

A Powerful Testimony

How to obtain it

Introduction

This is not going to be a detailed exposition; indeed, my purpose is to be as concise as possible. Each point below requires considerable study on its own; indeed, I have written on all these matters extensively.

What I am trying to do is lay down a roadmap for the young believer. There are many voices claiming to have guides for faith, or steps to power, or keys to success, and so forth. My concern about these is that usually they are:

- Man-centred. The object isn't usually God's glory or a divine testimony but the individual gaining something.
- Focused upon a person doing something, such as fasting or visualising, rather than being something.
- They are usually very simplistic.
- They are sometimes occult based or very mystical.
- They are usually centred upon material results – supposed acts of power or healing, material success or prosperity for example.
- They often twist Scripture, or misinterpret it.
- They often don't take into account sin, disobedience or weaknesses of character.
- They usually ignore fundamental facts that God states regarding the foundations of having a good testimony.

My purpose here is to be

- Absolutely Biblical.
- Centred upon God's will.
- Devoted to glorifying Christ.
- Reliant upon the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Righteous.

So, if you want to maintain a good testimony to God and men, if you want to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, then here are the essential points that I have learned by hard experience.

The objective: glorifying God

Before we even begin to look at the key elements, we must first understand about glorifying God.

The purpose in a Christian having a powerful testimony or having spiritual success or bearing spiritual fruit is to glorify God and nothing else.

It is a lie when preachers tell you that God's purpose is to develop your faith so that you can have anything you want. It is a lie that God's will is for you to always be prosperous in a material way. That occult idea arises from a basic failure to understand God's word properly. It is a twisting of Scripture data.

The disciple's only purpose on this earth at this time is to glorify God; to reflect him, to point to him, to express his will, to shine with his light, to manifest Christ, to walk in the Spirit.

Certainly Jesus glorified God as he walked on the earth doing good; but there was a point when Jesus talked about him glorifying the Father five times in two verses.

So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is **glorified**, and God is **glorified** in Him. If God is **glorified** in Him, God will also **glorify** Him in Himself, and **glorify** Him immediately'.

Jn 13:31-32

When was this? It was immediately after Judas had been exposed and the path to the cross had been set in train. Jesus was on the very verge of being betrayed, captured, tried, beaten and crucified.

This betrayal was done in secret in the dark; there were no crowds of supporters in Gethsemane. There was no rapturous emotionalism. There was no exultant joy. In fact there was sorrow. There was agony and stress such that Jesus sweat blood. There was distress among his few followers, followed by their deep depression. There was even the fact that the chief disciple denied his Lord publicly three times. This glorification was not set in a period of human success and power.

Yet this was the greatest testimony of Jesus glorifying God.

The church's general concept of glorifying God is worldly and wrong. God is not glorified by thousands of people chanting and getting excited. He is not glorified by waves of people falling over. He is not glorified by some man holding sway over an auditorium containing thousands of people. He is not glorified by some famous preacher claiming that crowds of people have been healed on a platform but then they all revert to being sick the next day. He is not glorified by crowds of people singing in tongues. Do we need to go on?

God is glorified in the cross of Christ. For us, God is glorified when the cross of Christ has its full effect in us.

I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 1 Cor 2:2

This is the basis of having a powerful testimony. What does this mean?

The testimony

The word 'testimony' means: evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something; a declaration. We could often replace the word with 'witness'. In Scripture, the testimony is often symbolised by a giving of light that rips apart darkness.

Thus Jesus came to the world to bring light and to be the light of the world.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Jn 1:4-5

Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light'. Jn 12:35-36

I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. Jn 12:46

When Jesus was physically in the world, he was the light of the world and he exposed darkness and reflected the glory of God. He who saw and heard him, saw and heard the Father.

Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me.' Jn 14:9-10

Jesus was thus a great testimony to God, a witness to the Father. He who saw Jesus saw God. The life of Christ was a testimony, a witness, to the character and glory of God.

Our job is to be a testimony to Christ, and thus to God.

The testimony is based upon being like Christ so that people who see and hear us can appreciate Christ.

Having a powerful testimony is nothing to do with healing people, or having lots of money, or being famous, or preaching to lots of people. It is about manifesting Christ.

For example: there can be two evangelists who both preach to thousands of people. The first does not preach the truth, does not rely on the Bible, whips up the emotionalism of the crowd and manipulates the crowd to behave in exotic fashions, such as screaming or falling over. This man does not have a testimony at all.

The other man preaches to a similarly large crowd but he preaches the truth. He expounds the Bible faithfully. He proclaims the Gospel. He glorifies Christ in his words and his character, speaking from the heart. This man does have a testimony.

We have a testimony when we provide proof that God exists and can be seen in what we do and say. We hold men accountable to God.

How do we get to this point of having a good testimony?

The list

1. Get your heart and thinking right

As in many issues of life, the fundamental thing is to get your thinking right. People often say one thing but think another. It is what is at the centre of our motivations that counts.

Proverbs tells us that out of the heart springs all the issues of life (Prov 4:23). The heart is closely connected to the mind and the thoughts of the heart must be right. Jesus tells us that out of the heart comes all our outward expressions, whether good or bad (Matt 12:35).

Nothing good will come from our lives if our heart and mind are not right. No matter what a man does, or how powerful it may seem, if the heart is wrong and the thinking is wrong then the action is wrong - no matter how many people say otherwise.

So, pay attention to your heart. Get your thinking conditioned to centre upon God's will.

