked intently at the Word, as the man who has actually looked into the mirror of God’s law. I had become too comfortable in my established church because it has a system with a budget and calendar, instead of relying on and living in the power of the Holy Spirit. I had enjoyed my big office, big budget, technical connectivity and large resources, instead of humbly seeking God’s favor. I had rested comfortably on the backs of those who have gone before me, instead of working out my own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). I had subtly bought into the age of science with its physical explanations for spiritual concepts and truths so that my spiritual eyes were blinded, thus hindering my faith. I had loosened my grip on truth to conform to and please those around me, instead of God, lest I make people mad.

A story in the life of Jesus, in Luke 10:38-42 about two sisters fighting, illustrates the truth that we first and foremost need to be focused on being and knowing Jesus. Then, after we are renewed in our minds and secure in our understanding of our identity in Christ, we are well fitted for serving. In this story, Jesus is the middleman, Martha is the doer and Mary is the listener. One was “distracted with much serving” and the other “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching.” Jesus is not here saying that we do not need to be serving, for Luke just finished telling us the parable of the Good Samaritan. He is saying we need to be careful of much serving that is distracting us from getting re-fueled from the source, our triune God. We can never forget that He is actually not “served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts. 17:25). Too many of us in the church in America have become “anxious and troubled about many things,” even good things. I mean what could be better than serving Jesus right? Yet, the point of this story is that we need to spend time studying the Word and *then*

applying it to our lives, for “only one thing is necessary” (Luke 10:42).

I had done so poorly at *placing a priority in knowing him above serving him* over the years, that I had, wrongly, felt like a failure as a Christian. In my over-emphasis on doing, I had briefly gleaned a few half truths from the Scriptures. I was anemic in my soul because I was starving for truth. This led me to, wrongly, over-emphasize Paul’s cry in Philippians 1:21-26 “to die is gain . . . My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better,” to the neglect of “for me to live is Christ . . . to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” I had wrongly focused on the “hope held out in the Gospel” that we receive in heaven (Col. 1:23, NIV), to the neglect of the “hope held out in the gospel” *now*. We have all heard the testimony that says “I need to stop trying so hard,” but this time it means something to *me*. As the years went by I had sought the Lord for answers. As a result, I have a bigger and fuller view of God that is full of hope, surrender, and power—and it is still growing!

Are you seeking God for answers? Are you hungering and thirsting for His righteousness? I would like to point you (who are in the institutionalized, western, American, and post-modern age church) to a fuller view of God. We must work hard at removing the blind spots in our faith, over and over again. For we live in a world that is fractured by evil, we all *know* this based on Genesis 3, yet we tend to *ignore* this on a daily basis. Many in the church live as if the spiritual world doesn’t exist on a minute by minute, hourly basis. Instead we live spiritual lives, on occasion, every few days. This is the modern worldview (the blind spot) creeping in to tell us that there are legitimate physical reasons for depression, anger, lust, addictions, and tragedy. Granted there is truth to these physical explanations, still we tend to completely ignore the spiritual aspects of these problems! Yet even if we do acknowledge the *reality of spiritual warfare*, there is a tendency to buy into the view that those of us who are in the church are *automatically* protected from evil. We plan our activities (corporeal or private) without seeking constant direction, protection and supply from the Lord because we

are called according to His purpose.” Luke 6:20-26 reminds us that this world does have suffering, but that in eternity we have great reward. All of these verses are especially talking about God working salvation out of sin, how he has turned evil hearts towards himself. He has called us to be a people for Himself so that He would be our God and we would be His people. We will not always be able to see God working, but by faith, we do believe He is *always* active. This will then move us to a spirit of thankfulness, trust and worship towards our great God.

God Uses (even evil) for His Purposes – We need to be cautious, however, in not giving too much credit to these three enemies, especially Satan. Too often when a person's eyes are opened to the reality of spiritual warfare they can tend to have a ‘theology of Satan,’ and blame everything bad that happens on Satan as if God is not sovereignly in control of the universe He has made and is redeeming. After all, was it not God who brought up Job’s name, and not Satan? Did Job not say “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). He did not say the Lord giveth and Satan taketh away, but that the Lord did both! Even so, Satan was clearly then and is still now on a leash. Satan especially does not have free reign with those who are within and active in the local church. There is a real hedge of protection offered by God to his bride, the church. This is why Paul says that church discipline casts one to Satan (I Cor. 5:5), because Satan has more freedom in the lives of those outside of the church.

