

CHAPTER 8

WALK: “IN AND THROUGH” WHOM?

As they walked to the Garden on the night of His betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). This statement is often used to validate the idea that Christians are unable to do anything without the Spirit’s power at work in and through them. This conclusion misses the point of Christ’s vine-and-the-branches teaching. John 15 is about abiding, continuing in intimate fellowship with Christ, and bearing fruit, Christlikeness.¹ The context points out that believers cannot bear fruit unless they remain in fellowship with Christ. Obviously, believers can live disobediently with respect to the flesh (Rom 8; Gal 5). On the other hand, a Christian can only please God if he is obedient to the will of God as found in the Word.

From our discussion in the last chapter, James 1:25 taught that abiding and obeying go hand in hand: “One who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it [in it], not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” Continuing to immerse oneself in the teachings of Christ and the New Testament leads to transformation in behavior. The Christian becomes a Word-doer, a law-doer. Notice the result: “This man will be blessed in what he does.”² Being blessed is the product of faithful obedience to God’s Word. That is what Jesus told the Twelve after

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washing their feet. “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). Blessings are the result of putting truth into practice.

Putting Truth into Practice

Putting truth into practice is the secret to living the Christian life. In John 15 and James 1, empowerment of the Spirit is not the issue. Instead, knowing truth and practicing truth take center stage. Frankly, you only can know what is pleasing to God through exposure to His Word. In fact, each believer must decide the extent of his personal commitment to the Word. To be only superficially acquainted with it is a problem for the Christian. Choosing not to be informed places the believer in conflict with God’s will. James offers perspective: “To one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jam 4:17). To put it plainly, not to do what we know what God wants us to do is sin. Being a word-doer that evidences Christlikeness and maturity demands not only choosing to know the Truth but also applying it in daily life.

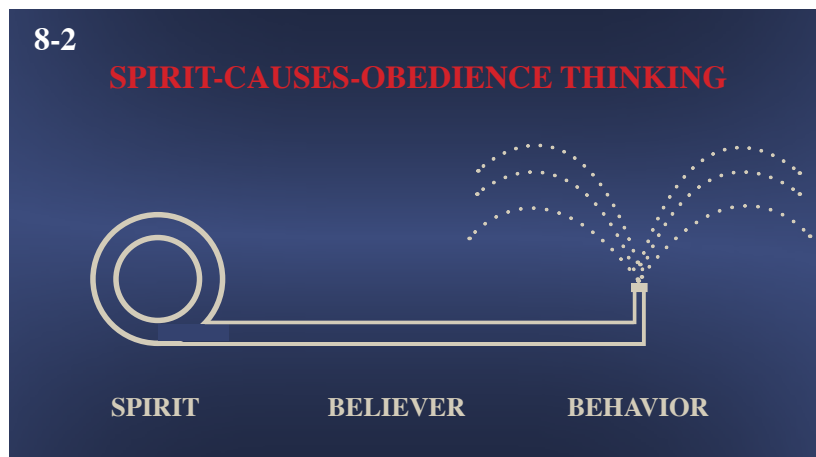
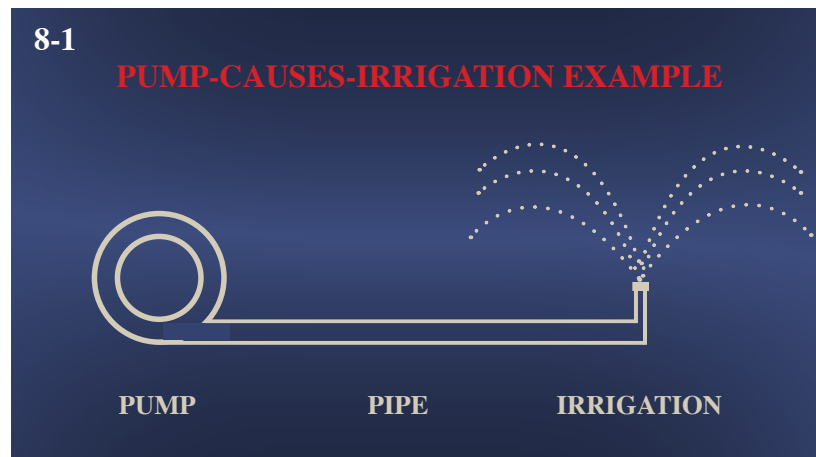
There is no short cut to Christian maturity. Nevertheless as we have said, some understand that the Christian life is lived by merely choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to produce good works in and through them. Obviously, that view is far afield from the biblical approach in which the believer himself obeys the numerous commands in the New Testament. Merely relying on the Spirit to make one a Word-doer trivializes the requirement for each believer to choose to live as a Jesus follower.

