

## **Revised In Him Scriptures:**

### **Williams:**

Romans 5:9-10 – I was reconciled while an enemy – much more now shall I be saved by His life (ZOE).

8:32– He didn't spare His Son when we were enemies – much more now will He give with Him graciously everything else we need.

8:37 – in all these things we keep on gloriously conquering through Him who loved us.

8:36-39 – Nothing can separate me from His love.

Comment - I was taught at one time that only I could separate myself. But the Word says “nothing.” Since my entire life and will is in His hands, I believe that this “nothing” also includes me. I will no longer see myself as a hindrance. He sought me out to reconcile me when I wanted nothing to do with Him, when I was a sinner. Now I am His very own, purchased with His blood, who knows Him and loves Him with all my heart. He doesn't leave me to myself. He is still there for me. He still seeks me out. Much more, much more than will He give me graciously everything else I need? So I need no longer fear “myself.”

You can see from the above that His love includes what He is willing to do right now – so that *we keep on gloriously conquering through Him who loved us*. Whatever situation I am in, nothing can separate me from His willingness to help me now! Me being a sinner didn't stop Him then. Much more my shortcomings and imperfections won't stop Him now! Now I am His. He has my heart.

Ephesians 2:4-5 – God who is *rich in mercy*, on account of His great love, made *us alive even when we were dead* in sin.

V. 7 – He wants to show throughout the ages the boundless generosity of His unmerited favor shown us in His goodness through Christ.

He showed it when Jesus died for us as sinners – now He wants to keep on showing it throughout the ages.

Romans 8:19, 21 – For all nature waits for our unveiling as God's children and to share our glorious freedom as God's children.

Ephesians 1 – I am consecrated and *above reproach* in His sight in love. I am His through the happy choice of His will. I have redemption in accordance with the *generosity* of His unmerited favor, which He *lavished* upon me.

### **Worrell:**

Holy and without blemish.

Riches of His grace *super-abounded* towards me.

I am to be to the praise of His glory.

### **Phillips:**

I have every spiritual benefit as a citizen of Heaven. Through Him at the cost of His own blood, I am redeemed.

Everything that exists finds its perfection and fulfillment in Christ.

Romans 8 - The Spirit gives to my whole being new strength and vitality.

I don't have a spirit of fear. I have been adopted into the very family circle of God.

The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own and have its share in that *magnificent liberty* which can only belong to the children of God.

I bear the family likeness of the Son. I am lifted to the splendor of life as His own son.

No, in all these things (natural things against us) we win an overwhelming victory through Him who has proved His love for us.

5:8-11 – Yet, the *proof* of God's amazing love is this: that is was while we were sinners that Christ died for us. Moreover, if He did that for us while we were sinners, now that we are men justified by the shedding of His blood, what reason have we to fear the wrath of God? If while we were His enemies, Christ reconciled us to God by dying for us, surely now that we are reconciled, we may be *perfectly certain* of our salvation (daily and temporal as well as eternal) through His living in us. Nor, I am sure, is this matter of bare salvation – we may hold our heads high in the light of God's love because of the reconciliation which Christ has made.

He proved His love while we were yet sinners, much more now will He provide all I need. That is why I can count on an overwhelming victory now! Whatever situation I am in!

I hold my head high in the light of God's love.

### **New English Bible:**

I am *without blemish* in His sight – such was His will and purpose – for us to be adopted as His sons.

In Christ my release is secured (though His blood).

My release is secured from anything that hinders me or keeps me bound and keeps me from living the abundant, overcoming, reigning life He came to give me.

Therein lies the richness of God's free grace lavished upon us.

God, rich in mercy, for the great love He bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our sins... He

raised us up and enthroned us with Him in the heavenly realms – so that He might display how great His kindness is to us. I am a display of God's great kindness in Christ. I am an example of the good things God desires to do to demonstrate His kindness. The glory of His gracious gift so graciously bestowed on me in the Beloved redounds to *His* praise. What He has done for me in Christ brings *Him* glory!

Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love Him – God reveals them to us by His Spirit.

The Spirit explores everything – even the depths of God's own nature. We have this Spirit that we may know all that God of His own grace gives us. (1 Corinthians 2)

God is love. The Spirit explores and reveals to us even the depths of God's own nature, even the depths of the love of God. That we might be... be strong to grasp... the breadth, length, height, and depth of His love and know it, though it is beyond knowledge. (Ephesians 3)

V. 20 - He is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive by the power which is at work among us.

Paul prayed that we know the vast resources of His power upon us who trust in Him. According to the power at work in us (as shown in chapter 1 – all He has done and is doing in Christ).

