***Spiritual Gifts, No. 2, Edification,
and the Spiritual Maturity Structure

RV22-01***

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 4:12 as our anchor point in our continuing study of the subject of Christian service. The Bible presents Christian service as a military operation in the face of God's enemy, Satan, and his demons. The angelic warfare is a spiritual conflict which requires training in order to fight this battle victoriously. You have to be trained to do spiritual combat, just like you have to be trained to do military warfare in the human realm. That is the thing that we've been studying for the last few sessions together. The pastor-teacher gift in the local church has been provided by the Lord Jesus Christ in order to give the Christian soldier this training for spiritual combat. So unless Christians have first been trained in the techniques of the Christian life; then alerted to what the combat equipment is; and, have been alerted to the use of the tactic of prayer, they cannot accomplish what God ultimately intends for every believer to do in the form of Christian service.

So what goes on in the local church is very important to you in terms of your internal well-being, and in terms of your internal joy. So the first point of equipping the saints is to be accomplished, above all, in the local church operation. Then comes, as a result of that, a second statement: "For the work of the ministry." The Greek indicates that this second "for" is the result of the fact that the first objective has been reached. So the second objective is for the work of divine good production – the work of the ministry; that is, that Christian soldiers are able to produce divine good works in their service for the Lord. Divine good works are produced by the Holy Spirit through a Christian soldier who is filled with the Spirit; that is, who is under the control of the Holy Spirit. These divine good works are produced in the angelic warfare by the exercise of one's spiritual gifts.

**Spiritual Gifts**

So we have been looking at these spiritual gifts. The first has been the gift of the evangelist. This is the recruiting officer who brings new believers into the local church operation. This is a particular specialized gift that certain Christians have in reaching the lost; in explaining the gospel; and, bringing them into a new life in Christ.

Then the second gift was the pastor-teacher gift for the training of these recruits for Christian combat and service. The third was the gift of exhortation – the capacity to move God's people toward goals that they should be pursuing. The fourth gift was the gift of ministry – the gift of performing certain works which are needed by individual believers in the local body. This gift of ministry incorporates, in all likelihood, all of our natural abilities which are sanctified to the Lord's use. The fifth was the gift of administration. This is the officer corps (the leadership provision) of the local church ministry. The sixth was the gift of giving – the capacity to be able to finance the Lord's work. This is not the ordinary giving that all of us are required to do, but a specialized kind of giving that a few people have been entrusted with performing. Of course it is a gift which is, like all these gifts, critically necessary in a local church operation.

To the extent that these gifts are present, there is freedom of ministry. To the extent that these gifts are lacking (as you can see, particularly in the gift of giving), that local ministry may have fantastic things on the ball and fantastic potential and fantastic capacities, but it's all nothing if the potential of finances is not there. If you're always scraping dollars together here and scraping dollars together there to try to get this done and that done, then the work just goes along at a considerably lower level of operation.

And as we stressed last time, the gift of giving sometimes is one of those gifts (as are all of these gifts) that can be neutralized in a believer. A believer who has this gift and sits on the money is a believer who's going to have the money jerked out from under him and placed in some other resource for the Lord's going to use it. So these are 6 of the gifts, and you may find yourself among these in your Christian soldier warfare. There are three more that we want to look at that we add to this.

**The Gift of Mercy**

Number seven is the gift of showing mercy. This is found in Romans 12:8. This is the ability to bring comfort to someone who is in spiritual or material misery of various kinds. It is great when you have Christians who can bring comfort when you're in misery. This is certainly a gift that is needed. It is more than Christian kindness to one who is in need. It is bringing new hope. It is bringing restoration of the believer to combat status. One of the things that the gift of mercy does is to get the troops up to the status where they're willing to do battle. It's for the morale of the believers. It's the troops who are worn and discouraged and wounded and beaten. Then somebody comes along with the gift of showing mercy, and rejuvenates their combat capacity.

This is a gift which is ready to use one's own resources to assist and to sustain a brother who has a critical need. This, of course, is one which is very important in times of physical affliction that Christians go through, or in the time of illness of one kind or another. The gift of showing mercy is a gift which is in high regard. This includes times of death and times of bereavement. This is the gift of showing mercy. Not everybody can do this. And some people try to be comforting, and they're not very good at it. There are some believers who have a wonderful knack for bringing comfort to those who are in misery.