Here are some practical suggestions

Be renewed in your mind

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rm 12:1-2

You must get rid of wrong ideas and your thinking must be transformed. Renewing means getting rid of all the old thoughts and getting new ones. This is the basic meaning of repentance – a change of mind.

It means thinking God's thoughts and not your thoughts. It doesn't matter what you think but what God says.

For example: almost all the church world believes that God loves everybody; however his word itself says, 'Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.' (Mal 1:2). If we only had this one verse it destroys the idea that God loves everyone; yet there are dozens of others. This means that most of the world of Christianity is thinking wrong thoughts, and this leads to having wrong doctrines, and then that leads to doing wrong things. Thus the majority of the churches are doing wrong things because their thinking wasn't right in the first place.

There are many other such examples showing why most of the churches are in a wrong place and why apostasy is widespread.

No matter how much you disapprove, your thinking must be replaced by God's will. That means that you must abandon your own thoughts and think the thoughts of God as expressed in his word. Be renewed in thinking.

Be full of God's word

Be filled with right doctrine. Hold the truth. Hear from God (that is, hear his words and thoughts laid down in Scripture; not be a mystic).

We have just shown how ignoring even one verse of the Bible can ruin our whole thinking process and lead to wrong doctrine. In this case believing that God loves all men leads to two wrong theological systems. The first is Arminianism; the second is Amyraldism.

The first is a Semi-Pelagian system that teaches that man co-operates with God in initiating salvation. God is not sovereign in grace; man has to do the first work by using free will. This sort of Semi-Pelagianism is not only the basis of Roman Catholicism, but also most of the Christian denominations in the world. The second is a confused and self-contradicting system that is the basis of most of the Calvinists in the world. It teaches that God loves everybody and wants everybody to be saved but then actually elects only a few to be certainly saved.

Now these are but two examples of having wrong doctrine based on a wrong thought. In these cases it is having a wrong view of the doctrines of grace, a fundamental error. However, there are dozens of other wrong doctrines that are held by Christians today; from a wrong eschatology to a denial of the Trinity. The point is that you cannot expect to have a powerful testimony if you do not hold the doctrines of God.

Any doctrine that is in error to what the Bible teaches will sap the life out of your testimony. I don't care how much faith you claim to have or what works of power you can do, if your doctrine is in error than your testimony is marred or non-existent.

Bear in mind that pagans can do works of power and claim to have great faith. Pagans have allegedly levitated and walked on water. This means nothing at all since they did not believe in the God of the Bible. Thus when supposed Christian charlatans also do works of power, these works are meaningless if they do not teach the truth. [However, most of the works of power claimed by these charlatans are fake.]

We must be full of God's own words; the truth as revealed in Scripture.

Understand what righteousness is

Many Christians simply do not know what righteousness is; that is, they do not know how to do right. The result is that many supposed believers tolerate sin in many forms.

The causes of this are many.

One cause is antinomianism; that is the teaching that Christians are not under any form of law at all. This is a result of poor teaching. When Paul states that we are not under law he is talking about the Mosaic Law which has been cancelled with all its forms. Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. However, God's eternal Moral law has never been cancelled because it is God's will for the behaviour of men. Thus the New Covenant also has laws and these laws (called the Law of Christ) are the Moral Law empowered in the believer by the Holy Spirit as he abides in Christ.

The fact that the New Covenant has laws is easily shown in texts like the following:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. Jn 13:34

Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 1 Jn 2:7-8

And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to

His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. 2 Jn 1:5-6

If the New Covenant has commands, then it has laws. Just as there was grace in the Old Covenant, so there is law in the New Covenant.

Antinomianism allows people to sin in the belief that grace allows them great laxity of behaviour. This is a lie. It also teaches that there is never any condemnation for Christians. This too is a lie (note Gal 2:11: Peter was condemned¹). There is only no condemnation in the new man, in Christ (Rm 8:1). When a believer is in his old nature, he sins constantly and is always under condemnation (see later).

There are various forms of antinomianism; some are very subtle. The Higher Life Movement erred when it taught that the way to deal with the domination of sin was to have a crisis experience, followed by holding on to faith to not sin. This usually led to people excusing sins as not being sins. This led to many proclaiming that they had not sinned for such and such months or years. That in itself was a sin (pride).

Make no mistake; righteousness is doing right. We are required to do right. The way to find out what is right is to examine God's word, and especially look to Jesus. Thus the life of faith is a fight.

I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Cor 9:27

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. Col 3:5

Fight the good fight of faith. 1 Tim 6:12

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness. 2 Tim 2:22

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Tim 4:7

An example

An example of not doing right, in a very simple matter is this. In Charismatic churches it is very common to see men wearing baseball-hats, headscarves, skullcaps of various forms and other headgear in church worship. Indeed, so-called worship leaders set an example by wearing such things. This is largely to appear in tune with modern fashion and have street credibility. But it is sin.

Paul's statement is very clear,

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head. ... For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God. 1 Cor 11:3-4, 7

Christ is the head of man. Men worshipping Christ in a public meeting must show respect for their spiritual head (Christ) and not cover their physical head. As man is the representative and glory of Christ, so he must keep his head free from covering before Christ and not hide it away.

¹ *Kataginosko* means: to find fault with, to blame, to accuse, to condemn.