Additionally, for the Christian, the flesh is not always used for evil and is itself not evil. As noted above, the flesh makes an excellent servant, but an awful master. The Christian man has been *purchased* by God and is under new ownership (II Cor. 6:19-20). Likewise, the world is not always used for evil. We are called to be in the world as salt and light, but not of the world (John 17:15, Matt 5:13-16). If one has a tendency to hide from the world because they fear it is evil, this is not of faith.

This is precisely why these three enemies are here noted as ultimately being used for God’s *good* purposes. No doubt,

they are meaning to portray is gratefulness for the good that God brought *out* of the evil circumstance. It is not just or righteous to call evil good or even to be thankful for it. Evil is always offensive to God and so should it be to us.

Now, one can still have a spirit of thankfulness *in* all situations in life, while not actually being thankful *for* a current circumstance. This may seem like splitting hairs, but it is not. For example, I would not be thankful if somebody wrongly accused me of something. Yet, I could be thankful that God made that person, that I have a chance to show them love and that all the while, God is the only true Judge. Jerry Bridges says it this way, “We should seek to develop the habit of continually giving thanks to God. We should above all thank him for our salvation and for the opportunities we have for spiritual growth and ministry. We should thank Him frequently for the abundance of material blessings He has provided. And then, when circumstances go awry and do not turn out the way we had hoped, we should, by faith, thank Him for what He is doing in the circumstances to transform us more into the likeness of His Son.”¹²

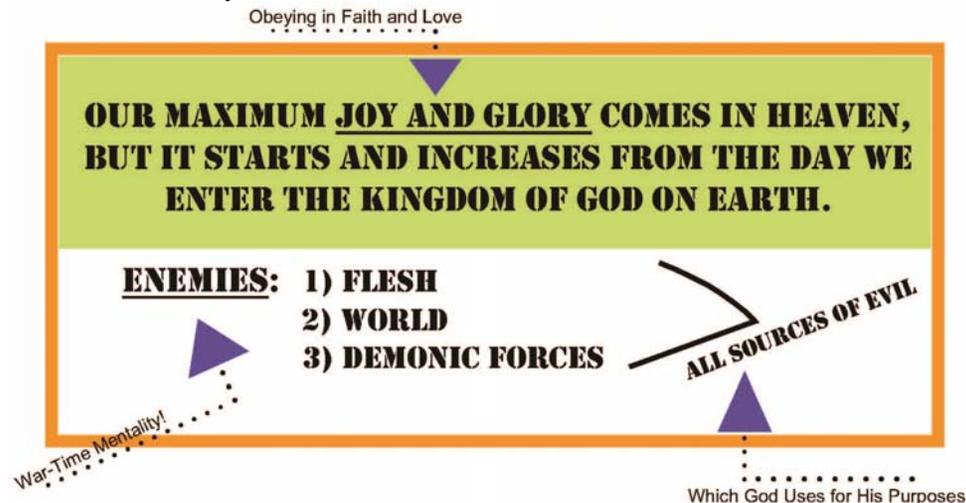
Ephesians 5:20 says we are to always “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” and I Thessalonians 5:18 says “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Bridges, further adds, “We should especially give thanks when we have experienced an unusual provision from God or deliverance from some difficult circumstance.”¹³

What is truly amazing is how God works good out of evil. The entire Bible is a story of God taking trash and turning us into treasure. In Genesis 50:20, referring to Joseph being sold into slavery, God says “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” In Romans 8:28, Paul says, “God works all things out for the good of those who love him and

¹² Ibid., 86

¹³ Ibid., 83

believe we have been sealed with the Spirit for great joy here on earth. I would like to offer a diagram that explains a biblical worldview to an institutionalized, western, American, and post-modern age church. This diagram illustrates a biblical theology that not only embraces joy in salvation, but is also honest about what daily hinders our walk.