**The Gift of Teaching**

Gift number eight is teaching. This is a gift that is referred to in Romans 12:7 and in 1 Corinthians 12:28. This is the ability to explain spiritual phenomena so people understand it and they can apply it. This is again, more than the duty which all Christians have to give a biblical reason for the faith that they hold to – the faith that they claim. The Bible says that each of us has to be able to explain to other people why we believe what we believe. You cannot explain that just on the basis of the fact that this is what you've always been taught. You must have a ground of authority for what you believe, and that has to be the Word of God. Every one of you are responsible to be able to say to people, "I believe this is right and this is wrong because here is what the Bible says. I believe that this is what God expects because this is what the Bible says. I believe that what the government is doing is wrong in this respect because this is what the Bible says." Now you're speaking with an authority that they cannot simply shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, that's somebody's opinion," because now it happens to be almighty God's viewpoint. So all of us are responsible for that.

However, there is a particular ability which some people have of being able to explain doctrine in such a way that people can understand, and can use it to a maximum degree. This is a gift of instilling this kind of divine viewpoint in other people.

Those who can teach secular subjects with a considerable degree of proficiency do not necessarily have the spiritual gift of teaching. You don't want to make that mistake. Sometimes people in Sunday school administration want a teacher for a class. What do they do? They say, "Here's this person. This person teaches school. This must be a wonderful teacher." They might be a wonderful teacher for the secular subject they're teaching, but a bomb when it comes to teaching a spiritual subject. It takes a special gift.

You cannot exercise this gift in the angelic conflict, of course, without a deep reservoir of "epignosis" knowledge – knowledge to which you have been positive in the form of Bible doctrine stored in your human spirit. You could have the gift of teaching and have a mentality full of ignorance, and that's what you'll teach. There are plenty of Bible's teachers, I guarantee you, that are doing exactly that. They have the gift of teaching, but they have ignorance in the human spirit, and that's all they can deliver to people. So it takes not only the gift, but it takes the material – the content.

**The Gift of Faith**

Then the ninth gift is the gift of faith. This gift is described in 1 Corinthians 12:9. This is the ability to act with uninhibited confidence in God – to trust God for great provisions and great victories in the spiritual battle, even though you don't see how it's going to happen. This is the ability to believe God's promises and doctrines with an unshakable conviction, and to have the courage to launch out into the unknown. Just because God says, "I want you to do it," you do it.

This gift is very important in a local congregation because sometimes God calls upon a group of people to move out in a certain direction to do something that is kind of scary. They have a great deal of hesitancy, and they're really not sure they should do it. At this point, somebody with the gift of faith stands up and says something, and it puts a peace, and a courage, and a determination on the whole group. It is the gift of faith carrying people along in the direction of what the Lord wants us to do. This is the capacity to trust in God which inspires other believers to cast themselves upon God's grace, and to move out.

**Temporary Gifts**

These are the gifts, basically, that are in operation in the age of grace in which you and I live today. At the early history of the church, in the early days before the New Testament Scriptures were completed, there were some gifts which were temporary which are no longer functioning today. There were some gifts where some believers had the ability, for example, to raise people from the dead. They went about exercising that particular gift, and you read about that in the Scriptures. Well, nobody has that gift today. That's a gift which was phased out, because it was a gift which had as its purpose proving that the New Testament Scriptures, which were being written, were true, and proving that the church was God's replacement program for the program with Israel, which was temporarily laid aside.

Of course, the gift of raising people from the dead had other expressions. It had the expression of healing physical illnesses. It was one and the same package deal. If a person was physically ill, you could heal his illness. If his physical illness had taken him to death, you could raise him back to life. That was one of the marks that one had the gift of healing, indeed – the fact that you could raise somebody from the dead. That, of course, doesn't exist today.

