

WORLDLY THINGS ARE TEMPORARY SPIRITUAL THINGS ARE ETERNAL

We dwell in the physical realm that we see and experience, but there is also an unseen spiritual realm where the things we experience affect our eternal existence.

WORLDLY REALITY AND SPIRITUAL REALITY

In our Worldly Environment Physical Reality and Spiritual Reality Co-exist

It is obvious to everyone that we live in a physical environment that is readily perceived and experienced. Our senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell, are the organs that allow us to be in contact with our physical environment. Our minds coordinate the reactions of our senses and deduce conclusions that result in actions and emotions. By these means we experience the many intricacies of our own personal involvement in the physical realm.

It is not so obvious to all that we also dwell in a spiritual realm, where there is no supportable evidence from our senses. Whereas our senses enable us to perceive the physical realm, it is only our spirits that enable us to understand spiritual reality. Before becoming Christians our spirits were in a state of degeneration due to the Fall. On becoming Christians we were 'born again' as the Holy Spirit entered and empowered our spirits, enabling us to see and understand spiritual realities and truths.

In the spiritual realm there are unseen spiritual entities such as the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who reveal themselves to us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also guides and teaches, revealing spiritual truths to us. He also shows us the will of God for our lives, and directs us into spiritual ministries. There are also God's angelic spirits who minister to us unawares. By contrast there are hordes of demon spirits, who are continually endeavouring to bring our natures under Satan's control. The following Scriptural readings illustrate the presence of spiritual entities in the spiritual and worldly realm we live in.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit (*Holy Spirit*) is life because of righteousness." [Rom 8:9-11].

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God..." [Luke 2:13].

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." [Matt 18:10-11].

"Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him." [Mark 1:34].

Unfortunately there are many Christians who have not opened their hearts to Spiritual reality and spiritual truths. Nor have they fed and strengthened their spirits with spiritual food through reading and studying the bible and the teaching of anointed teachers, by habitual prayer, praise and worship, and fellowship with other believers. They have remained in a state of spiritual babyhood, still unable to see or understand spiritual realities.

Spiritual Things are Spiritually Discerned

Whereas we experience the things of the world through our senses, Paul states in the following reading that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. He is emphatic that it is only through our spirits that we are able to receive the spiritual truths that the Holy Spirit wants to impart to us.

“Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” [1 Cor 2:11-14].

The ‘natural man’ is a person of the world who has not experienced the regeneration of his spirit. Such people rely on their intellects to discern truth, and Paul tells us that they cannot receive spiritual truth because it is spiritually discerned.

Even as a Christian, exceptional intelligence can be a hindrance to discerning spiritual truth, if it results in reliance on mental ability, rather than spiritual discernment. The next reading shows us that the fleshly or natural attributes of a person vie with the Holy Spirit for control of our minds. ***“For the flesh [natural or worldly attributes] lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”*** [Gal 5:17-18]. That is why the intellect of the natural or worldly man may hinder him from receiving and understanding spiritual truth, which to him may seem foolishness. A child who depends on God as his Father is more open to receive truth in his spirit than a mature person who relies on his natural intellect. ***“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty...”*** [1 Cor 1:27].

Worldly Physical things are Temporary -- Unseen Spiritual things are Eternal

In describing his spiritual walk, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that he and his fellow workers focused on the unseen spiritual things because they were eternally true, whereas worldly physical things are only temporary.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen [spiritual things] are eternal.” [2 Cor 4:17-18].

Paul is telling us that as Christians, we should not think as worldly people think. Potentially, we have been given ***“the mind of Christ,”*** or a mind that is guided by the Holy Spirit through our spirits. Consequently we should see things in the light of spiritual reality rather than by their worldly appearance.

Worldly Works and Spiritual Works

In the next reading we are shown that we were created to do good works, and that it is God who prepares the works. ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*** [Eph 2:10].

The works that we do for Christ should be spiritual works initiated and directed by the Holy Spirit through our spirits. But since we as Christians live in both a worldly and spiritual environment, and have souls as well as spirits, we have the potential to do worldly works for Christ that are soulish or fleshly, initiated by self without the input of the Holy Spirit. Consequently they have no chance of bearing lasting fruit. Jesus said, ***“I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”*** [John 15:16]. It is our responsibility as Christians to learn to differentiate between the flesh and the Spirit so that we may do spiritual works that bear lasting fruit. ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit”*** [Rom 8:5].