Empowerment Considered

Power to live the Christian life. Is that the Spirit’s ministry? It would certainly seem so since this teaching is the dominant position in the Church. The central thought is that a Christian cannot live obediently without empowerment from the Spirit. The Spirit then is the *cause* of good works, with the believer merely the *conduit* of God’s energizing power.

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This Spirit-causes-obedience view is illustrated by an irrigation system (see chart 8-1). Pipes are used as conduits for the flow of water in order to irrigate a field. The pump activates and energizes the flow of water through the pipes. The pump is *working in and through the pipe*. “Because the pump works the pipes work”³ and the field is watered. Replacing words, the Spirit-causes-obedience position shows that the believer is *not* actually responsible for his or her actions (see chart 8-2). “Because the pump (or Spirit) works the pipes (or believers)



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work,” with godly behavior being the result. Being merely the conduit for the energizing work of the Spirit, does the believer participate in producing good works? Is the believer responsible for good works? See the problem? The believer is merely a conduit through which the Spirit produces godly results.

A hand in a glove is likewise used to illustrate the Spirit-causes-obedience view.⁴ God is the hand producing good works, while the believer as the glove is merely the covering for God’s power and work. Because the hand (or Spirit) works the glove (or believer) works. Like the pump-pipe illustration, the hand is working in and through the glove.

However, choosing to live according to God’s Word and then actually doing so is the biblical pattern for Christian living. There are hundreds of commands in the New Testament directed to the believer. Remember the “put off” and “put on” commands presented in Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:22-24; and Colossians 3:8-14. The believer is solely responsible and accountable for his walk with God. If not, the Spirit should be the One rewarded for the good works. The Judgment Seat of Christ is the event occurring at the return of Christ at which time the works of each believer will be evaluated, whether good or bad (2 Cor 5:10). Notice it is the believer’s works, not the Spirit’s works, which are judged. If good works, rewards are forthcoming; if not, rewards for forfeited.

Nevertheless, Spirit-causes-obedience remains the mainstream teaching. There are two primary scriptures used to support and defend this idea: Ezekiel 36:27 and Acts 1:8. In the next two chapters, we will address both texts, explaining that these texts actually refute the very concept that they profess to support. In this chapter our focus will be the viability of the position that God works “in and through” the believer to produce obedience.

Getting Perspective

While there are New Testament texts teaching that God works in and through Christians, a question must be asked in each case. “What was God’s purpose?” The typical view is based on an incorrect interpretation of Acts 1:8, which in turn is supported from a theological

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position based on Ezekiel 36:27. The interpretation of those two verses will effect the understanding of other texts concerned with “in-and-through” teaching.⁵

Nevertheless, actual biblical evidence for this teaching is lacking. In order to correctly use the phrase *in and through* in reference to God and the Christian in the context of Christian living, it must be substantiated from the Scriptures. The Greek prepositions typically used are *en* (translated “in”) and *dia* (translated “through”). Of the approximately 2,800 times *en* is used and the approximately 650 times *dia* is used in the New Testament, they rarely concern the context under consideration here. When these prepositions are used in this context, the examples below represent a large percentage of those occurrences and give the biblical perspective.

The following analysis presents a different view from the popular teaching that endorses the Spirit’s power working *in and through* the believer to live the Christian life. Clarity is evident when examined from two different perspectives: (1) ministry and (2) living.

“In and through” for Ministry

An understanding of the *ministry perspective* is evident when observed in two parts: (1) God working *in* Christians for ministry and (2) God working *through* Christians’ ministry.