There was the gift for speaking in a language which was unknown to you as an individual. It was a language that was in operation extent in the day. It was a language that people spoke but which you yourself had not grown up speaking, and suddenly, miraculously, you could speak this foreign language. That again, was a proof gift – a gift to prove what the New Testament church was teaching, and to confirm that teaching as being from God.

There was also, of course, the gift of being able to discern spirits – to discern whether a thing was from God or whether it was from Satan, because until you had the Bible to match up against what people were saying, it was sometimes difficult to know whether this was from God or not. So you had the gift of discerning of spirits.

You also had the gift of interpretation. When you did have this gift of foreign languages being spoken, you also had to have somebody who could stand up and tell people what this person had said, and confirm what this person was saying. The person himself couldn't just say it because you wouldn't know whether he was telling the truth or not. So you had the gift of interpreting tongues, and we don't have that gift anymore.

There was the gift of knowledge which was a gift of the capacity for putting together doctrinal truths before we had them recorded in Scripture, and how to apply doctrinal truths.

The gift of wisdom, again, was the capacity to order doctrinal categories in an understandable form before the New Testament was written.

So all of these gifts that were temporary in nature were all related to communication of the New Testament Scripture. When that book was completed, with the writing of the book of the Revelation, then those gifts (at the end of the first century) were phase out. But these nine are in operation. They are what you and I use to engage in the angelic conflict.

**Identifying your Spiritual Gift**

That does raise the question of: how do you identify your combat gift? Here are a few ideas on that:

1. **Desire**

One indication that you have a certain gift is that you have a desire to serve in that particular capacity. You look at these nine gifts, and you say, "Now, I have a desire to serve with this particular gift." You cannot secure a spiritual ability by asking God for it. You are given these gifts sovereignly by God the Holy Spirit. The charismatics constantly make this mistake. I have sat in many charismatic meanings where people are standing up and telling about what gifts of the Spirit they're going to ask the Lord for, and the gifts they'd like to do. Well, that's utter nonsense. You don't get any of these spiritual gifts by praying for them. But if you have a desire to use it, that is kind of a clue that God has given you that particular gift. The desire, however, does not produce the gift. The lack of desire to engage in certain of these gift activities is a sign that you probably do not possess that gift. That wouldn't entirely close the door, but if that persists (that you do not have an inclination to want to serve in one of these gifts), it's an indication that you don't have it.

1. **Recognition by Others**

Further evidence is the recognition of one of these gifts in you by other believers. Fellow believers confirm that a Christian soldier does possess a specific divine ability. Others may see a spiritual gift in you before you even recognize it in yourself. Certainly, if other people do not recognize that you have a particular gift, then it is questionable that you have it. One of the places I've had occasion to see this evident is with the pastor-teacher gift. It is wrong for you to urge that a Christian should engage in a ministry that you are not sure he has the gift for. If you're going to ask a person to do a certain job in the Lord's ministry, you want to be sure that you feel at ease that the person has the gift to do that. Otherwise, you're wrong in asking the person to do that.

You may stifle spiritual ability also by wrong application of it. You may have a wonderful gift of teaching when it comes to teenagers, but you may want to do something that you think is little more glamorous, like teaching adults. So you try to use your gift of teaching to teach adults, and it doesn't go. You bomb out, and you wonder what's wrong: "I thought I had the gift of teaching." Well, you do, but you're trying to put it in the wrong place, and you neutralize it. There is a lot of arrogance in the exercise of our gifts that undermines the gifts that we have.

So first of all, your gift is identified by your having a desire to do it. Secondly, others look at you, and they recognize that you've got the ability to do this. You have this gift.

1. **Blessing**

The third evidence is that there is a blessing resulting from your exercise of the gift. There are results that are evident as you use your gift – results in the form of doing what these gifts were designed to do. God's plan for a Christian soldier is fruitfulness. John 15:8 tells us that. God's plan is for you to be fruitfully productive in the exercise of your gift. If you do not accomplish divine good results with the exercise of your gift, it's probably a sign that you don't have the gift. Or if you do, you're out of fellowship, and it's not functioning. So one cannot accomplish specific divine good results without having the necessary spiritual gifts. If you're not producing the results someplace along the line, you should say to yourself, "I just don't have the gift to do this, and I have to back off, and I have to move in a different direction, instead of trying to persist in an area where you do not have the gift."