This is but one example of the New Covenant being the opposite of the Old Covenant (Ex 28:4, 29:9, 37, 39:27-28). The external, material features of the Old Covenant were symbolic and vanished when Christ came.²

Now if you don't understand the theology behind this (and many do not since most women do not cover their heads in worship, which is the corollary of this), Paul tells us in very simple and clear terms, 'a man indeed ought not to cover his head'. There is nothing difficult to understand; men must not cover their heads in worship – end of story.

So, every man in Charismatic churches that wears some sort of head covering is sinning against God and living unrighteously. In past days even non-Christians understood this and took their hats off when entering a church. Today the church is worse than the world used to be. This is unrighteousness.

Die to the world

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Gal 6:14

Avoid what is all around you trying to mould your thoughts.

We do this by applying what God has already done to us. The world is dead, crucified, to us in our new man. As we live in the new nature we are dead to the world. However, when we put on the old nature we are open to the world's temptations.

The world is constantly pressing upon the believer to make him conform to its ideas. Sadly we see this everywhere in the modern church. Just look at any Christian television channel where the performances are not dissimilar to any worldly production. Christian rock bands are no different to those in the world, they just have different lyrics.

Everything in the modern church is worldly.

- The building is a worldly idea; there is no church building in the NT.
- The meetings are formal in structure, just like the world; there was no formal structure in the NT.
- The leadership system is essentially worldly and demonic; there is no such structure in the NT; only a team of equal elders and none other.
- The sermon dominates the meeting and is a worldly idea; apostolic meetings did not have formal sermons but dialogues where questions could be asked and discussions arose.
- One man dominates the modern church just like worldly autocratic leaders. The NT had mutual edification by all.
- Modern churches are dominated by instrumental music that did not exist in apostolic churches.

We could go on and on.

Just as the church has become worldly, so individual Christians are equally worldly. This is so obvious it needs no comment.

To have a good testimony this needs to be reversed by being dead to the world.

² This is why there is no instrumental music in the church.

Know that you are loved by God

The LORD your God loves you. Deut 23:5

He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him. Jn 14:21

Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him'. Jn 14:23

The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. Jn 16:27

Keep yourselves in the love of God. Jude 1:21

It is critical to know that God is your heavenly Father and that he loves you. He loves you because you are in Christ. As he loves Christ, so he loves you.

This is due to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This must be explained.

Now this has nothing to do with the Charismatic heresy of a mystical 'second blessing' experience that gives supernatural gifts. There is no such thing in apostolic teaching but it is common in occult circles. When you were converted you received all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3); if you have Christ you need nothing else.

The baptism of the Spirit occurred when Christ was ascended and glorified above all power whereby all the elect were placed in union with Christ, the glorified man in heaven.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'

But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Jn 7:38-39

By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. 1 Cor 12:13-14

The Spirit only began to permanently indwell the elect after Christ was glorified. Before that the Spirit came upon people temporarily for a special function (Ex 28:3, 31:3).

When the Spirit was outpoured on the church, after Christ was glorified, he changed the elect into spiritual beings (2 Cor 5:17) and joined them to Christ to make the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him (Eph 1:22-23). Having the Spirit and being united in Christ are part of the same event.

Like being co-crucified with Christ, justified by faith and Christ's blood being shed for an atonement, the spiritual bonding of the elect with Christ was once only for all time in heaven. Christ does not take the value of his blood into heaven again every time a person is converted. This corporate unification is made real in the convert, in historic time, when he is born again.

The waiting disciples after the resurrection necessarily had a special experience of this, being the first ones to know it. Thus we see the events at Pentecost. When people were later converted, they also received the Spirit based on the past outpouring; in fact the

phrase 'received the Spirit' became a euphemism for conversion. People that were supposedly converted but had not received the Spirit, were not converted (Acts 19:2-3).³

In Acts we see that the conversion of various types of people is synchronised with a reception of the Spirit, which at that time also involved certain manifestations (such as tongues or prophecy) for the short period of authentication (Heb 2:3-4).

Unfortunately today many conservative Christians are blind to this truth and show no experience of the things of the Spirit. This is abnormal and is due to poor teaching. Their lives are dull, dead and manifest no enthusiasm or zeal. Their meetings are boring, man-centred, intellectual and dry, lacking all spiritual progress. This is abnormal. As a result, we see many of their teachers seeking something better (note Martyn Lloyd-Jones' search⁴). While there is no second life-changing blessing, such folk need to understand that they have been sealed with the Spirit (Eph 1:13) and experience his filling for the first time. It is like children that play with the wrapped up boxes of Christmas presents but never open them. They do not need new presents but simply to unwrap what they have already got.

Now Charismatics make the reverse mistake but reducing the full effects of the indwelling of the Spirit and being united to Christ to zero by saying that all Christians need a new experience that is a mystical, emotional experience of the flesh. They accept mimicry and squash the real thing that is dormant. Charismatics then dwell on external experiences rather than learn what it means to be in Christ. This is the essence of occultism and paganism, which is what most Charismatics have entered into.

Now, having explained all this, of necessity, what is the key result of the baptism of the Spirit and what is renewed with every new filling of the Spirit?

It is a real awareness that I am a son of God; that God is my Father; that I am loved by God. The work of the Spirit in me makes me aware of my sonship and adoption.⁵

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Rm 8:15-17

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'. Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal 4:6-7

The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rm 5:5

It is only when we are assured of our sonship that we can really begin to take authority over ourselves and what we do in this world. Those that do not have this are racked with a lack of assurance and can do nothing at all.