This power gave us life while dead, raised us up to sit with Him, etc., and according the Romans 8:10-11; 31-32 is still working for us! And we can know and understand and grasp it! It is revealed to us by the Spirit of God!

...The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray or for what it is right to pray for, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit Himself is pleading for us...God...knows what the Spirit means...He

pleads for God's own people in God's own way; and in everything, as we know, He cooperates for good with those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

If God is on our side, who is against us? He did not spare His own Son, but surrendered Him for us all; and with this gift how can He fail to *lavish* upon us *all he has to give*.

I am *convinced* that there is *nothing* in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths – *nothing in all creation* that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Jerusalem:

Ephesians 2:10 – We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning He has meant us to live it.

I am God's Work of art! He is proud of what He made. He likes His work.

3:16-19 – Out of His infinite glory may He give you power through His Spirit for your *hidden self* to grow strong... planted in love and built on love...strength to *grasp* the breadth, length, height and depth; until knowing the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the fullness of God. 3:20 – God is more than able to do this!

Yes, Lord, this is my desire and goal.

1 John 4:16-18 – I want to come to know and believe the love of God, which will cast every trace of fear and guilt out of my life!

Romans 5:10 – When we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may *count on* being saved by the Lord of His Son.

Saved (sozo) – saved, healed, made completely whole.

Live (zoe) – God's life and nature; His quality of life.

I can count on being saved, healed and completely whole by God's life and nature living within me! This is for me here and now, even in the midst of my imperfections and shortcomings and the unrenewed parts of me.

Romans 8:31-32 - ...With God on our side, who can be against us? Since God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be *certain* after such a gift that *He will not refuse anything* He can give!

V. 35-37 – There is nothing that can come between us and the love of Christ...even if we are troubled or worried or being persecuted or lacking food or clothes or being threatened or even attacked... these are the trials through which we *triumph* by the power of Him who loves us.

V. 39 - ... no created thing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It was demonstrated and made visible when He came for us as sinners and reconciled us. After this gift, sure He will not refuse anything He can give!

1 John 4:9-10 – In this the love of God was made manifest (displayed) where we are concerned; in that God sent His Son, His only begotten, into the world that we might live through Him. *In this is love, not that we love God but that He loved us* and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Ephesians 3:7-9 – I have been made the servant of that gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of his power. I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mys-

tery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything.

I am:

- Entrusted with grace.
- Proclaiming the unfathomable treasure of Christ.
- Throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery.

1:17-19 – May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power.

Colossians 1:9-10 – That is why, ever since the day he told us, we have never failed to remember you in our prayers and ask that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will and so be able to lead a life worthy of the Lord, a life acceptable to him in all its aspects, bearing fruit in every kind of good work and growing in knowledge of God,

Lord give to me a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed.

Bring me to a fuller knowledge of you.

Enlighten the eyes of my mind so that I can see:

- The hope your call holds for me.
- How rich is the glory of your inheritance.
- How great is your power towards me.

Give me perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding:

- That I can reach the fullest knowledge of your will.
- That I may be able to lead a life worthy of the Lord.
- Bearing fruit in every kind of good work
- Growing in the knowledge of God.

### **Amplified:**

Ephesians 1 - He chose and *actually picked me out* for Himself as His own.

I am holy, consecrated and *set apart for Him*. I am blameless and *above reproach* in His sight. It pleased Him to adopt me as His child. I have redemption, deliverance and salvation in His blood. I was made God's heritage.

I have *freely bestowed* grace, riches and generosity of His gracious favor lavished upon me.

V. 1:19 - And (so that you can know and understand) what is the *immeasurable* and *unlimited* and *surpassing* greatness of His power in and for us who believe... He wants me to understand this! Wow! Lord, if it is for anyone, it is for me. I look to you to reveal it to me.

V. 2:4-5 – But God! So rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us, even when we were dead... He made us alive together... He gave us the very life of Christ Himself...

V. 2:7 – He wants to clearly demonstrate... the immeasurable (limitless, surpassing) riches of His free grace in kindness and goodness of heart toward us...

### **Living:**

V. 3 – We are blessed with *every blessing in heaven* because we belong to Christ.

V. 4-5 – Long ago, even before He made the world, God chose us to be His very own through what Christ would do for us. He decided then to make us holy in His eyes, *without a single fault* – we who stand before Him covered with His love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And He did this because He wanted to!