In this diagram you see two halves, the top half explains our solid identity in Christ, while the bottom half says we have real enemies fighting to devour us and mar the beauty of our great God who has given us this great salvation.

The Top Half: The top half is often emphasized and certainly better understood in the church today than the bottom half. Still some points of explanation are in order because too often we do expect our greatest joy and glory to come in this life instead of the life to come. While we can have great joy, as John 10:10 and 15:11 says, it is not the same joy that will be experienced in heaven, where “the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for

the old order of things has passed away." (Rev. 21:3-4, see also I Cor. 13:12, Ps 16:11)

Our Maximum – Too often the joy we experience as believers is smaller than it could be. We should pursue our maximum joy in the Lord on earth! There is an immense amount of joy to be had in the Lord when we obey in faith and love. Sometimes we do not maximize our joy here on earth because as C.S. Lewis has said "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on *making mud pies in a slum* because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased"¹. Do not accept *status quo* contentment in the Christian life, or even the good Christian life, go for the best in your walk with our Master and Savior!

Obedying in Faith and Love – The connection between obedience and our greatest joy is as vital as any beneficial symbiotic relationship could be. We will prove that below in the next section, but it must first be noted that it is not mere obedience alone; it is a passionate and willing obedience that is done in faith and love. If it is not of faith or done in love, then our obedience will not yield great joy.

We obey in faith, while trusting by faith that God's way is right. It is a faith that is based on the character of a good God as He has revealed Himself in the written Word and through the Holy Spirit. It is a faith that is not blind, but makes sense and is confirmed in my experience and felt in my emotions, passions, and affections. Obedience can be hard sometimes, but we must obey even when we don't understand God's ways or commands. If we trust by faith that God's commands are best and right, then our obedience *is* of faith! Then we will be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6).

¹ *The Weight of Glory*

said *connected*. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Ps. 50:15)

In Luke 10:18 Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven," because the kingdom of God was at hand. Yet, he calls them to focus their rejoicing in their own salvation. Don't spend all your time focusing on Satan, rather focus on the giver of life. Moreover, when we do talk about Satan attacking us, we give him too much credit, for Satan himself has probably never attacked any of us. When we imply that Satan attacked us what we are saying is that he can be everywhere at all times. We may mean that Satan is the representative head of all the demonic forces, but that is probably not what we are thinking. We should be accurate in identifying this enemy as plural—demonic forces. Ephesians 6:12 says this very thing when it says our struggle is against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." It does not say our battle is against only Satan himself.

In addition, we should beware of 'making fun' of the Devil. It is not wise to taunt our enemy. Jude 9 says "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

All Real Sources of Evil – We need to quickly realize that although things are not as bad as they could be, they are truly evil. What could be worse than offending our holy God? The fall in Genesis 3 is the evil of all evils, what we call human sin. Yet, God has offered forgiveness and in wrath, He has remembered mercy (Hab. 3:2, Matt. 9:13, Eph. 2:4). He has also limited evil by shortening the length of our years, since the flood. Psalm 90:10, explains, "The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."

Still we cannot call good what is truly evil. Often well meaning Christians express gratefulness for an evil circumstance, which sounds absurd when you think about it. Actually, what

sin as bitter? Even if you do, too often the reason we accept worldliness is not because we do not hate sin, but because we honestly do not call worldliness sin!

The right attitude towards possessions and things in this world is to “use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away” (I Cor. 7:31). Are you over zealous for things in this world? Jerry Bridges defines worldliness as “accepting the values, mores, and practices of the nice, but unbelieving, society around us without discerning whether or not those values, mores, and practices are biblical. Worldliness is *just going along with the culture around us* as long as that culture is not obviously sinful.”¹¹

Demonic Forces – John 10:10 says the thief (Satan and his demons) is a stealer of Joy, that he is a killer! Ephesians 2:2 says that he is aligned with this world, that he is in fact ‘the prince of the power of the air.’ John 12:31 however says that because of the cross and resurrection of King Jesus that ‘Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.’ Satan has been defeated and God’s kingdom is advancing forcefully (Matthew 11:12) until He comes again. Will you be a man that lays hold of this Kingdom with all your being?!?! Will you do whatever it takes to have bold faith? Take up the armor of God (Eph. 6) to fight this old foe. The armor is put on when you “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18).