**Geographic Location**

There are certain hazards to your divine good production through your spiritual gifts in the angelic warfare, and I want to call those to your attention also. One of them is that you use your gift in the wrong geographic location. The apostle Paul was prevented on occasion from going to certain geographic locations to minister with his gifts. He was specifically told not to go to certain places. If he insisted on going, the result would have been defeat in the angelic warfare. We have one example where the apostle Paul was told, "Don't go to Jerusalem." But he insisted on going to Jerusalem, and the result was that he was thrown into an imprisonment that lasted for four years: two years in Caesarea; and, two years in Rome. Here were four years out of his ministry, because he insisted on going to minister in a geographic location that the Lord said, "I don't want you going there." So you have to be careful in terms of your geographic location when it comes to exercising your gift in the angelic warfare, or your fruitfulness will be greatly reduced.

Christians, for this reason, must not move from one geographic location to another without divine permission. You do not just get up someday and say, "Hey, I'm going to move from this city to this city. I'm going to move from this state to this state. I'm going to move from this coast to this coast." You don't just do that. First of all, you say, "If I move, what will be the effect on my spiritual well-being: on the training program in which I'm engaged in my local church; on the ministry in which I am engaged; and, on the use of my particular spiritual gifts and the circumstances in which I find myself. I guarantee you that you must be able to say, "When I move here, I will have just as good training spiritually; I will have just as effective ministry; and, I will have spiritually what I have here. The Lord is transferring me." If you cannot say that you have the equivalent, then God is not moving you. You're moving yourself. And you're moving yourself for job opportunity, because you're a slave to some organization.

You've come along and you've spent all these years in college, and you learned to be an engineer or something. You've work for this company, and suddenly this company comes along and says, "Now we want you to move from here to here. And you have two options. You can suddenly move from a spiritual oasis to a spiritual desert where the job is leading you, or you can tell your employer, "Hang it on your nose. I don't have permission from the front office to move, so I can't go. God hasn't allowed me to move." In this case, you must be also prepared for them to say, "Well, God hasn't allowed us to keep you on our payroll." Then you are prepared to move off their payroll. I've seen them where the company says, "You're going to move." And they've stopped, and they've looked this over, and they're said, "What's this going to mean to me and my children; to my spiritual well-being; and, to my eternal rewards?" And God did not say to them, "I'm going to give you the equivalent over here." And they refused to go. Some of them lost their job. When they lost their jobs, they got better jobs.

Some of them got so shaky that they were so fearful that they had to go and stay in that business that they'd gone to college for and they'd learned all these years. And they moved. And after they moved, it has been interesting to see how they keep reaching back to the old days. In one way or another, they try to keep shoving their children with some kind of a contact back where they once knew spiritual things. They try to get tapes on where they once were being fed the Word of God, and where they were prospering. They try to get some kind of contact to hang onto what they once had, and they reminisce about their halcyon days in spiritual things now and their dearth of nothing. How did that happen? Because they moved. They changed their geographic location, and their spiritual gift would not function because they changed for the wrong reason.

Spiritual reason is the first reason you have to move. If you move for any other reason, you're going to be sorry. The move may not be very distant. It may be just a little bit of a move, and God is going to clamp right down on you, and you're going to stay throttled spiritually until you've backed yourself off and come back. And I've seen people do that. I've seen them go, and I've seen them come back and say, "Whew, boy, I won't ever do that again. Was that an experience? And I learned my lesson. No more of that for me." But the trouble was, I could have told them that before they moved. Everybody knows what I'm going to say ahead of time. This is a definitive ministry. So they know that they shouldn't ask me certain things if they don't want to hear the (wrong) answer. They know they're going to hear wrong answers as far as what they want to hear. So I notice they're careful enough not to ask me, but afterwards they don't mind asking me, and I say, "Yes, that's what I could have told you to do."

Sometimes people move for climate. Sometimes they move for economic advantage. They think they're going to make more money someplace else. Economic reasons can be very quickly undermined by God. And if you move for that reason, they will be. Or there may be some lifestyle that's attractive to you. Be careful of any kind of reason. Don't try to exercise your gift in the wrong geographic location.