V. 7 – So *overflowing is His kindness* toward us that He took away *all* of our sins through the blood of His Son, and He has showered down upon us the richness of His grace.

V. 11 – ...because of what Christ has done, we have become gifts to God that He delights in.

V. 18-19 – I want you to realize that God has been made rich because we who are Christ's have been given Him!

I pray that you will begin to understand how *incredibly great* His power is to help those who believe Him.

### Romans 5 & 8

When our hope and faith are strong and steady, we can hold our heads high no matter what happens and *know* that all is well; *for* we know how dearly God loves us...

God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. Since by His blood He did all this for us as sinners, how much more will He do for us now that **He** has declared us not guilty? And since when we were His enemies, we were brought back to God by the death of His Son, what blessings He must have for us now that we are His friends and He is living within us? (5:4-5, 8-10)

Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God – all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins – making us friends of God.

And so we should not be like cringing fearful slaves, but we should behave like God's very own children, adopted into the bosom of His family and calling Him, "Father, Father."

But if... you cut the nerve of your instinctive actions by obeying the Spirit, you will live.

Comment - This sounds like a key to victory. I cut the *nerve* of my instinctive actions, I break the power of the pulling, pushing habits of thought and actions that have controlled me, by obeying the Spirit. Without cutting them at the nerve, in my heart where I live from, I will only have limited success.

I don't break them by trying hard to change but by obeying the spirit. It is relationship not rules that leads to my victory!

It is His leading me into victory. I am completely dependent on the Spirit to get where I want to go. I have to stay close enough to hear, and I have to expect Him to lead me. And He always leads me in His triumph, into His victory!

All who follow the leading of God's Spirit are God's own sons.

Corinthians 2:14 – He always leads me in His triumph. I follow His leading. Therefore, I triumph!

Nor are you meant to relapse into the old slavish attitude of fear. You have been adopted into the very family circle of God...

Comment – None of these things work with guilt or fear. They only work through fellowship, accepting my acceptance to God, expecting Him to care enough to help, to direct, to support me. He is always there, but my faith, my trust, my actually expecting it, is what causes Him to work for me.

### New Living

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

- Before He made the world, He loved us and chose us to be holy and without fault in His eyes.
- He decided in advance to adopt us into His family.
- This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.
- Glorious grace has been poured out on us who belong to Him.
- He is rich in kindness and grace and purchased our freedom with the blood of His son.
- He forgave our sins.
- He has showered His kindness on us along with all wisdom and understanding.

## **The Message**

### **Ephesians 1-3**

Long before He laid down earth's foundations, He had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by His love. Long, long ago He decided to adopt us into His family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure He took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of His lavish gift-giving by the hand of His beloved Son.

Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, His blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need,

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glori-

ous living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing Him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for Christians, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!

... immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

Now God has us where He wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust Him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing!

I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God. God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

## Romans 5-8

5:17 – If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?

V. 20 – All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call *grace*. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down.

7:15-25 – What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

But I need something *more*! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes.

I can will it, but I can't *do* it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable.

The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of

contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

Romans 8 – God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that. The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

V. 26-28 – Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

V. 31-32 – So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us?

9:30-33 – How can we sum this up? All those people who didn't seem interested in what God was doing actually *embraced* what God was doing as he straightened out their lives. And Israel, who seemed so interested in reading and talking about what God was doing, missed it. How could they miss it? Because instead of trusting God, *they* took over.

They were absorbed in what they themselves were doing. They were so absorbed in their "God projects" that they didn't notice God right in front of them, like a huge rock in the middle of the road. And so they stumbled into him and went sprawling. Isaiah (again!) gives us the metaphor for pulling this together: Careful! I've put a huge stone on the road to Mount Zion, a stone you can't get around. But the stone is me! If you're looking for me, you'll find me on the way, not in the way.

### **Wuest:**

... to bring back again to their original state all things in Christ.

Holy Spirit, the token payment of our inheritance, guaranteeing the full payment of all.

There is not even one bit of condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.

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Do I really believe this? I should. The Word most definitely teaches it. It couldn't be plainer..

### **Beck:**

Nature is waiting on tiptoe to see the unveiling of God's family. We are appointed to be thoroughly like His Son so He would be the firstborn among many brothers.

In all this He who loved us helps us win an *overwhelming* victory.

He has done what in His kindness He planned to do, who bought us with His blood, to forgive our sins and set us free.