We must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ

The following readings tell us that each one of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of the works of his life on earth, “*whether good or bad.*”

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” [2 Cor 5:9-10].

“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” [Rom 14:10 & 12].

The judgment seat of Christ is not to determine our eternal salvation, because that is determined by our belief and acceptance of Jesus as our Saviour and Lord through His sacrificial death on the cross. This is a personal judgment of our works on earth, and what we achieved for the Lord. It is to determine our station or status in our new life in eternity. Not all will have the same status. Because Jesus’ disciples had given up all to follow Him, He told them, ***“Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (after being resurrected), when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*** [Matt 19:28-29].

Paul warned the Corinthians about building on the foundation of another person’s ministry with worldly works of the flesh. Although their salvation would be intact, they would still suffer judgment. ***“...each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”*** [1 Cor 3:13-15].

The writer of Hebrews tells how some early Christians willingly faced torture and martyrdom so that they might obtain a better resurrection. ***“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”*** [Heb 11:35].

When facing the judgment seat of Christ it will be apparent that our worldly achievements will count for nothing, because the things of the world are only temporary. People may have created empires, amassed huge fortunes, or acquired world acclaim, but the world and its works will pass away, and if we have no spiritual works we will have nothing to commend ourselves to the Lord. We may be Christians, and have a bag full of works to present to the Lord, but if they are works of the flesh and not of the Spirit, they will profit us nothing.

TWO PLANES OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH

There are two intermeshing planes of spiritual truth in which we participate in our spiritual walk.

- The heavenly plane of spiritual truth involves our relationship with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the eternal spiritual blessings acquired for us by Jesus on the cross.
- The second plane of spiritual truth is concerned with our daily walk in our earthly environment, and the spiritual blessings that equip us to have victorious fruitful lives.

1. The Heavenly Plane of Eternal Spiritual Reality

The Eternal Blessings of the Heavenly Realm

This section outlines the truth of the eternal spiritual blessings acquired for us by the atoning sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. They relate to our relationship with God, our deliverance from Satan’s kingdom and power, and the eternal blessings associated with our salvation. These blessings are inviolable and eternal, and secured for us in heaven. Our position is to receive and hold fast to them by faith. Some Christians are reluctant to receive these as personal blessings on the mistaken grounds that it would be presumptuous. It would only be presumptuous if we regarded these blessings as personal achievements rather than attained through the atoning sacrifice of the Jesus on the cross. The truth is that if we do not embrace the

blessings, we are rejecting the grace of God, and all He acquired for us by the death of Jesus on the cross.

We are transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” [Col 1:13-14]. This reading tells us that we are now members of Christ’s kingdom, we are redeemed, and that our sins have been forgiven.

We are holy and blameless in God’s sight

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...” [Col 1:21-22].

We are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” [2 Cor 5:21].

We have received eternal salvation

“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” [John 6:40].

We are reconciled to God and are His Children

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ...”[2 Cor 5:18].

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” [Rom 8:16-17].

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God...“Beloved, now we are children of God...” [1 John 3:1 & 2].

These readings tell us that we, who have been redeemed, are reconciled to God, and accepted by Him as His children. We are holy and blameless and without reproach before God. Even more incredibly, we are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. The point is, how do we view these truths? Viewed from a worldly perspective they couldn’t possibly be true. We know that in our natural man we are burdened with things like resentments, judgments, unclean thoughts, fear, hatred, and so forth. What is the truth of the matter? By worldly standards our perfect righteousness is impossible, but in the spiritual realm this must be regarded as irrefutable eternal truth. The spiritual reality is that in the spiritual realm we are holy and blameless and the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. It is on these grounds that we were able to receive the Holy Spirit.

What makes our spiritual position absolute truth in the spiritual realm is that it rests on the cross of Jesus Christ, where He bore the complete judgment and punishment for our sins in our stead. As a consequence God accounts us as being redeemed, our debt cancelled, and we are perfectly righteous in His sight. We must learn to stand firm in our position in the spiritual realm. It is as Paul said, ***“set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*** [Col 3:2].

Every Claim of Satan Against us is nailed to the Cross

Where the next reading says the “handwriting of requirements” that was against us, Paul is using a legal metaphor based on the list of legal charges directed by the accuser against the defendant. Paul is saying that every legal claim Satan has against us has been taken away.