Are you automatically protected from demonic forces? No and Yes. No, because in the Lord’s Prayer we are to pray for deliverance from evil (or the evil one). But, yes we are protected by the blood of the Lamb who has risen! There is especially protection as we live together as a church, a community of tight-knit believers praying and encouraging and admonishing one another. This is the hedge of protection afforded us when we are connected to a local body of Christ. I didn’t say just a member, I

¹¹ *Respectable Sins*, 166

We obey in love, for Jesus tells us to “remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love” (John 15:9) & “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Obedience and love go hand in hand, you can’t have one without the other. And if you have love and obedience, then you have the great joy of John 15:11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

So we see this obedience is not a legalistic obedience, for Galatians 5:6 says that what counts is “faith working through love.” The way we express love to one another is by living out the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5, all nine “fruits” are expressions of the one fruit, love). We need to be obedient by having true concern for one another that looks real and is real because it is authentic—this is loving and trusting obedience. This is why the two Great Commissions of the Bible are focused on others. Both Genesis 1:28 and Matthew 28:18-20 are calling us to preach the gospel to the world around us, so that the earth will be filled with worshipers of God.

If one wants to gain life then you must lose your life by dying to yourself daily (Matt. 10:39, Luke 9:23). Jesus calls us to a radical and crazy obedience! This is the hard obedience of Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Yet by faith we believe that his yoke is easy and his burden is light (Matt. 11:30).

Joy and Glory – Joy goes hand in hand with glory. John Piper has said “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied [joyous and happy] in him.”² *As we enjoy God, by obeying God, we glorify God.* We are called to be doers of the Word, as James 1:22-24 says, but these deeds have been prepared beforehand by God himself, that we might walk right into them (Eph. 2:10). But, this glory is most seen in heaven as we serve

² www.DesiringGod.org

Him, somehow, in heaven as II Corinthians 3:18 says, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with *ever-increasing glory*, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”³

Comes in Heaven – We must keep in mind that there is a limit to our joy while we are on earth because our greatest joy and glory does not come to us until we are in heaven. As C.S Lewis has said in *Mere Christianity*:

The Christian says, 'Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. *If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.* If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same. (p 121)

³ Our Christian “life to the full” that John 10:10 speaks of is closely related to His expanding Kingdom, see below Kingdom of God.

people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” I John 2:15-17 says “Do not love the world or 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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life (possessions)--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Unfortunately, there are some kinds of sins that we wrongly accept as okay or understandable. Because worldliness is a sin we would expect a Christian to commit, we excuse it. We say things like ‘I’m only human’ or ‘God made me this way’ or ‘It’s not that bad’ or ‘I have freedom in Christ to enjoy this or that’ or ‘I wish Satan didn’t have his way with me.’ Though we may never plan on sinning, our problem is that we can tend to accept these sins that we ‘expect’ to commit.

There are some sins that we expect Christians to commit (though we do not approve of these sins) and there are some sins we do not expect Christians to commit. Putting sin into two types of categories can lead to dangerous rationalizations since all sin equally separates us from God and all sin is equally forgivable. Yet, all sin is not equal in its degree and consequences; therefore we legitimately have categories of sin. For example, committing an act of sexual immorality and breaking the seventh commandment has greater consequences than lusting after a woman in one’s heart. Or, killing a person has far greater ramifications than simply hitting them, which is worse yet than hating them. Because we innately know this to be true we put worldliness in a lesser category of sin and tend to marginalize our fight against it! Just because worldliness is a sin we expect Christians to commit, does not mean we should accept it! Little sins lead to big sins. Somebody who commits a “big sin”, surely started by allowing a little worldliness to creep in.

If we start to justify ourselves by comparing one sin to another sin, we are way off base! Thomas Watson said it well ‘Till [all] sin is bitter, Christ will not be sweet.’ Do you see all

What can I fast from this month and every month, just to teach my flesh who is in charge?