He poured out the riches of His grace on us... God who is rich in mercy loved us with such a great love He made us who were dead in sins alive with Christ. God's love demonstrated: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now,

much more is His exceeding great power available to me in any time of need.

### **Young:**

Condemnation no longer has a right to hang over my head. Who shall dare lay a charge against me, a choice one of God? God is He that is declaring me righteous. Who is he that is condemning? Christ is He that died, yea, rather also was raised up, who is also on the right hand of God – who also does intercede for me?

Comment – If it is there, it is hanging around illegally. Jesus, the only one who can validly condemn me, justified me instead!

Isaiah 50:7-9 – And the Lord Jehovah gives help to me. Therefore, I have not been ashamed. Therefore, I have set my face as a flint, *and I know* that I am not ashamed. Near is He who is justifying me. Who does contend with me? We stand together, who is my opponent? Let him come nigh to me. Lo, the Lord Jehovah gives help to me. Who is he that declares me wicked?

Hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. For when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. God showed, proved and demonstrated His love by sending His Son while we were sinners.

### **NKJV**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good



pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance,

I am blessed with every spiritual blessing as His: These are my rights as His kid. Notice the first one is to be holy and without blame. Another right is the forgiveness of my sins. *He* is the One who made me accepted. *He* is the one who initiated all of this, through His good pleasure.

He wanted me so much, He wanted me to be clean enough from sin to fellowship with Him. He wanted it so badly that He did what it took to provide the way. How much He must love it when take Him at His word and take the time to be with Him.

I have forgiveness of sins according to the riches of *His* grace, which *He* made *abound* to me. He has provided more than enough favor, which I don't deserve, to abound to me to forgive any sin, to overcome any problem, meet any need.

He also initiated this! Where sin abounds, grace *much more* abounds. Thank God for these wonderful truths! May they sink deeply within my heart until they become a part of me and are the controlling forces of my life!!! Then I will *know* that God is for me! Who can possibly be against me.

How much is God for me? Oh, Lord, that I may know the exceeding greatness of your power *on my behalf* who believes!

That He may give to me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of my understanding being enlightened; that I may know (1) what is the hope of His call-

ing, (2) what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and (3) what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (NKJV)

God is for me to extent of the exceeding greatness of His power towards me that it took to raise Jesus from the dead and raise Him up above all!

- ❖ He chose me to be holy and without blame.
- ❖ He predestined to adoption as His very own, according to the good pleasure of His will.
- ❖ *He* made me *accepted* in the Beloved.
- ❖ I have redemption through His blood.
- ❖ I have forgiveness of sins – according to the *riches* of His grace, which *He* *made* to abound to me.
- ❖ He makes known to me the mystery of His will again by the good pleasure of His will.
- ❖ I have obtained an inheritance.
- ❖ I have the Holy Spirit as down payment on this inheritance, guaranteeing it will all be mine.

His Grace (as described through these translations):

How great is the grace of God, which He gave us in such large measure! Grace – He favors me though I don't deserve

it. I still don't deserve it, and His grace is still more than enough.

He chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless and to live through love in His presence. He wants me to live in His presence always, holy and spotless through His love.

- ❖ How vast the resources of His power open to us who trust in Him.
- ❖ How infinitely great is the power He has exercised for us believers.
- ❖ How incomparably great is His power for us who believe!
- ❖ The immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe (the magnificence and splendor of the inheritance).
- ❖ How tremendous is the power available to us who believe...
- ❖ How incredibly great His power to help those who believe Him.
- ❖ Exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.

Vast resources, infinitely great, incomparably great, very great, immeasurable greatness, tremendous power, incredibly great and exceeding greatness of His power:

What glorious descriptions of His power toward me!

This immense power is released to me through faith and trust! According to my faith, be it unto me! ALL THIS POWER IS AVAILABLE TO ALL OF US BUT IS RELEASED INTO OUR LIVES ONLY IN PROPORTION TO OUR FAITH, only according to our true expectation and heart trust, only when we are fully assured and absolutely certain with no wavering or doubting – because only this is true faith.

## **SALVATION – By Grace Through Faith**

The Gospel is the very power of God working for the salvation of everyone who believes – a process begun and continued by faith.

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I hear it. I hear about what God has provided for me. When I believe it, when I put my faith in it, it is God's power working for my salvation. God's power is in His Word to activate it when mixed with faith. The process is begun and continue by faith.

Salvation – depends upon faith on man's part and generosity on God's part.