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting

of requirements [judicial charges] ***that was against us, which was contrary*** [opposed] ***to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers*** [of Satan], ***He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*** [the cross].” [Col 2:13-15].

This reading declares that every accusation or legal claim that Satan could present before God to prevent our salvation has been ***“nailed to the cross.”*** God has disarmed Satan and rendered him legally powerless to prevent us receiving our salvation, and every other spiritual blessing of eternal righteousness.

In the spiritual realm, even Satan has to acknowledge that every claim against us has been removed, but that does not stop him from accusing us and trying to make us judge spiritual things from a worldly perspective. The crux of the matter is how we view our circumstances and our position before God. If Satan succeeds in making us judge according to worldly truth we will always be open to his accusations. If we stand firm in our position in the spiritual realm and judge from a spiritual viewpoint according to what Christ achieved for us on the cross, we will accept our righteousness and blamelessness by faith, and know rest and peace within ourselves.

Paul says that our focus should be on living and walking in the light of the permanent eternal spiritual blessings secured and kept intact for us in heaven. In this next reading he berates those ***“...who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** [Phil 3:19-20]. He is telling us that our citizenship or true spiritual dwelling place is in the heavenly spiritual realm. For instance, no matter how dire our circumstances may be on earth, and how much Satan accuses us, we should never lose sight of the fact that due to the cross, in God’s eyes we are eternally saved, and eternally righteous and blameless in His sight.

We have an obligation to maintain our faith in the eternal salvation and righteousness secured by Christ, for it is conditional to ***“if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...”*** [Col 1:22-23]. We are obliged to hold fast to our belief, for the only thing that can take away our blessings in the heavenly spiritual realm is a loss of faith.

2....Spiritual Truth Concerning Our Daily Living in the World

The last section dealt with our position in the spiritual realm in relation to God and all heavenly hosts, and Satan and his demonic spirits of darkness. Living in the spiritual plane of truth we are assured of the inviolable position of our eternal righteousness and salvation. These spiritual blessings were procured for us by Jesus, and they are eternally ours.

This section deals with the reality of that we are also walking in a worldly physical realm where we sin often. As Christians, our walk in the realm of the world is one of overcoming the power of Satan and sin, and steadily growing into a state of practical righteousness. Even in our state of warring against sin, God in His grace and wisdom has provided us with the spiritual means to overcome the effect of our sins, and allow us to live in peace with clear consciences. Once again it is by the cross of Jesus that Satan is overcome, and we are enabled to walk in victory.

Through the blood of Jesus our sins are forgiven and we are cleansed from unrighteousness

God has provided the blood of Jesus to be the means for our sins to be forgiven, and our whole being cleansed from the defilement of sin.

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light (of spiritual truth) as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son

cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” [1 John 1:5-9].

The Old Testament portrays how God prepared the way for the acceptance of an atoning sacrifice to deliver His children from the guilt of sins they had committed. The key element in the atoning sacrifice was the blood of the sacrificial animal, because its life was in its blood. **“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”**[Lev 17:11]. The blood symbolises a life poured out for the sake of others, that they may be set free from the guilt and death associated with sin.

The writer of Hebrews tells how in obedience to God, Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial animals on the people and articles of the tabernacle to purify and sanctify all things in the sight of God. **“For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.” Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”** [Heb 9:19-22]. Note the final summation – **“almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”**

The Old Testament ordinance paved the way for acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus, **“the spotless lamb of God,”** who allowed his blood to be poured out on the altar of the cross to atone for the sins of all mankind. That is why John the apostle could say that if we sin and **“confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,”** and that **“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** This spiritual truth provides us a typical example of how the natural man does not receive **“the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.”** From a worldly perspective the blood of Jesus being able to cleanse us from sin belies human logic, and such a statement would be considered as foolishness. But if we as Christians **“walk in the light”** of spiritual truth, we have a continual avenue for our sins to be forgiven, and furthermore, to be cleansed from the defilement that sin has inflicted.

Further readings that reveal the spiritual power of the blood of Jesus

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...” [Eph 1:7].

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” [1 Peter 1:18-20].