God Working *In* Christians for Ministry⁶

God *working in* Christians from the *ministry perspective* is illustrated by the following texts (italics added):

6 There are varieties of effects [workings], but the same God who *works* all things *in all persons*...**11**But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (1 Cor 12:6, 11).

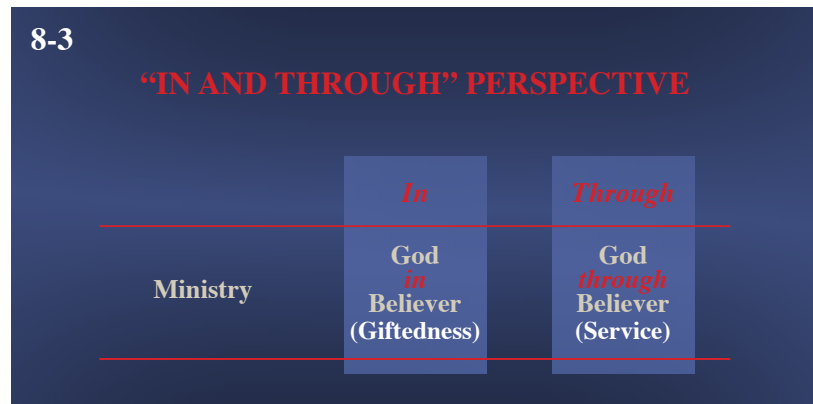
For He [God] who effectually *worked* for [*in*] *Peter* in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually *worked* for [*in*] me [Paul] also to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8).

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Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that *works within us* (Eph 3:20).⁷

For this purpose also I [Paul] labor, striving according to His [God's] power [working], which mightily works [*working in power*] within [*in me*] (Col 1:29).

Each of these texts illustrate from the provision for *ministry* that God works *in* believers (see chart 8-3). In both Galatians 2:8 and Colossians 1:29, the context relates to the ministry of Peter and Paul as apostles of Christ, being gifted to establish the early Church. In a major New Testament section on spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:6, 11 points to the giving of gifts to every believer, ensuring that the Church could function as God intended. For some Ephesians 3:20 is thought to address God's working in believers for living, particularly when associated with Ephesians 3:16: "That He would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." In that case, "power that works within us" (v 20) is equated with "power through His Spirit in the inner man" (v 16). Nevertheless as explained in detail in the next chapter, the "power that works within us" (v 20) is associated with Ephesians 3:7: "I [Paul] was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given



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to me according to the working of His power.” There Paul explained that God had gifted him for ministry “according to the working of His power,” which corresponds to our discussion in both Galatians 2:8 and Colossians 1:29. In fact, the readers of this letter would readily associate verse 7 with verse 20, “according to the power that works within us,” as Paul shifts from God’s power for ministry relating to himself (v 7) to them (“within us,” v 20). Particularly this would be reinforced as Paul then turned to the practical section of the letter and addressed their own spiritual gifts for ministry within the Church (cf. 4:7-16).

Since each believer is endowed with a gift or gifts, here the above texts address God’s work *in* each Christian relating to abilities in *ministry* for service to others.

God Working *Through* Christians’ Ministry⁸

From the *ministry* perspective, God *working through* Christians is illustrated by the following verses (italics added):

Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many *wonders and signs* were taking place *through the apostles* (Acts 2:43).

God was performing extraordinary miracles [*works of power*] by [*through*] the hands of *Paul* (Acts 19:11).

After he [Paul] had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which *God had done* among the Gentiles *through his ministry* (Acts 21:19).

As we just indicated God works *in* Christians providing spiritual abilities, these texts (Acts 2:43, 19:11, and 21:19) tell how those gifts are expressed in the actual ministry *through* the apostles (see chart 8-3). In fact, God’s work through the apostles for ministry was evident in 2 Corinthians 12:12: “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.” As noted above, not only the apostles but every believer is gifted for service in the Church. Nevertheless, while gifts are to be generously used, Christians can thwart the work of God from being expressed as intended. Then, both the believer and the Church have lost.