³ The 12 Ephesian disciples were only baptised into John's baptism – and he was the last of the Old Covenant prophets. This was a legal baptism of intent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. They knew nothing about the Holy Spirit at all. They were not converted into Christ. After believing the Gospel they were both converted and experienced the Spirit.

⁴ Which sadly ended in disappointment and bitterness. He had sought the kind of spiritual experience that certain Puritans wrote about, such as Thomas Goodwin. Unfortunately, he sought it on the basis of revival and a mystical experience, reflected by his Welsh revivalist background. MLJ never understood the old and new nature properly and wrote some appalling mistaken comments on progressive sanctification, such as identifying sin in the body. Though he was a great teacher adored by many, and though he said much that was good, he had serious theological flaws.

⁵ These are different but we cannot explain that here.

Thus, understanding about the work of the Spirit in us is vital to knowing that God is our Father who loves us. Armed with this we can maintain a powerful testimony.

Conclusion

You must get your thinking right. You must be steeped in God's thoughts and must reject sinful and worldly ideas.

2. Abandon self-sufficiency

We should not trust in ourselves. 2 Cor 1:9

The great foundational key to serving God faithfully is to fully trust everything to him. This first requires that you stop trusting in yourself or others and abandon all self-sufficiency. All your resources must derive from God. All your strength must be from God. All your gifting must be from God.

Even in the Old Covenant great saints understood this concept:

Then Moses said to the LORD, 'O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue'. So the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say'. Exod 4:10-12

My God, my strength. Ps 18:2

It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect. Ps 18:32

God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Ps 46:1

The God of Israel *is* He who gives strength and power to *His* people. Blessed *be* God! Ps 68:35

I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD. Ps 71:16

My flesh and my heart fail; *but* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Ps 73:26

All my springs *are* in you. Ps 87:7

In the NT this is worded somewhat differently:

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. Jn 4:14

By the grace of God I am what I am. 1 Cor 15:10

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God. 2 Cor 3:5

God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. 2 Cor 9:8

And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness'. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10

To this *end* I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. Col 1:29

The great problem in living the Christian life is relying upon our own strength. Thus God deals with us over many years to bring us to the point of ceasing to trust in ourselves, just as he did with Jacob, the great example of this spiritual training.

The following points are key areas that must be understood.

Deny yourself

The first is that you must learn to deny your own strengths. Jesus made this clear.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it'. Matt 16:24-25

When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.' Mk 8:34-35

Then He said to *them* all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it'. Lk 9:23-24

Now this denial is not an act of the striving flesh but is a spiritual choice based upon the fact that you have died with Christ. This leads us to our next point.

Die to yourself

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Rm 8:13

Those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24

The foundation of being able to deny ourselves is based upon the fact that in Christ we have died to sin and have been raised with Christ in resurrection (Rm 6). Thus we must learn to live on the grounds that we must die to ourselves; die to our Adamic nature. We are not what we were born as but what we were regenerated as in Christ. We are a new race of spiritual people.

If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor 5:17

We must correct a mistake here. Some teachers claim that the doctrine Paul explains in Romans 6 (identification) means that the old, Adamic nature had gone and has been destroyed forever⁶ and that the Christian only has one, new, spiritual nature.⁷ The fact that Paul repeatedly tells us to put off the old man and put on the new as an act of choice proves this one-nature doctrine to be folly. This will be explained in this paper (e.g. next).

What the whole of the NT teaches is that having died with Christ (Rm 6:8) and having been raised with Christ (Col 3:1) we now have a choice. Progressive sanctification is all about that choice and the need to put off the old nature; what the Puritans called mortification. Thus Paul constantly urges saints to 'put on' (Rm 13:12, 14; Eph 4:24, 6:11; Col 3:12, 14).

⁶ The word 'destroy' in Scripture rarely means annihilation but a change in form. In Rm 6:6, 'done away with' (NKJV; 'destroyed' KJV) means to render idle, be unemployed, inactivated, to be deprived of force. Since it is the old man that leads to being dominated by sin, if it was removed entirely Christians would never sin again.

⁷ Lloyd-Jones taught this, hence his mistakes.

Put off the old man

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Eph 4:22

You have put off the old man with his deeds. Col 3:9

Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Col 3:8

Once you have understood the doctrine of identification, of having died and having been raised with Christ, you can then put off your old nature. This is a daily act of repentance not a one-off crisis. Every day you must choose to put off your old life and put on the new man.

Putting off the old man is saying no to the flesh. It is denying ourselves. It is carrying our cross. It is living as a dead man – someone dead to all the things of the old life, including its strengths as well as its weakness. Far too many Christians think that putting off sin is enough and then try to serve God in the power of their human strengths. This is folly. Only when we are weak are we strong. Only when we are dead can we know resurrection life.

What is the old nature: Paul gives various lists; one of which is quoted above: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language. If you swear, you are in the old man. If you get angry, you are in the old man.⁸

These points need to be carefully investigated in Scripture; studied and then meditated upon. There needs to be a clear understanding of our death with Christ and our being raised anew in Christ. This doctrine is the basis of progressive sanctification and it must be grasped as a matter of urgency.

Some Christians go through their whole lives and know nothing of this. As a result their testimony is weak and vapid; their ability to deal with sin is undermined. Learn this thoroughly by reading such passages as: Rm 6:1-14, 7:1-25, 8:1-14, 13:14; Gal 2:20, 3:27, 5:24; Eph 4:22-24; Phil 3:10; Col 3:5-10.