You can neutralize your spiritual combat by the erratic use of your gift – abandoning the battle under adverse circumstances. Many times we've got hotshot Christians who are going to serve the Lord in some capacity. They get in there, and they're starting off, and it's all wonderful and exciting. Then the grind comes in: "Boy, what's this? Another weekly meeting? I just went to a meeting last week with this club. We've got another meeting this week? Yeah, and another one next week, too." Here are all these preparations and deadlines to meet. And then the battle is no longer so glamorous. Then they quit using their gifts. They have the gift for it, but they drop out of using it. They have the capacity to do some ministry that needs to be performed. They've got the gift of ministering, and they do it, and then they drop out. Then somebody has to come out and say, "Hey, how are you doing on this project? How's this? Where do we stand on this? How's this going?" We see this business of needing repeated prodding by somebody to keep serving, and to keep getting the job done. That devastates your spiritual gift – erratic use, affected by various factors in your staying on the job. That is bad soldiering.

Nobody wants to go in combat with soldiers that have to keep being reminded that we are in a battle, and the soldiers keep wandering off. How would you like to go into combat with some soldier who gets in the midst of the battle, and because he's a geologist, he sees some interesting rock, and so he stops, and he's fiddling around there looking at these rocks, while the shells and the fire are flying, and the bullets are flying around you? The battle is intense, and this guy is sidetracked with playing with his rocks there. It's like he's lost his marbles or something. You say, "I don't want that kind of a guy around."

And yet that's what we have in Christians. What are we going to do here? Who do I want to go into combat with? Well, I guarantee you you're not going to pick some person that you know is going to be there, and then get sidetracked, and you're carrying the double load. Then pretty soon he comes back in, and now he's doing the job again. And then pretty soon he's out again. This is devastating to your spiritual warfare when you're erratic in the use of your gifts.

This often happens because you're looking for praise; because you're looking for recognition; because you're looking for appreciation; or, worst of all, because you're looking for how devoted the other Christians are. When you see that the other soldiers aren't doing the battle, you kind of say, "Well, I'm not going to do it. Man, I've done this so many times, I'll let somebody else do it." And because other people are not faithful, then you become unfaithful. That's bad business.

You can also destroy your gift by trying to serve in the wrong situation. You want to meet any need which you happen to see is present. There are many needs in the Lord's work which you're not called to meet.

You want to meet something that you think is glamorous, and you'd enjoy serving in that capacity. You want to use your gifts with the wrong age level. That will neutralize you. You're serving in the wrong situation. You can be neutralized by desiring personal glory, and by being motivated by a lust for praise and for prestige in the public eye. You want to be able to credit yourself with the successful production of some divine good instead of recognizing that it is God who has accomplished it. You love to be able to get up and give testimonies of great success stories. Those are wonderful "bragimonies." So they serve so that they can get up and give these wonderful success stories.

You can neutralize your gift if you're a rebel against lines of authority. You don't consult those who are leading an operation. You can see where this goes in battle. We are forever having Christians who are going off on their own in the local church operation to do something they think is wonderful and good, and that they think is a decision that should be made. Very often they're making it with limited information. Instead of consulting with the authorities above them, who've got the whole picture, they go off half-cocked. Pursuing services that one has a personal fancy for is what they're doing. They're rebels against authority and they have a particular interest in some particular area of the work, so that's what they pursue. So we have Christians who often will pour their money into getting something done that they happen to have a particular interest in, while other things are left without support. This is the arrogance of independence, and the result is lack of coordination in the angelic conflict.

Another problem is using your natural abilities in place of your spiritual gifts. You impose your natural talents on a local work, and you call it Christian service. You must be careful not to do that – not to use your natural abilities in carrying something through, rather than the fact that God is carrying you along with your spiritual gift. Functioning on the old sin nature is what we're talking about, instead of Holy Spirit enablement. Preoccupation with natural gifts in spiritual combat will leave your spiritual gifts neglected, and thus the battle is lost.

The second objective was the achieving of divine good production.