How I live victoriously – By my acceptance of God's more than sufficient grace and righteousness. Acceptance is: the act of taking, admitting, receiving, believing, and agreeing to. I have to accept that God favors me though I don't feel like I deserve it and that He has made me righteousness.

The stumbling stone of the Gospel – their minds were fixed on what they achieved instead of on what they believed. It seems like the entire church is stuck here; they are so caught up with behavior, making sure that we "act like" Christians that they neglect the inner relationship with God and dealing with matters in the heart first so that the good behavior is real and genuine and not just put on because "this is what is Christian is supposed to be like." They insist that we put so much effort into what we achieve that they have little energy left to put into our relationship with God. And putting so much emphasis on behaviour causes us them to see how drastically far we they fall short and then guilt keeps us from that relationship with God. The difference between Christianity and any other religion is this relationship, that God doesn't just demand right behaviour of us but by living in our hearts and living through us He provides it. He demands faith and obedience not perfection.

Romans 9:30-32 - Israel who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone – relying on what they achieved rather than what they believed.

Romans 8:3-8 - For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: (God did what my flesh was too weak to do and still is. I merely accept it.) He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds (setting your mind on what you achieve rather than what you believe is setting your mind on the flesh) on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (This is setting your mind on your relationship with God not on your behavior). For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

As cooperators with God Himself, we beg you then not to fail to use the grace of God, which you have received.

Surely you can't be so stupid as to think that you began your spiritual life in the spirit then complete it by reverting to physical observances.

If you try to be justified by the law (doing), you automatically cut yourself off from the power of Christ; you put yourself outside the range of grace.

How do you put yourself outside of the range of His grace? By trying to do it yourself, in your own strength, rather than relying on Him, rather than doing it God's way – by grace

through faith. It is by getting back under such guilt that you are not free to live by relationship with the Living God.

Psalms 33:17-18; 147:10-11 – These passages describe works versus faith; man's ways versus God's ways; trusting in man versus trusting in God. See them in NKJV and Living below.

A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy. His eyes are upon me, to save and deliver me.

Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory - for all its strength, it cannot save you. But the LORD watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love.

He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy. The Lord takes pleasure in me. I am one of these. That is why I am favored of God!

The strength of a horse does not impress him; how puny in his sight is the strength of a man. Rather, the LORD'S delight is in those who honor him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love. He delights in me when I actually expect Him to be good to me and to meet my needs.

Salvation – doesn't depend on anything you have achieved; it is the free gift of God. For God has made us what we are, created in Christ Jesus to do those good deeds which He planned for us to do.

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From beginning to end, salvation doesn't depend on anything I achieve. It is the free gift of God. He has given. I receive. This is how I reign in life, by accepting what He in His great mercy has done. This is how I live victoriously. I began by

the spirit, not depending on my achievements but on His provision; I am perfected to maturity in the same way. I do not trip over the stumbling stone and begin to focus on achieving rather than believing. I am not stupid!

I complete and work out my salvation – but it is God who is at work within me supplying the will and the power to achieve His purpose.

Galatians 2:19-21 - For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 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. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

The life I live in the flesh I don't live in guilt or defeat or inadequacy. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Remember, He did this for me when I was a sinner out of the greatness of His mercy and the good pleasure of His will. Much more now will He give me all that I need - including all I need to live life victoriously – even over my own flesh!)

It is no longer I who live! It is He who lives in me who lives His life of victory through me. How? Through my faith in Him who is in me! Ephesians 3:17 – that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith... How does He dwell in my heart? Through faith! I was saved by faith! I live the life in my flesh by faith! He dwells and abides in my heart through faith! When are we going to get it?

John 4:24 – God is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

God's way:

❖ Worship in the Spirit

❖ Pride ourselves in Jesus Christ

❖ Put no confidence in the flesh.

The Secret – I have learned the secret. I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances may be... I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me.

He gave us a vision of the wonder and splendor of His secret plan – Christ in you!

Come to know God's great secret – CHRIST HIMSELF! For it is in Him and in Him alone that all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden.

Hebrews 12:1-3 - ...Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us... How? By bending down and trying to untangle yourself? No! By looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith... for consider Him...lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.

When I try and struggle to lay it all aside and be all that I can be, do all that I can do, I get so frustrated (Galatians 2:19), so wearied (Heb 12:3), that I do faint in my mind and end up giving up. But when the burden is on Him, when I am committed and fully trusting Him, I am at peace, and He is able to work out His will in me. I live by faith in Him who dwells in me. Philippians 2:13 – For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Living – For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him.