Remember:

- Romans 12:1 says we are to offer our *bodies* as living sacrifices in response to the Gospel of forgiveness that Paul just presented in the first 11 chapters of Romans. This is true worship.
- By faith we believe with all our heart that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24), for “we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom. 6:6).
- Our flesh is weak, and sin is sly, subtle and only exposed by the law of God. Dear Christian, “there is not safety against it but in a constant warfare,”¹⁰ so fight with the Armor of God as Ephesians 6:10-20 says to fight!
- When there is victory, all the glory goes to God! For, “we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (II Cor. 4:7).
- Even as we live, on our way to our own physical death, we have hope, for “we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (II Cor. 4:16).

The World – Romans 12:1 says we must not conform to the patterns of this world. Though we live in this world, but we are not of it (John 17:15-16). James 4:4 says “you adulterous

There is great joy to be had while on earth and we need to maximize it, but we must be focused on finishing the race, not only starting it or running it, but on the finish line itself. This is where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:3-4). Colossians 1:23 says there is a hope held out in the gospel; this hope is ultimately the day of our glorification in heaven. Galatians 5:5 says that “by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.” We are waiting for heaven, we are hoping for heaven. Paul’s cry in Philippians 1:21-26 is “to die is gain . . . my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”

Starts and Increases – Although there is legitimate God-given joy to be had as a non-Christian (Acts 14:17), soul satisfying and eternal joy is only realized when we are born again (Ps. 16:11; 63:3, Ecc. 3:11). But this joy is a growing joy, like a light that gets brighter and brighter as you get closer to it. In II Corinthians 4:6, Paul talks of the first time we believe, “for God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” The point is that Genesis 1:3 is not only about the creation of the world, it is also about the dark and lost soul getting gloriously saved, for God has turned on his light in our hearts through His glorious gospel.

In II Corinthians 3:18 Paul tells us that this light is an increasing glory, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” My favorite passage is Proverbs 4:18, which says, “The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.” This joy and glory increases till the day we enter heaven where the King reigns in the fullness of His kingdom!

This glory/joy is also closely related to the Kingdom of God and its expansion. In Matthew 13:31-33 the kingdom of heaven is increasing in our own lives as time goes on. It is also gaining ground in fulfillment worldwide. The kingdom is God’s

¹⁰ Owen in *Of The Mortification of Sin in Believers*, 52

expanding rule both in our own lives, in the church, and the universe. As the kingdom of God is expanding in our lives and the world, so is our glory and joy ever increasing.

The Day We Enter . . . on Earth – We enter the kingdom of God when we surrender to our Maker as our Savior. When Jesus started preaching “repent and believe” in Mark 1:15, he said the kingdom of God was at hand. We enter the kingdom when we repent of our sin and believe in the Son of Man’s death on the cross and His resurrection three days later to conquer death and sin. He took our place so that sin would no longer reign in us.

Kingdom of God – As mentioned above our joy and glory *starts and increases* just as the kingdom is increasing in power (in our lives both personal and as the church) and expanding in presence (in the world). The Kingdom of God is synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven. Dwight Pentecost calls it the Kingdom of the God of Heaven. David Platt defines it as “The redemptive rule or reign of God in Christ.”⁴ George Ladd says “The Kingdom in this age is not merely the abstract concept of God’s universal rule to which men must submit; it is rather a dynamic power at work among men.”⁵

Little can be said in just a few short paragraphs on a phrase and key concept that is mentioned over 150 times in the New Testament. Indeed the concept of God’s kingdom is from of old, especially emphasized in the Kingdom of the Israelites in the Old Testament⁶. My point though is that we (together with each other) are currently reigning with Christ in His kingdom since you are seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6). This is encouraging, it is good news, and it is a reality! In the physical realm, you are commissioned by God to rule this earth (Gen. 1:28). In the

⁴ *Secret Church* notes

⁵ *The Presence of the Future* by George Eldon Ladd, 139.

⁶ see *Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program and Covenant Promises Throughout History* by J. Dwight Pentecost.

were “born again” our soul in our spirit was regenerated, but our flesh has only changed ownership and has not yet received its new body. II Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were *bought* with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Until Jesus comes back, our flesh makes an excellent servant, but an awful master. This is why Peter says, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from passions of the flesh, which war against your soul!” (I Peter 2:11) The fallen flesh is our primary foe and this is the power that demonic forces hold over us, though *neither have any authority over us*.