**Edification (Building up)**

Then Ephesians 4:12 has a third use of the word "for." This word "for" is again (just as before) the Greek word "eis," which means "unto," indicating again "unto a certain specific purpose." This is the second objective, which is the result of having achieved the first objective of equipping the saints unto the purpose of edifying. This is "oikodome." This word "oikodome" means "the act of building" – "the things of building up." It is used in the New Testament in a figurative sense of edification or of spiritual growth. What this is referring to is erecting a spiritual maturity structure in the soul. The purpose of training in the local church for you as a Christian soldier is so that you can build a spiritual maturity structure in the soul.

It says that this is being done, "For the building up of the body of Christ." The body of Christ is the church. Ephesians 1:20-21 tell us that the body of Christ is the church. This refers to the body of which Jesus Christ is the head. Christian soldiers making up the church are to grow into spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is important because it produces maximum combat efficiency.

**The Spiritual Maturity Structure**

As you know, the spiritual maturity structure can be viewed in the form of a pentagon – a five-sided figure. It has five basic qualities that make up the defense and combat factors of the Christian soldier. Spiritual maturity structure in the soul produces emotional stability when you are under the pressure of combat. This spiritual maturity structure is actually the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ being reflected. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, the apostle Paul is thanking God for five qualities that he experiences – five unpleasantnesses. He is thanking the Lord for these because these make him a strong and mature Christian. Let's look at them.

1. **Grace Orientation**

First of all, you have the quality of grace orientation. 2 Peter 3:18 and Hebrews 13:9 speak about this. The solution for evil which separates man from God is provided by God's grace, apart from human merit or from human works. People who are grace-oriented know how to forgive and forget immediately in dealing with the injury and the threat that they have from others. It's pretty easy to see in other people, as well as yourself. When you see people who cannot forgive and forget an injury – real or imagined – whatever else you know about them, you know that they do not have grace orientation. Grace orientation means that you know how to rest yourself upon the character of God (all that He is), and to know that whatever comes into your life is going to be channeled through God's character and through God's essence. The Christian life is lived by the power of God's grace enablement, not by human doing.

When you are grace-oriented, you look to the Lord to accomplish for you. This is an attitude of "live and let live" as unto the Lord, so you respect the privacy of other people. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul thanks God for infirmities. The word "infirmities" means "weakness." It is our weaknesses which test and mature us so that we come into a sense of dependence upon God, and it develops our grace orientation. When Paul says, "I thank God for my weaknesses," he was talking about the fact that it led him to develop his grace orientation. Our weaknesses cause us to know how much we need God to come through in our behalf.

1. **The Mastery of the Details of Life**

A second factor is called the mastery of the details of life. Luke 12:15 and 1 Timothy 6:6 refer to this quality of the Christian soldier's maturity. This is the quality of holding spiritual things in greater esteem than material things. The material things of life are necessary. You do need food; you do need shelter; and, you do need clothes. They are nevertheless temporal in nature. Bible doctrine and God's will are given top priority in one's life. You trust in God to meet the material needs. We learn how to be content with what God provides, and we learn how to not be upset when He takes things away from us. We learn how, in short, not to be greedy people. That is a mastery of the details of life. We learn how not to be covetous. Those are corrosive qualities in the life of the Christian soldier: covetousness; and, greediness. And they shoot down many a Christian.

In Corinthians 12:10, Paul uses the word "necessities" in speaking about the mastery of the details of life. This problem of his necessities trains him to have a perspective on temporal things.

1. **A Relaxed Mental Attitude**

A third quality is a relaxed mental attitude. We find the relaxed mental attitude in Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:15. This refers to a mind which is free from mental attitude sins such as anger; self-pity; envy; pride; hatred; vengeance; and, so on. It's a person who is at ease physically and mentally with people; with himself; and, with the circumstances of life. This is a person who can take things in stride, and not become part of the problem. If you have a relaxed mental attitude, you won't forever be becoming part of every jerk's problem that comes along. Every Christian that comes along whining about something that he's dissatisfied with, you, instead of standing aloof from that problem, and maybe helping to give some guidance and direction to his whining and to his bellyaching about something he's distressed over, you become part of his problem. And you jump in and whine and bellyache and struggle with him.