3. Be dependent upon God

Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you. Ps 55:22

The remnant of Israel [that is, the elect] ... will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. Isa 10:20

Lean on the God of Israel. Isa 48:2

Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God. Isa 50:10

The corollary of abandoning our self-sufficiency is learning to be utterly dependent upon God alone, for all things. Having learned to die to our old life, we must learn to live the resurrection life of Christ. How do we do this?

⁸ Anger: I need to qualify this for the unlearned. There is a righteous anger and a fleshly anger. Righteous anger is when we are angry because of an offence to God, such as blasphemy, lawlessness or lies. We are angry on God's behalf. Fleshly, sinful anger is when we get angry for selfish reasons; that is, we are personally offended by something; something has irked us and we explode. This is sin.

Put on the new man; abide in Christ; be filled with the Spirit

Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph 4:24

Put on the whole armour of God. Eph 6:11

Put on the armour of light. Rm 13:12

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rm 13:14

Put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Col 3:10

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. Jn 15:4

Abide in My word. Jn 8:31

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

Putting on the new man, putting on Christ, abiding in Christ, being filled with the Spirit is the action of faith and prayer that determines our walk. It is the determination of the will each morning to live in the new nature and asking God for help to do it; then believing it. It is saying no to your own strength and telling God that you want his strength.

Walk in the Spirit; manifest Christ; bear fruit

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Gal 5:16

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Gal 5:25

As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Col 2:6

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 Jn 2:6

As a result of faithfully abiding in Christ, of putting on the new man, the believer can then walk in the Spirit and bear the fruit of Christ. You cannot walk in the Spirit unless you have first been filled with the Spirit.

Remember that the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ (Rm 8:9; 1 Pt 1:11); walking in the Spirit is walking in Christ.

Be prayerful

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Eph 6:18

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Jude 1:20

Prayer is critical in preparing yourself to be dependent upon God. Prayer is involved in putting on the new man, in asking for the fulness of the Spirit. After that, prayer is necessary in every daily decision and for wisdom in general.

The man dependent upon God is a man who is much in prayer.

Faith

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God *is* a refuge for us. Ps 62:8

The just shall live by his faith. Hab 2:4

The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'.
Rm 1:17

Now the just shall live by faith; but if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. Heb
10:38

Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him* [God]. Heb 11:6

Faith undergirds everything we do in this world because we cannot see spiritual things. We cannot see Christ, God the Father, the Spirit, heaven, demons, Satan, our spiritual condition and so forth. This means that we must rely upon faith all the time, and thus the just (those justified by faith) live by faith every day.

There is a great deal of nonsense spoken about faith today and much of it a sort of voodoo, mystical working up of the flesh. Faith is nothing like this. Faith is simply apprehending God's promises for yourself and trusting in them. Faith has to do with apprehension; apprehension of Christ.

If Christ says, 'Abide in me and you will bear fruit', then you abide in Christ by faith. You choose to live in Christ and believe that you are. This cannot be explained technically; it is something that disciples of Christ do naturally, just as a baby breathes.

Wait on God

Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD! Ps 27:14

Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring *it* to pass. Ps 37:5

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him. Ps 37:7

Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you. Ps 37:34

Wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. Ps 130:5

The concept of waiting on God is repeated many times in the Old Testament but is not mentioned in the New. This is because the Holy Spirit was not given as an indwelling force in the OT but is in the New Covenant after the cross.

What this means in NT terms is to be in the Spirit, the let God empower you to act, to not work in your own strength.

Committing your way to the Lord literally means to roll away your burden to the Lord as you roll a stone that is too big to pick up. This is a helpful analogy for depending upon God.

Thus depending upon God can be called: waiting on God, resting in God, and committing your way to the Lord.

In practical terms regarding life decisions these terms can have a literal value. Major changes in your life require time, patience and waiting upon God before you take any action. Never rush into anything that involves a major life change. Too many people have rushed into big decisions and then spent years trying to get out of them. If God is directing you, there is no rush. Do not be bamboozled into rash decisions.

4. Follow God

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Rev 14:4

A great principle of living your life right is identified in the psalms as walking in the light of God. It is by God's light that we see light and can then walk in the right path.

For with You *is* the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Ps 36:9

Only by the light of God can we see our way in this world. With that light we can follow his footsteps and walk in the right path.

When God watched over me; when His lamp shone upon my head, *and when* by His light I walked *through* darkness. Job 29:2-3

For You will light my lamp; the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. Ps 18:28

[The Lord] shall make His footsteps *our* pathway. Ps 85:13

Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Ps 119:105

In the NT this is much more personal than just the concept of light.

Walk in the Spirit

The light of God for the believer in the New Covenant is the person of the Holy Spirit whose job is to guide us.

When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you. Jn 16:13

It is one thing that a Christian is doing right, is holy, is faithful; but he must also know where to go and what to do. He must be guided.

Guidance is all about following Christ. We must know who we are in Christ and what our job is; then we must follow him in the way that he leads us. This very often is not the way that we would have planned. Indeed, it is very often the case that our way is very different from what we would have planned.

Look at most of God's servants. Their life did not go as they thought it would. Note Moses, Jeremiah, David, Amos or Paul. We do not know the way; we can only follow Christ and do what he says.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. 1 Pt 2:21

5. Bear fruit

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain. Jn 15:16

We should bear fruit to God. Rm 7:4

The believer has been chosen by God in order to bear fruit. Your job is to do the works God decreed that you should do. Your faith must be active and progressive. All genuine believers will bear fruit but not all in the same way or to the same extent. Conversely, those who do not bear any fruit cannot be true believers.

Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Gal 5:22-23

Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. Ps 1:1-3

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth). Eph 5:8-9

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Phil 1:11

Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Col 1:10

Just in case we do not understand what the fruits of righteousness are, or what the character of Christ is, Paul spells it out for us: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This isn't rocket science and yet we see so many supposed Christians doing the opposite.

For example; one fruit is love – therefore hating is wrong and not Christ-like. Thus any aspect of hate (violence, anger, wrath, slander, libel, false-witness etc.) to anyone is completely wrong. Yet the Internet is full of websites claiming to be Christian that demonstrate this sort of hatred.

Another example is self-control; yet Charismatic churches have been filled with people who become mystically passive and then yield self-control so that they scream, shout, dance, writhe on the floor, pogo, roar or fall over. This is not the fruit of the Spirit; therefore such behaviour is from the enemy.

Note also that Paul affirms that the fruit of the Spirit *is* in goodness, righteousness, and truth. Doing good is bearing fruit. Doing right is bearing fruit. But also learning the truth is bearing fruit. We bear fruit when we determine to study Scripture so that we can learn true doctrines. Those who dismiss studying the Bible are not bearing fruit.

Do the works God predestined for you

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10

Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. Ps 119:2-3

Good works are in short supply these days. Historically, the church has been known for its multitude of good works: establishing hospitals, orphanages, schools, universities, alms houses; the list is endless. Sadly, the church has been corrupted by the modern focus upon selfishness; there are even church courses on self-esteem, self-awareness and self-love, which are out of touch with the teaching of Jesus to deny ourselves and die to ourselves.

God chose you for a purpose – to do the job he created you for and determined for you in eternity. Only you can do this job, no one else.

Those people who strive to do good works will find them easy to come by; there are opportunities everywhere. We can begin by doing good to our neighbours and the poor in our area; but seek to do good especially to the church.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal 6:10

Make the most of opportunities

Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time. Eph 5:15-16

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. Col 4:5

Great men are those who make the most of the opportunities that arise. There can be several gifted people in a room but one redeems the time by achieving something, such as bringing someone to the Lord.

Sometimes God uses someone who is not considered as gifted at all; but they have determination. For example: Gladys Aylward was determined to be a missionary but was rejected by all the missionary agencies for being unqualified. Instead she worked and saved her money to go to China on her own anyway where she achieved great things.

However, we also need wisdom in making the most of opportunities. Not all opportunities are good for us. Those who believe that an open door is always God's plan, will find themselves sorely disappointed and possibly messed up. Guidance is not just determined by an open door but by considering:

- Is the opportunity sinful? Is it a glory to God? Is it going to be good for my future?
- Have I sought out the counsel of wiser servants of God?
- Have I tested this opportunity against God's word?
- Do I have a witness in my heart that this is right?
- Do I have a gut feeling that this is bad?
- Is my Christian testimony going to be advantaged by this or worsened?
- Am I prepared to let this go even if my circumstances would have been improved?
- Have I prayed about this sufficiently?

Love the brethren

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Rm 13:8

You yourselves are taught by God to love one another. 1 Thess 4:9

Love one another fervently with a pure heart. 1 Pt 1:22

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. 1 Jn 3:14-16

Loving the brethren cannot be overestimated. It is by this means that the world sees something special in us.

One of the chief means of testing whether someone is truly converted is seeing if they love the brethren. Often God saves a person into a church community of people they would

never have mixed with in the world – yet they love them. This shows that this love is heavenly and not natural. It is a fruit of the Spirit to love; and this especially applies to the brethren.

6. Be single-minded

For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. Isa 50:7

He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Lk 9:51

There are people who are quite gifted in some area and yet have no personal discipline. There are others who are less gifted but achieve far more in life than more gifted people because they are radically focused upon their objectives. This shows the power of being single-minded.

Jesus was single-minded when he set his face like flint to go to Jerusalem and be killed as God's sacrifice for sin. Just imagine the distractions that could have taken the Lord off course. He could have healed thousands more people and done much good. He could have taught his disciples for several years until they were perfect in understanding. He could have waged war against earthly enemies of God. He could easily have established himself as king of the Jews. He could have travelled to other nations and brought the Gospel to them.

But the Lord ignored all these great opportunities and single-mindedly focused upon going to Jerusalem to be killed. This was God's will for him.

Only single-minded people get things done.

There is no place for being wishy-washy, half-hearted, indecisive, irresolute, ineffectual, or beating about the bush.

Single-minded people start something and finish it. They have their eyes on the goal. So many people are like butterflies that gad about from one thing to another, never fulfilling their potential. Others are dominated by the thinking and goals of others and never find their own place.

God wants people who understand his will for their lives and then work hard to achieve what he wants.

Sometimes people say to me, '*How can I know what my ministry is or what God wants me to do?*' They express ignorance of what they are called to achieve. This is usually down to one of two things. The first is that they have a calling but want to do something more exciting. Often women are beguiled by the world and are not satisfied with being wives and mothers (a high calling) but want to be something else. This is just folly. In fact, many modern studies show that women that have been ardent feminists for decades are now expressing real sadness that their lives have been wasted.

The second reason is that people who ask this question have not spent any length of time trying to find the answer. How long have you sat down praying earnestly for God to direct you into some form of ministry?