In *The Enemy Within*, Kris Lundgaard quotes G.K. Chesterton as saying, “If a rhinoceros were to enter this restaurant now, there is no denying he would have great power here. But I should be the first to rise and assure him that he had no authority whatever.” Lundgaard goes on to explain, “The law of sin in a believers is like Chesterton’s rhino. The only moral, authoritative rule over believers is the kingdom and reign of God. Indwelling sin is a usurper to the throne who, like the rhino, can at times force himself on us. Even though we rise and tell him he has no authority, he can push us around the restaurant.”⁹

Romans 12:1 says if we are to live in the center of God’s will then we must present *our bodies* as a living sacrifice. We must die to our flesh! What does this mean? We must be on a fast for the rest of our lives, no doubt! We must not live for ourselves if we are to gain eternal life. We must not seek to gratify the desires of our flesh, but rather the desires of the spirit.

For further study on this topic see my booklet “An Understanding of Sin in the Believer.” Also see John Owen in his three works compiled by Kopic and Taylor in *Overcoming Sin and Temptation* which explores in great detail, how, because the flesh is not made new until the resurrection of the dead, it is persistently dragging down both saved and lost people (A contemporary and more condensed treatment of this topic is found in Kris Lundgaard’s book *The Enemy Within*).

⁹ Lundgaard, 29

demonic forces hold over us is an appeal to our flesh through the world.⁷

The Number of the Enemies – Ephesians 2:1-3 lists all three of these, very real, enemies. Do not neglect to fight any of them! How do these three relate? There is first of all a battle being waged within us, between our flesh and our spirit. Demonic forces then enter the equation when they use the world to entice us to sin by appealing to our flesh. All three are connected, more than we normally realize. (The world could be considered to be the all encompassing enemy since the world also includes the flesh and Satan as the ruler of the world (I John 2:15-17, Eph. 2:2).)

The Flesh -- In Matthew 26:41, James 1:14; 4:1, Romans 7:1-25; 12:1, and Galatians 2:20; 5:16-18, we see the biblical worldview that says the flesh, our very own body, is the first enemy of the spirit of God who lives within us.⁸ When we

⁷ To be fair, I acknowledge that there is an opposing worldview, however, that would instead say that though it is still by God's sovereign design, God's reign is nonetheless not currently a reign that is completely sovereign (see *God at War*, by Gregory Boyd). This is another explanation given for the problem of evil in the world. It says that since Satan is given free permission to roam about unchecked, there is therefore gratuitous evil (a theological term that means there is evil in which no good comes from at all). This leaves the only possible place for blame on God at His creative act in bringing Satan into existence. Though I take a different view, what is highly praiseworthy of Boyd's work is his pleading for the Christian to acknowledge the open spiritual warfare that vexes believers on this earth. Either way, the point I am here making is that both systems of thought need to deal with these three, real enemies.

⁸ A more literal translation of the Bible is needed here, as for example, the '84 NIV translated the Greek word *sarx* as "sinful nature," and not "flesh" as the ESV and the '11 NIV do. Additionally, *sarx* is not always referring to the body, but at times does refer to our entire sinful nature. Though I hold that when it does, it is a reference to the whole man before he was born again. I do hold to a view of man that says we have one nature, not two at the same time.

spiritual realm, you have been given ALL authority to go forth and conquer the nations in His name (Matt. 28:18-20). Certainly the fullness of His kingdom is not in the here and now, but it is here and it is breaking forth more and more, advancing forcefully, by men who boldly take hold of the kingdom (Matt. 11:12). The fullness of the kingdom comes when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father" (Phil. 2:10-11). We must wait until "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