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“For Ministry” Summary

From the ministry perspective, God’s enablement both *in and through* Christians results in service to others.

“In and through” for Living

To understand the *living perspective* we must also approach it from two directions: (1) God working *in* Christians for living and (2) Christians living *through* Christ.

God Working *In* Christians for Living⁹

As before in the ministry point of view, God likewise works *in* Christians for living. Here the work is to develop Christian character (see chart 8-4). Texts that demonstrate this are the following (italics added):

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13** for it is *God* who is *at work in you*, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13).

20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, **21** equip you in every good thing [work] to do His will, *working in us* that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb 13:20-21).

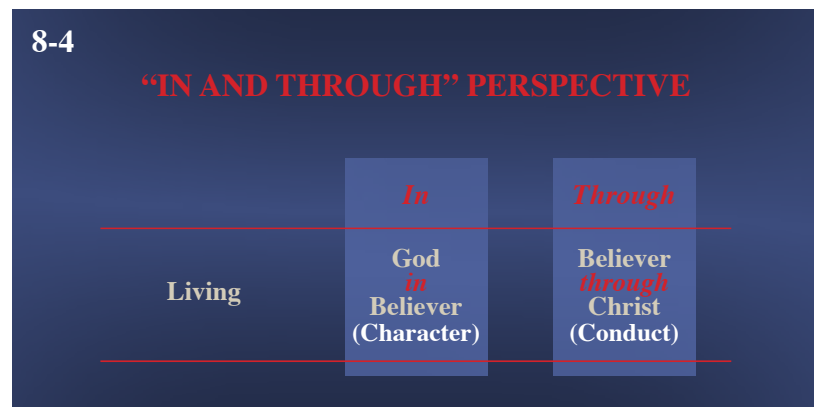
Philippians 2:13

In Philippians 2:12, Paul commanded believers that they should “work out their salvation” through obedience, with Jesus providing the ultimate example (vv 5-11). Their salvation concerns deliverance either from trials or from disobedience, but certainly not in reference to eternal life. Paul was addressing believers in Christ. Verse 13 then

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indicated the basis for the believer’s living out faithful obedience — “for it is God working in you.”

Now, to what does “God working in you” refer? Those holding the *empowerment* viewpoint tell us this means that God causes the Christian obedience — the God-causes-obedience view. But there is a better way. Since Paul gave Christians a command to work out their deliverance by means of obedience to God’s Word, it is the believer himself that brings about his obedience by the choices he makes. This text tells us that the believer’s obedience, not Spirit’s obedience through the Christian, is based on God’s working in his life. Contextually, “God working in you” is best understood to occur through the *influence* of the Spirit. God influences the believer’s mind and thus actions through the Spirit’s leading, filling and teaching. Nevertheless, only as the believer makes himself available to God (Rom 6:12-13), aligning himself with God’s Word and accessing the Spirit’s ministries, will his choices actually reflect the reality of God’s work in his life.



Hebrews 13:21

The book of Hebrews concludes with the author’s hope that “God would make them prepared (equipped) for their every good work...since He was working in them.” The word form used for *prepared* indicates the possibility, not the guarantee, that the preparatory action will take

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place even though God is willing.¹⁰ While the remaining portion of verse 21 will be discussed from the living-through-Christ perspective, it is evident that a believer's good works are dependent not only on God working but also on the Christian's reliance on the resource of the Spirit. As in Philippians 2:12, here the *influence* of the Spirit clarifies the context. The Spirit's leading, filling and teaching can potentially set the believer on the course of making choices that end in good works.

In Summary

From a living perspective, Philippians 2:12-13 and Hebrews 13:20-21 tell us that God works *in* the Christian for living the Christian life. The Spirit's leading, filling and teaching is in view and is constantly available to the Christian.

Those who see empowerment for living in Acts 1:8 imagine the energizing by the Spirit causing all believers to walk obediently. The assumption is that the believer receives power in a mystical experience being infused with spiritual energy, resulting in obedience. On the other hand, the influence view is an entirely different approach. The *empowerment view* involves getting what is *not yet* possessed, while the *influence view* centers on accessing and experiencing what is *already* possessed. God is expected to initiate the former, since believers need additional empowering. On the other hand, believers are expected to know and apply the Word, for God has already provided His resources through the Spirit.