Often ministry emerges from a period of serving in some capacity. You need to serve the brethren and so you do this or that; in time something more concrete emerges from this service as God opens doors.

Once you have some understanding of what God wants you to do, pursue this with all diligence and set your focus on glorifying God to the fullest extent possible.

7. Be fully committed to the body of Christ

Let us pursue the things ... by which one may edify another. Rm 14:19

He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 1 Cor 14:3

Since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel. 1 Cor 14:12

Let all things be done for edification. 1 Cor 14:26

Comfort each other and edify one another. 1 Thess 5:11

Serving God is not done in a vacuum; serving God is you being part of the local body of Christ and fulfilling your job in conjunction with others.

Though we are to do good to all, our first priority is to serving the brethren. We must bear one another's burdens; any gift that you have should first be directed to edifying your brothers and sisters. Gifts don't operate in a vacuum; they are for the body.

Forming a ministry that operates outside the body is a last resort, but sometimes it is necessary. It is better to give your teaching, for example, to the wider body in various forms (books, papers, on-line articles etc.) rather than not give any teaching at all because you have no voice in an apostate climate. Arthur Pink was placed in this situation and wrote most of his greatest works isolated from the church. But again, this must be a last resort.

Ideally all ministry will emanate from within fellowship where there are checks and balances and where people can support ministry in prayer.

Many gifts are very difficult to manifest outside of a church, such as helps, mercies, counselling (word of wisdom), and practical aid. However, even if you cannot find a sound church, you must be devoted in your heart to the body of Christ in whatever way you can. If you want to serve God, your heart must be devoted to serving the brethren.

The current problem

A problem exists today that cannot be ignored. This is because we are in the time of apostasy predicted by Paul (2 Thess 2:4, 9-10) All around the world churches manifest the most appalling falling away and the most heinous deception. This is why numbers in churches are dwindling globally. Numbers have been declining in Britain for many years but recent studies show that even conservative America is seeing a decline of 8% in church attendance at the moment, with significant numbers of young people deserting the faith. I have discussed why this is happening many times; it begins with abandoning Biblical doctrines and embracing pagan ideas.

Thus many people find themselves in the local position where there is no sound church that they can attend. This is extremely difficult.

There are only two options really.

The first is to swallow your principles and attend the best church that you can. For this reason many folk that have condemned Anglicanism for decades now find themselves in their local Church of England church because the pastor is relatively sound. Sometimes it is just because there is less chance of Charismatic chaos. This is not an option for me because such attendance is tacitly supporting the very evil and unbiblical doctrines and practices that the Anglican synod has promoted, such as homosexual priests, gay marriage and women leaders. You cannot attend an Anglican church without sponsoring such things by your very presence. Much the same can be said about Baptist churches and most independents. Apart from church issues that are universally unbiblical, it is even difficult to find a truly Calvinistic church in the UK.

The only other option is to seek local like-minded people that you can fellowship with informally and hope that a house church may eventually come out of it. Having said that, there are few like-minded people about in many areas, such is the dearth of the truth.

I cannot give any easy answers to this dilemma and I get asked questions about it from every country. However, it is not the first time in history that fellowship was very difficult to maintain. One must love the Lord's people where one can.

8. Stand against the enemy

When you do all these things you will be attacked and meet resistance. Thus God has prepared sufficient resources for the believer to meet that attack head on and to stand, despite any resistance.

The believer can always overcome the enemy, even though it may not be the sort of victory recognised by the world. Thus martyrs are victorious even though they die. Note that the greatest victory of all was the cross of Christ, which defeated sin, death and Satan; however, to the world this was a tragic failure. Our thinking must be godly and not worldly.

Put on the armour of God;

Paul's exposition of the spiritual armour has spawned many books; and rightly so. However what he was highlighting were the different features of putting on Christ, putting on the new nature, in connection with spiritual warfare.

The essential factor is putting on Christ.

Let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, ... put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rm 13:12-

14

We can summarise the armour simply since it is well understood by all (I hope).

- *Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* You are not fighting a personal crusade; you merely have to defend the ground God gave you; to stand.
- *Gird your waist with truth.* We have covered this earlier. Knowing the truth of God's word is fundamental to everything else. This means knowing good doctrines. It also means having personal integrity, living in truth, not being a hypocrite.
- *Put on the breastplate of righteousness.* Doing right is another fundamental. You cannot stand against the enemy if you are in sin. Learn what is right behaviour; be prepared.

- *The preparation of the gospel of peace.* The ability to have peace in difficult circumstances is a great asset. You are more likely to take the correct path if you are in peace. Never make an important decision when you are agitated. Only Christ can give you peace.
- *Take the shield of faith.* Faith can conquer all that Satan throws at you. This is especially true when he accuses you of being useless or wicked. As long as you are not in known sin, you must always believe that the blood of Jesus has cleansed and is cleansing you and that you are God's child.
- *Take the helmet of salvation.* Don't let thinking be perverted; beware of deception.
- *Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* Again, we have covered this. God's word is a sword that cuts and separates soul and spirit. It is powerful. Ignoring God's word is the most stupid thing a Christian can do. It will certainly make him ineffective against the enemy.
- *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.* Be much in prayer when engaged in spiritual warfare. Note that this prayer was going on before the attack started – pray always. Do not be afraid of asking God for what you need.
- *Being watchful with all perseverance.* Believers are those who keep their eyes open. They are those not surprised by events even though the world is taken aback. Never has there been a time when watching and investigating were more necessary.
- *Supplication for all the saints.* Continue interceding for others. God loves someone who prays for his brethren. We should be constant in this.