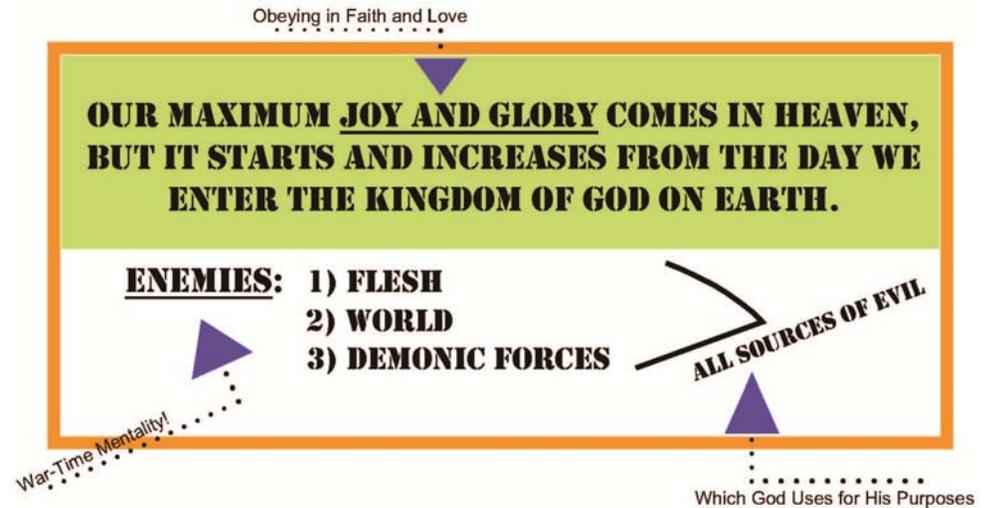
King David was familiar with waiting for the full kingdom to come. He was anointed as king over all of Israel 15-20 years before he actually became king, but in God's eyes he was the rightful king all along. In fact, David was anointed as king three times. The first time was private. It took place when Samuel the prophet found him as a boy at the home of his father Jesse (I Sam. 16:1-13). The second time was shortly after King Saul's death when the tribe of Judah anointed him king (II Sam. 2:4). The third and final time was when all Israel came to Hebron and pledged loyalty to him (II Sam. 5:3). God works through process. For us as NT believers, salvation itself is a process, that of justification, sanctification, and glorification.

We are called to long for the fullness of God's kingdom here on earth. In fact, this is something we are called to pray in the Lord's Prayer "Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). In Luke's version it simply states "Thy Kingdom Come" (Luke 11:2). What is interesting in Luke's teaching on prayer in Luke 11:1-13 is the concluding remark that Jesus will give the Holy Spirit to those who keep asking him for it. Where did that come from? No where in the Lord's Prayer is the Holy Spirit mentioned. There must be a link between our prayers for God's kingdom to come and the giving of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish it. This is not talking about receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit when a lost person is justified, for the prayer addresses God as our Father and thus we

are considered *already* be his adopted sons. Rather, here the giving of the Holy Spirit is pertaining to the *filling* of the Holy Spirit

Therefore, a key to His Kingdom coming here on earth is praying and then living in the power of the Holy Spirit. This means (1) we use and embrace the gifts the Sprit has given each of us (Rom. 12 & I Cor. 12) and that (2) we live out the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5, remember, all nine “fruits” are expressions of the one fruit, love).

This is not done alone, but it is done with the body of Christ. *We* have been given the keys to the kingdom, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the **keys** of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). If we realize, by faith, that we are right now in the kingdom of God and that we have been given the keys to this kingdom, then our joy is real and increasing.



The Bottom Half: However difficult it is to grasp, the current reign of God on earth does have imposing challenges that a believer must face, because God has designed his sovereign reign to include our freedom of real choice. This is the essence of the bottom half of this diagram.

Too often we neglect to honestly acknowledge that one reason for the study of God’s Word is to remove personal sin from our lives, through repentance. Too often, we just want to study God’s Word so we can have the top half, while ignoring that the light only shines on this earth as the darkness is extinguished by the power of the Gospel.

We must deal with these three, real enemies. The desires of the flesh and the world are not from the Father and they are passing away (I John 2:15-17). Satan is the ruler of the powers of the air, which is the unseen spiritual world in the earthly realms (Eph. 2:2). Satan is unleashing the gates of hell on the church! Even so, it will *not* prevail, but there will be travail (Matt. 16:18)! Below I will explore the three enemies we face—that the power