Hebrews 13:9 – It is good to depend upon the grace of God for inward strength and not on rules of diet.

2 Timothy 1:12 – For I know the One in whom I have placed my confidence, and I am perfectly certain that the work He has committed to me is safe in His hands.

2 Timothy 2:1 – Be strong in the grace that Christ Jesus gives.

Hebrews 3:14 – We continue to share in all that Christ has for us as long as we maintain the trust with which we began. Watch out for that wickedness of heart, which refuses to trust.

There still exists a full and complete rest for the people of God. And he who experiences this rest is resting from his own work as fully as God from His. **THIS IS SOMETHING WE CAN HAVE HERE AND NOW** – through faith! It is learning to trust fully and completely in God for my salvation, learning the secret, that it is by grace through faith – all of it! Every bit of my salvation is through depending on Him who lives in me and all He has provided for me! Let us be eager to know this rest for ourselves.

Same context:

Seeing that we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to our faith... (Hold firmly to what?)

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Notice this doesn't say to hold fast to doing all you feel you should be doing, hold fast to praying a whole lot. It says to hold firmly to your faith. Keep believing, and He will keep on working. Stop believing, and you hinder His working.

Let us approach the Throne of Grace with fullest confidence that we may receive mercy for our failures and grace to help in the hour of need.

Let us hold firmly to going by faith not works – if we slip, Jesus is there to help.

JESUS IS ABLE TO SAVE ME FULLY AND COMPLETELY as I approach God through Him. He is always living to intercede on my behalf.

The God of peace is the One equipping me thoroughly to do His will and effecting in me everything that pleases Him.

I serve God with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son (Romans 1:9; 2:29; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 7:6; 8:2-13; John 4:24).

Romans 1:16-17 – Salvation includes deliverance, safety preservation, healing, soundness, and gathers into itself all the redemptive acts and processes. It is by grace through faith, every part a free gift and wholly without works. And it works by faith as described below in Rom 10:10-12.

10:10 – For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. V. 11 – For whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. V. 12 – the Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him.

8/1/87 – Phillips

Romans 5-8

- Let us grasp the fact that we have peace with God.
- In this relationship of grace I take my stand in happy certainty of the glorious things He has for me.
- I can be full of joy here and now no matter what the circumstances.
- God helped me when I was powerless to help myself and reconciled me to Himself. Now I may hold my head high in the light of God's love...
- By my acceptance of His more than sufficient grace and righteousness I live my life victoriously! I reign as a king over my life. I hold the reigns. I am not controlled, but I yield to God.
- I was dead and buried with Him in baptism, so that just as He was raised from the dead by that splendid revela-

tion of the Father's power, so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether.

- No condemnation not hangs over my head.
- God's life lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death.
- I can cut the nerve of my instinctive actions by obeying the Spirit (It is not by law or formula, no, it is a living, daily relationship with God).
- I am not to fall back into fear – I have been adopted into the very family circle of God. All who follow the leading of God's Spirit are God's own sons.
- The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own. All creation will have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God.
- God made me righteous in His sight and then lifted me to the splendor of life as His own son.
- God gave His Son to bring me to this place. Can I not trust Him to give me with Him everything else I can need?
- I win an overwhelming victory in all things through Him who has proved His love.
- The Spirit helps me in my present limitation. I can't see things in the Spirit as clear as I would like. I don't always know how to pray about things, but the Spirit within me sees things as they are. He sees my desires and God's will. If I yield to Him, He will express this through me in those agonizing longings which cannot find words. I trust in Him!

### Ephesians Prayers:

#### I pray that:

- God will give me the spiritual wisdom and the insight to know more of Him.
- I may receive that inner illumination of the Spirit which will make me realize:
  - How great is the hope to which He is calling me.
  - The magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians.
  - How tremendous is the power available to me.
- Out of the glorious richness of His resources He will enable me to know the strength of the Spirit's inner reinforcement.
- Jesus was raised by the glory of the Father. By this I too rise to life on a new plane altogether. I am lifted out of sin and death.
- The power available to us who believe is this same divine energy. This is what Paul spoke of when he expressed his desire to know God in the power of His resurrection.

#### I pray also that:

- Christ may actually live in my heart by faith.
- I being rooted and grounded in love may be able to grasp the bound of His love.
- I may know for myself His love so far above understanding.
- I may be filled through all by being with God Himself.

He is able to do far much more than these things, far more than I can image or even dare ask!