Notice that you can make these particular passages say anything you want based upon your theological stance. These texts do not provide explanations of how God works in believers, rather only statements that God works *in* Christians for living. Obviously, your obligation is to select the explanation that best explains all biblical texts. Rather than the zapping of power causing obedience, the author believes God works in us by means of the Spirit's ministries of leading, filling, and teaching. That approach comes nearer to the clearest understanding of how God works in the Christian for living the Christian life and producing Christian character (see chart 8-4).

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Supplement A Word and Sin *In Christian Living*

Two additional texts give us insight as to God’s work *in* the believer for godly living (italics added):

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the *word of God* which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the *word of God*, which also *performs its work [works] in you* who believe (1 Thess 2:13).

For while we were in the flesh, the *sinful passions*, which were *aroused* by the Law, were *at work in the members of our body* to bear fruit for death (Rom 7:5).

In the *first* example (1 Thess 2:13), the context addresses receiving and believing the Word of God as truth and it’s bearing on Christian living. While the written Word is available, it must be studied and lived out in daily life. As before, this “working in you” does not mean power zapping. Rather the word of God provides explanation and direction for godly living. Remember, the Spirit’s ministries of leading, filling, and teaching are through the Word of God.

The *second* text (Rom 7:5) tells us “sinful passions... work in the members of our body.” In chapter 3, we went in length to explain that sin actually has no power. Remember, the expression *sin’s power* is not a biblical idea. Rather sin, in fact, is *only* an influence, certainly a strong one, that affects the Christian’s choices and behavior. The propensity to sin remains an intense pull on the believer until he is present with Christ.

Both the Word of God and the inclination to sin can be at work in the believer’s life. In each case, it is the choice of the Christian himself as to which one he gives the victory. These texts give further credibility to the influence model.

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Christians Living *Through* Christ¹¹

While the living perspective just discussed referred to Christian character, the believer living through Christ concerns Christian conduct (see chart 8-4). Notice that we are making two important distinctions: First, *God working through Christians* for ministry (explained above) differs from *Christians living through Christ*. Second, the alleged *Spirit empowering Christian conduct* differs from *Spirit influencing Christian conduct*. These distinctions are clarified in the following texts that speak to Christian behavior without any indication of the Spirit working through the believer (italics added):

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in *life through the One, Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:17).

So that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal *life through Jesus Christ* our Lord (Romans 5:21).

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, *to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man* (Eph 3:16).

I can do all things through Him who *strengthens* me (Phil 4:13).

Equip you in every good thing [work] to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, *through Jesus Christ*, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb 13:21).

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we *might live through Him* (1 John 4:9).

Romans 5:17, 21

As referenced in chapter 4, the two texts from *Romans 5* concern whether grace will reign in life or sin will reign in death. In the context believers in Christ are in view with life representing enriched living or

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fellowship with Christ and death referring to forfeiture of fellowship. In both, reigning leading to life or to death is a possibility, a potential based on the actual choices the believer makes. If grace reigns, God is allowed to influence and control the believer’s choices and actions. Otherwise sin influences and controls the Christian.

The reign of grace, allowing God to influence the Christian, is “through Jesus Christ.” Verses 15-16 tell us Christ’s work on the cross not only provided for the gift of righteousness, establishing a right relationship with God for those who believe in Christ, but also when received that gift liberates the Christian from sin, making him free to experience righteous and enriched living. Through Christ, which would include the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, Christians are both motivated and influenced to make choices pleasing to God.

*Ephesians 3:16*¹²

In *Ephesians 3:14-19*, as well as in *Philippians 1:9-11* and *Colossians 1:9-14*, Paul prayed for believers to grow in maturity. In *Ephesians 3:16*, Paul presented his request for the believers *to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*. Thereafter, verses 17-19 contain a progressive series of expected results derived from being “strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inner man.” Notice the acquisition of strength concerns the inner man, “an inner strength as opposed to a physical strength.”¹³ Differing from an instantaneous approach, this strengthening is accomplished by means of the Spirit’s ministry over time as the believer allows the Spirit to influence his thoughts and actions. This particular text is addressed in detail in the next chapter.