Remember whom you are fighting

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Eph 6:12

A big mistake made by many today is to forget that we are fighting spiritual enemies that battle for our mind, and instead concentrate on being tempted to fight material supposed enemies.

Charismatics do this all the time in a multitude of ways. I will give but a few examples:

- When they attack a supposed demon in a person by attacking the person. Famous Charismatics and Pentecostals have punched people in the stomach, kicked people in the face, or wrestled people on the floor and more. This is sinful pagan behaviour.
- Others have used sacramentalism (external items supposed to have spiritual properties) to defeat demons; such as: pouring communion wine over genitals to rid a person of a spirit of lust.
- Yet others use sacramentalism to gain a spiritual advantage; such as: praying over wooden crosses and wearing them to be immune from demons or to gain some power. Blowing rams horns on a high place in a town to promote a revival.
- Knighting a person with a sword in order to convey authority over spiritual powers.

We could continue for page after sickening page of such idolatrous rubbish. These are examples where Satan has deceived people to do what he wants thinking they are serving God. Charismatic churches are filled with this sort of thing.

The real issue is safeguarding the mind; guarding our thoughts; taking every thought captive. Satan uses deception above all other methods. If your mind is not guarded you will fall into traps and snares, like the above.

The battle is for the mind; the war is spiritual. Satan's plan is to get you to do unrighteous things – to not act right. To do this he must first overcome your mind and make you think erroneously. The battle is not physical.

Deal with sin quickly

There are two problems for the true believer regarding sin.

The first is the denial that they can sin and can be condemned. The second is that they focus upon their sin and worthlessness to the point of being useless to God. Both extremes must be avoided. Antinomians (such as many found in Charismatic churches) exhibit the first problem. Strict Baptists and some Presbyterians, that do not understand grace and the work of the Spirit, exhibit the latter problem.

Can a Christian be condemned for sin? Absolutely; why else would Scripture constantly warn us not to sin and explain the dangers of sin? The promise of Romans 8:1 that believers are not condemned only applies to their new nature not their old, which continues to be corrupted [**'the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts'** Eph 4:22]. Peter stood condemned as a great apostle (Gal 2:11). James stated that, **'we all stumble in many things'**, (Jm 3:2).

The idea that Christians are always the perfect righteousness of Christ is heresy. Definitive sanctification (which is what is meant) only applies to the spirit not the soul or body. When we were justified we were also definitively sanctified (**'you were washed, but you were sanctified'**, 1 Cor 6:11; N.B. the past tense) so that we could stand before God in heaven.

This has nothing to do with the state of sanctification of the soul on earth, which is gradually being changed progressively (**'we ... are being transformed ... by the Spirit of the Lord'**, 2 Cor 3:18).⁹ A believer standing in the new nature is sanctified and not condemned; however, a believer walking in the old nature is in sin and is condemned.

Therefore, no one can deny that they have any sin:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 Jn 1:8

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 Jn 1:10

However wallowing in grief for sin all the time is not good for us either. We certainly must mourn our sins but once we have confessed them and repented then we must move on in righteousness. If God has cleansed you from a recent sin after your confession, it is sin to moan that you are wicked and loathsome; rather you need to thank God that he has made you righteous. [However, this is not to criticise recognition that your old nature is always corrupt.]

So, the key issue is dealing with sins urgently.

A Christian must not delay in confessing sin, or keeping short accounts with God. As soon as we are convicted of sin, we must confess (admit it openly to God), say sorry and repent (determine not to repeat it).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 Jn 1:9

Once we have done this we must believe God's word and move on. You do not keep dwelling on the confession.

⁹ See also Rm 12:2.

Conclusion

You can now see that having a powerful testimony is all about character. However, it is not about our personality as a human being, it is about what we are in Christ. God does not work on our old strengths but on what we have learned by the Spirit, through grace and faith.

The story of Jacob is illustrative of this and growth in sanctification. Jacob in his later life was a blessing to his tribe and even to Pharaoh, and manifested prophetic qualities; but he was not like this in earlier life. Before he was changed by God (and made weaker in strength) he was a grasping, selfish, man of guile. Jacob's testimony is shown in his later life. Israel is the new man; Jacob is the old man.

God promises that all of us have certain gifts; at least one. These gifts are then meant to be nurtured through fellowship (that is what church is for) so that the gifts are developed and that we are like Christ. These gifts are then used to glorify God and for the edification of others. In doing this we manifest the testimony.

No one can say they have no gift because God's word says otherwise (Rm 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4; Eph 4:7; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Pt 4:10). If you are not using your gift, however menial it may seem, then you have no testimony.

When everyone is using their gift appropriately in the local church it is the closest thing to heaven on earth – a great testimony. I have only seen this during a few periods in my life, but it is what is meant to be happening every week all around the world. No gift is small or menial and all gifts support the other gifts; Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 12 makes this eminently clear.

Thus if your gift is to help people, such to provide assistance getting weaker folk to church, or if your gift is to provide and make food and drink for the assembly, these are not less than a man who teaches doctrine to the church. They all work together to make the church a living testimony. What is necessary, however, is observing the key items listed here so that the gift is expressed in the Spirit of Christ and not the flesh. That is the testimony.

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. 2 Tim 1:8

John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 1:2

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 1:9

[Those] who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 12:17

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