### 8/26/03 – By Grace through faith

Ephesians 2:8-10 – By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

All of my salvation is by grace through faith. In it all, I am His workmanship not my own.

Hebrews 12:2 - Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Not only did He begin my faith, but He completes it – as I look to Him.

Galatians 3:3 - Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?

I started with the Spirit. The way I am to continue is the same – with the Spirit.

Colossians 2:6-7 – As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith.

The way that I received Him is the way I continue.

Romans 1:17 – The righteousness of God is revealed through faith to faith, as it is written, the one who is righteous will live by faith.

My salvation is from faith to faith, not starting by faith and then changing to works when I reach a certain level.

Romans 9:30-32 - What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but Israel, who did strive for the

righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone...

V 10:3 - For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness.

This is the great stumbling stone of the Gospel, reverting back to works to complete the salvation that was begun by faith.

Romans 10:8-10 describes the righteousness of faith.

But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

Hebrews 3:14 (Living) - For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.

### 2/08 – Romans 7 from Versions

#### The Message

I can anticipate the response that is coming: "I know that all God's commands are spiritual, but I'm not. Isn't this also your experience?" Yes. I'm full of myself—after all, I've spent a long time in sin's prison. What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

### 8:1-14 – The Answer

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have

done that. The law always ended up being used as a band-aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God!

Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. ] And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms.

It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!

So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The



best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life.

### Romans 7:15-25 (Living)

I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to--what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can't help myself because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things.

I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.

It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant, but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin. So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free.

Romans 8:1-4 (Living) – So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit--and this power is mine through Christ Jesus--has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but

God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours--except that ours are sinful--and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us.

V. 12-14 – So, dear brothers, you have no obligations whatever to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do. For if you keep on following it you are lost and will perish, but if through the power of the Holy Spirit you crush it and its evil deeds, you shall live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

### 2/1/08 – Summary of Thoughts from Romans 7-8

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.

If I am still living like this even as a Christian, there is something I am not doing yet, there is something I don't yet know or am not yet applying – because a Christian shouldn't be liv-

ing like this. But most I know are. There is a way out, and it can be found in His Word. The more I continue in the Word, the more I will see and be able to apply.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit--and this power is mine through Christ Jesus--has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. We aren't saved from sin's grasp by knowing the commandments of God because we can't and don't keep them, but God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours and destroyed sin's control over us by giving himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God's laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us.

How can I obey God's Law and fulfill His requirements? Follow after the Spirit and no longer yield to the flesh.

In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. . Those who trust God's action in

them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God!

This is what I have learned: instead of redoubling my own efforts, trying and trying and trying again to do what I want to do – I simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in me. It is a matter of yielding not striving. I learn to trust God's action in me.

Galatians 2:19-21 (The Message) – What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God's grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

Galatians 3:1-5 (The Message) – You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the Cross was certainly set before you clearly enough. Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? *For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God.* If you weren't smart enough

or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up! Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?

Lord, these things are wonderful. The new translations say it just enough different to give it a different slant and confirm things I know. Continue to reveal your truth to me until it is part of my life and I am doing it fully.

2/2/08 – From earlier but along the same lines:

2006 – Many people would tell me that I just need to try harder to apply the things I know to change my thinking and behavior, that I need to make a decision to change and then carry it out. This is certainly the message the church world gives out.

I have tried harder so many times through the years, I have made multitudes of decisions, so many good intentions; my improvement has never caught up.

What does this mean? Why is this? I believe it is a sign that I have put my effort in the wrong things. If something hasn't worked right after 30 years of diligent application, there is something wrong – in what I know, maybe in the way I am doing it – but something isn't right if it isn't working.

All of the effort in the world without true knowledge will not get the job done. Self effort, even zealous, diligent self effort will never get me to my goals. Spiritual goals can only be reached by spiritual means.

Romans 10:2-3 – For I bear them witness that they have a [certain] zeal and enthusiasm for God, but it is not enlightened and according to [correct and vital] knowledge. For being *ignorant* of the righteousness that God ascribes and seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Notice they were ignorant not rebellious. You can have a perfect heart and all of the right intentions as well as great zeal and still not be able to carry it out. Will power is not enough.

They wanted to please God and did the best they knew based on their knowledge, they still they did not obey or submit themselves to God's righteousness and therefore didn't enjoy its results. They did what all thought was the right thing and in line with God's ways, but they were wrong. The church world as a whole was wrong then and can be now – if they don't teach what the Word does.