Philippians 4:13

Paul’s contentment in all his circumstances either in scarcity or plenty, is the context of *Philippians 4:10-13*. In verse 13, he wrote that he could prevail in any circumstance since he is invigorated (strengthened) through Christ.¹⁴ The influencing ministry of the Spirit of Christ, based on the work of Christ, determined Paul’s understanding of and response to any situation.

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Hebrews 13:21

While *Hebrews 13:21* was addressed in the first perspective, God working *in* Christians for living, our concern now relates to the phrase *through Jesus Christ*. As stated previously, it is evident that a believer's good works are dependent not only on God's working in them but also on the Christian's reliance on the resources of the Spirit, the influence of the Spirit. In the context of Hebrew 13, the use of "through Jesus Christ" is equivalent to that in Romans 5:21. Believers are motivated and influenced through the ministry of Christ to choose good works.

1 John 4:9

First John 4:9 relates to Christ's work of salvation. This was the thrust of Jesus' words when He said,

57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. **58** This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever (John 6:57-58).

From the backdrop of God's daily provision of manna, Jesus contrasts himself as the onetime provision to be eaten, an analogy of believing in Christ, in order to receive life everlasting. Partakers of God's provision possess life—"live because of Christ."¹⁵

Nevertheless, the context of 1 John 4:7-21 centers on the love of God for His own, which should in turn motivate believers to love one another. In that setting, the emphasis of verse 9 is God's love revealed by sending His Son to die for us so that we can possess life through faith. In addition to that new position in Christ, God's love potentially allows Christians to experience an enriched life as they "live through Christ."¹⁶ "Because of Christ" we are spiritually alive, yet we can experience life abundantly as we live "through Christ," allowing the indwelling Spirit of Christ to shape our choices and actions.

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Romans 5:17, 21; Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13; Heb 13:21;

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and 1 John 4:9 illustrate Christian living through Christ or Christ’s Spirit. Notice this living perspective sees the *Christian living through Christ, not Christ living through the Christian*. While the former living perspective, God working *in* Christians for living, referred to Christian character, the believer living through Christ concerns Christian conduct. Living *through* Christ is cooperative living, involving both the Spirit’s influence and the believer’s choice to obey. God causing obedience through the Christian is *not* found in these texts. Rather, the *believer is solely responsible to live the Christian life through Christ’s provision of the Spirit’s influencing ministry*.

Supplement B Strength and Weakness

In both Ephesians 3:16 and Philippians 4:10-13, there is an exchange of weakness for strength. The context of each relates to gaining a godly perspective of one’s situation or circumstance. Rather than accomplishing a task by means of an acquired power, living out life deals with grasping the reality of God’s Word by the Spirit’s leading, filling, and teaching through Christ.

When we turn to Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-10), weakness and strength are held in equilibrium. “When I am weak, then I am strong” (v 10). Understanding the sufficiency of Christ’s provision, one’s physical lack of strength actually develops inward strength for godly living. Becoming content in difficulties is the product of a change in perspective, in attitude, and then in behavior as a result of the Spirit’s influence, not a power surge.

Supplement C Evaluation of Exchanged-Life Teaching

While never using the term *exchanged life*, the genesis of this teaching is traced back to Hudson Taylor, the founder

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of the China Inland Mission.¹⁷ The popularity of exchanged-life teaching is associated with Watchman Nee (*The Norman Christian Life*) and Ian Thomas (*The Victorious Christian Life*), while recent adherents include Steve McVey (*Grace Walk*) and John Eldredge (*Ransomed Heart*). This teaching is centered in Galatians 2:20. “I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.” The core of the teaching is that when a Christian truly understands his identity in Christ, resulting from the exchange of the old man for the new man at salvation, that person will allow Christ to live out His life through him, experiencing the reality of his identity with Christ.