To be redeemed is to have our debt paid for by someone else. In this case our eternal lives have been redeemed from everlasting destruction at the cost of the blood Jesus Christ – His life poured out on the cross as an atoning sacrifice. That is why Paul could say that every legal claim that Satan had against us has been **“nailed to the cross.”**

We are sanctified or set apart to God

In the Old Testament the blood of the sacrificial animal was sprinkled on the altar and the congregation to sanctify them to God. When by faith we believe and receive the spiritual blessings procured for us by Jesus on the cross, and receive by faith the purifying power of the blood of Jesus applied to ourselves, we are sanctified or set apart to God.

“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who

through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” [Heb 9:13-15].

“Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” [Heb 10:29-30].

“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” [Acts 26:17-18].

“But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” [1 Cor 6:11].

“By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” [Heb 10:10].

How do we acquire Our Spiritual Blessings?

We acquire our spiritual blessings when we claim them by faith in prayer – usually silent prayer from within when we are faced with a need. We testify to what the word says in faith that it applies to us personally. For instance Satan may accuse us that we are beyond God’s forgiveness. We respond with the prayer thought that if we confess our sins God is just and faithful to forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. We do not have to quote the Scriptures word for word, but testify to what the word says in content. If we stand firm on the word, Satan has to retreat.

Satan Opposes Our Acquisition of our Spiritual Blessings

In Revelation, we are told that Satan accuses us day and night.

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” [Rev 12:10-11].

Satan, the accuser of the brethren, was defeated by the cross of Jesus, when every legal claim against the brethren was “nailed to the cross.” He was cast out of heaven, but that has not stopped him from accusing us here on earth, particularly when we are in a state of trial and weakness. The reading states three ways we may overcome.

- Standing in our complete righteousness wrought by the blood of Jesus.
- Testifying to our blessings in the Scriptures.
- Not loving our lives means declaring them purchased by Jesus and presented to God.

Jesus is our Advocate and High Priest

“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” [1 John 2:1-2].

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” [Heb 2:17-18].

Jesus acts on our behalf before the throne of God as our Advocate and as a faithful High Priest. In the Old Testament the High Priests were intermediaries between God and the people, presenting their sacrificial offerings to Him on the altar for the forgiveness of their sins. He is the High Priest of our confessions (translated testimonies in other readings), presenting them to God on our behalf.

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus...” [Heb 3:1].

When we testify to our belief in His blood, Jesus presents our testimonies to God on our behalf, as our merciful and gracious High Priest who is fully aware of our human frailty.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

How do you evaluate the success or failure of your life on earth?

By your bank balance, your wages, your debts, your house and mortgage, your future prospects?

By your position in society?

By worldly acclaim or lack of it?

By your possessions?

By your spare time and recreational activities?

By comparing what you have with others?

What you should have?

All of these things are worldly considerations, and our use of them to judge our success or failure is an exercise of the flesh. When we walk in the flesh we walk in death, generating reactions like dissatisfaction, envy, bitterness, covetousness, hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy, downcastness, depression, and anger. The overall effect is unhappiness and death working in our spirits, souls and bodies.

Besides the negative aspect of the things above, the keynote of this study is those things are temporary, and have no eternal value whatsoever. The worldly security we crave for is not real. It is only transitory, and has no lasting effect on the well being of our lives, or our purpose for living. Jesus said. ***“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God*** [not salvation, but receiving the blessing of Christ’s kingdom within us, and the blessing of the fatherhood of God]!” [Mark 10:24].

The reason it is so hard for those who have their dependence on riches to enter into the blessings of the kingdom of God is that spiritual blessings are received with the simple trust of a child. Trusting in money takes away that simple child-like reliance on God for our provision and for every blessing. Furthermore, if our dependence for our provision rests on ourselves, others, and the world, then God must let it remain there.

The True Source of Our Wellbeing is from Walking in our Spiritual Blessings

In the key bible reading, Paul says that the unseen or spiritual things are eternally true, whilst the physical blessings that we can see have no lasting value. The real measure of how we have been blessed in life is in the spiritual blessings we have received and dispensed.

In judging the success or failure of our lives, perhaps we should be asking questions like:

Have you walked in the light of all the spiritual blessings Jesus procured for you?

Have you lived according to the power of Christ’s life in you?

Has Jesus been able to use you to minister His life to others?

Have you learned to overcome the trials of Satan by standing on the word of your testimony?

It is the answer to questions like this that will shape our testimony before the judgment seat of Christ.