Romans 9:31-32 - Whereas Israel, though ever in pursuit of a law [for the securing] of righteousness (right standing with God), *actually did not succeed* in fulfilling the Law. For what reason? Because [they pursued it] not through faith, relying [instead] on the merit of their works [they did not depend on faith but on what they could do]. They have stumbled over the Stumbling Stone.

Phillips - ...but Israel, following the Law of righteousness, *failed to reach the goal* of righteousness. And why? *Because their minds were fixed on what they achieved instead of on what they believed.* They tripped over that very stone the scripture mentions: Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whoever *believes* on Him will not be put to shame.

They didn't succeed because they pursued the goal through relying on what they could do rather than depending on faith.

Their emphasis was on action rather than belief and relationship.

This is also the reason I have many times failed to reach my goal. I too have continued to stumble over the same Stumbling Stone – fixing my mind on what I achieve rather than what I believe, fixing my mind on myself, my abilities or inabilities, strengths or weaknesses rather than on God who has provided all that I need.

I have always had great zeal in the things of God, from the very day I came to Him. Why haven't I gotten further? Why haven't I reaped to the degree I have sowed? Could it be for the same reason.

I have listened to those around me rather than the Word and the witness of the Spirit in my heart and I have put all of my effort into living up to the current beliefs of the church world and trying to be what they say I should be, neglecting to do what my study and my heart were saying to me. How could I possibly prosper this way?

This is what most Christians continue to do. They stumble over this same stumbling stone. They desire to be and do all that God wants. They desire to do right. But they pursue their goals depending on what they can do rather than on faith in God and what He has done and what He will do in them and through them. It is much easier for a flesh creature to do what they can do in the flesh rather than use their zeal to learn of spiritual things and how to live and move and have their being in active fellowship with God and learn to live by faith.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me..

You can have all of the right intentions as well as great zeal and still not be able to carry it out and as a result miss out on God's best. Will power is not enough to overcome the flesh or change yourself.

They missed God by not knowing enough. They did what they knew. They did what they thought was right but still missed it. But God doesn't count ignorance as an excuse for not submitting to His truth. They didn't succeed because of ignorance.

The Law, God's requirements for us, are spiritual. They can never be accomplished through flesh power. Relying on the flesh we find ourselves not doing what we want to do but what we hate. We find ourselves not carrying out our good intentions. It is impossible for the flesh to accomplish spiritual things no matter how much we delight in the law of God and desire to do right.

For I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do but the evil I do not want I keep on doing.

When Paul talks about it not being him doing it but the sin which dwells in Him, He is talking about the force of sin which dwells in the flesh. It is there in every one of us and will always be there.

To overcome it, we must switch over to spirit power. We must live in and through the Spirit every day of life.

God did not leave us in this terrible predicament, through Christ there is no condemnation for us now – BECAUSE through Christ the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death (the law which dwells in my flesh causing me to not do what I want but instead do what I don't want). For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by this negative force (in our flesh), God did.

Now the righteous requirements of the law can be fully met in us when we do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. If we continue to live according to the flesh even in our efforts to overcome the flesh, we will continue to struggle through the pattern of Romans 7.

Even though God made the provision and we have received salvation, we can still miss out – if we don't learn how to switch our power over to the Spirit. If when we read Romans 7 we identify with it rather than Romans 8, that is a sign we are still living in the flesh.

Here is the same thing in different words spoken to me at a different time:

A major thing that has blocked me from the best that God has provided me in life is that I put too much responsibility for my growth on myself, too much faith in myself that it is up to me to improve myself and change myself into what I know I am made to be. Then when I fall short in living up to what I want and what I believe He wants, I feel worse about myself and draw away from the Lord in disappointment and frustration and guilt.

When there is something I see in the word that isn't in me yet, or something I am doing that I shouldn't, it is not a time to feel guilty and draw back but to rejoice and let Him become my strength in weakness, to let Him equip me with more of all I need to do His will – through faith. It means I get more of Him filling me and living in and through me.

The Lord has revealed the same things to me many times, and they worked while I worked them. But when I let them go and began to focus again on behavior or on myself rather than on Him and His provision, I slipped back into old ways. I need to pay closer attention than ever before so that these things no longer slip but become a part of my innermost being. Then it will work and continue to work.

When I look into my life to the times when things worked and when I made major progress, it was always when I was putting trust in the Lord to work in and through me. It was when I was aware of His love and acceptance more than my sin, shortcomings and inabilities. There was a door open into my heart. I let Him in.