This teaching is summarized in the expression “Not I but Christ”¹⁸ and characterized by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Sanctification of our behavior, then, is Christ living His life out through the believer.”¹⁹ Consequently, the exchanged-life teaching embraces the “let-go; let-God” mantra with God producing good works through the believer. This teaching obviously conflicts with the author’s discussion of (1) *empowerment* found in chapters 3–5 of this book and (2) *living through Christ* found here in chapter 8.

The author believes there is a better and more biblical approach to understanding the exchanged-life experience needed in each Christian’s life. Rather than being found in Galatians 2:20, a better perspective on exchanged-life living is found in the discipleship passages addressed to believers on five occasions in the Gospels: (1) Matthew 10:32-39, (2) Matthew 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-26, (3) Luke 14:35-35, (4) Luke 17:31-34, and (5) John 12:24-26).²⁰ A Christian can either lose his life while trying to save it or find life in the process of losing it. Jesus’ paradoxical statement presents the practical choices facing each believer. Every choice has an outcome and

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both the choice and the consequence are the responsibility of the Christian. The believer is accountable for both his decisions and behavior, not God.

Like Galatians 2:20, both Romans 6:6 and Colossians 3:9-10 teach of an exchange. At salvation, the old man is “put off” and “dead,” while the new man, who is “alive in Christ,” takes its place. That *positional exchange of life* makes the person spiritually alive to God and therefore possesses the potential for godly living. That potential becomes a reality only as the believer chooses to align his life with the Word of God. Then and only then the Christian’s experience becomes a reality in conforming to Christ. That growing transformation from the ways of the world to the ways of God, as found in Romans 12:2, is the process of losing one’s former life and finding a life pleasing to God. This progressive, *experiential exchange in life* is Paul’s desire for his readers. In Romans 6:12-13, Paul tells them to (1) “not let sin reign in their mortal body” and (2) “not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness,” but rather (3) “present yourselves to God...and your members as instruments of righteousness.” In Colossians 3, Paul instructs them to *put off* “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth...Do not lie to one another” (vv 8-9a). On the other hand, they were to *put on* “a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you... Beyond all these things *put on love*” (vv 12b-14a). While the *positional exchange of life* is God’s work, the *experiential exchange in life* is the Christian’s work in cooperation with the Spirit. Believers gain life that is eternal in the former exchange, but *only increasingly experience an enriched life in the latter exchange as they live through Christ.*

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“For Living” Summary

God works *in* the Christian both for ministry and for living (see chart 8-5). In both cases, He imparts the necessary provisions to the believer: gifts for ministry and the Spirit’s ministry for living. God also works *through* believers for ministry in order that the diligent Christian can serve effectively. The biblical evidence substantiates each. The tension arises in relation to the view that the Spirit causes and produces good works through the believer. The biblical evidence does *not* validate that assertion.²¹ Rather, living *through* Christ concerns accessing God’s provision and choosing to obey the Word as the Christian allows the Spirit to influence him. The focus is the believer’s conduct.

8-5

“IN AND THROUGH” PERSPECTIVE

	<i>In</i>	<i>Through</i>
Ministry	God <i>in</i> Believer (Giftedness)	God <i>through</i> Believer (Service)
Living	God <i>in</i> Believer (Character)	Believer <i>through</i> Christ (Conduct)

Nevertheless, those who support empowerment would state that it is the believer’s choice to allow the Spirit’s power to produce obedience. But that is a biblically unsupportable (see chapter 9). The texts above and the Bible as a whole expect each believer to be solely responsible to choose and live in obedience to God.

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Just Along for the Ride?

Just along for the ride. No effort, no worries. Just sit back and let someone else do the driving. That’s what the newest automobiles provide. They do virtually everything for you. They do the stopping. They do the parking. Soon they will actually do the driving. We have come a long way. It’s a new day, at least with cars.

Unfortunately, for centuries the teaching of the Church has perpetuated the idea that the Spirit causes and produces good works *in and through* the Christian. We are just along for the ride. No wonder the Church has such little impact on the world. The Church is inundated with slothful Christians, those who expect the Spirit to do the work for them.²² Rather than developing Christian character that changes Christian conduct, the world is unaffected because Christians are not being transformed into the image of their Savior.