You can see how much we need a relaxed mental attitude. That's not too hard to notice when somebody doesn't have that. It's pretty easy to spot the characters who become part of the problem instead of saying, "Now look. You've got a problem, and I don't want any part of it. I don't even want to smell like your problem. And I'm not going to get involved in your problem. I'll give you some advice. I'm not in it with you. Don't expect me to champion your cause with you." You learn, when you have a relaxed mental attitude, to turn all your problems over to the Lord, and you faith rest them. You wait upon Him in confidence for guidance and for solution, because you know He's going to come through. When you have a relaxed mental attitude, boy, you can just lean back and take it easy. And you can let the battle be the Lord's. You have a spirit of gratitude to the Lord for His provisions.

When you have a relaxed mental attitude, you're able to respect the privacy and the volition of other people. You're not the kind of a pushy character that's always trying to get people straightened out with your verbal harassment. Wives need to remember this. Peter told women, "Don't try to straighten out your husbands by verbal harassment." Some women never learn this. Every time they want to straighten out their husbands, they start yapping. It doesn't work. So the next time you'd think they'd say, "Let's see. That's not what I want to do. That's counterproductive. That doesn't work." But the next time they don't like something, they start yapping again. And Peter says, "Listen, ladies, I'm telling you, you straighten this guy out without your words. You're not going to straighten him out with your bellyaching words." They say, "OK. That's wonderful. I love the word. Praise God." But they go right back into it. They never seem to learn.

Now, a relaxed mental attitude will help overcome that. A relaxed mental attitude will enable you to say, "Peter, man, you're right. This jerk is not going to change by my words. It's going to take a different approach. This is counterproductive. It hasn't worked in the past. It's not going to work in the future. I'm not going to be a hen pecker. I'm not going to peck every time, because that's not going to do it." That's what a relaxed mental attitude is all about. It's a terrific quality. It keeps you from getting pushy and nosing in other people's volition and in other people's problems with the Lord. It enables you to be a help rather than a hindrance.

In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul uses the word "reproaches" in referring to the quality of a relaxed mental attitude. This is a quality that tests us and matures us so that we leave the battle with the Lord.

1. **The Capacity to Love**

Then there is the capacity to love. We have this in John 13:34 and Colossians 3:14. This is the quality of mental attitude goodwill free from bitterness. The facets of the soul are free from spiritual callouses, so we are able to respond: in love to God; in love to your husband or wife; and, in love to your friends. Not everyone has mental attitude goodwill. It's a quality that must be developed in a Christian soldier. This is a quality that pursues the welfare of the object of our mental goodwill, and it pursues it at personal sacrifice. You're willing to sacrifice yourself for this person. It provides capacity to so appreciate God; to so appreciate your mate; and, to so appreciate your friends that you'll be loyal to them no matter what. That's a capacity for loving. The mental attitude love, of course, is the product of Bible doctrine stored in the human spirit. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Jesus was saying, "You can't love Me until you know My commandments. Then you can love Me. Knowing My commandments, and being positive toward them, enables you to love Me.

Mental attitude love: a Christian soldier in combat certainly needs to know how to have this possessing his thinking. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul uses the word "persecutions" in reference to this quality. Persecutions strain Christians in mental attitude goodwill in the face of evil treatment.

1. **Happiness**

Finally, there's one more equality, and that is happiness. John 15:11 and Philippians 4:4 speak of this. This is the quality of peace in the Christian soldier's soul in the midst of the angelic warfare. There's a joy within which is based on the filling of the Holy Spirit and the daily intake of doctrine. This is a joy which is not dependent on people; on circumstances; or, on things, so it does not dissipate. When people speak about happiness, they mean happiness as connected to some person: "This person makes me happy. This girl I'm in love with makes me happy. When she won't be in love with me, then she makes me unhappy." That's not the kind of happiness we're talking about here. This is a happiness apart from persons and apart from your circumstances: "My circumstances are happy. I'm here on this boat. I'm here on the Gulf of Mexico. I have a fishing line in the water. I am catching fish. I am happy." Or, "I am not catching a single fish. I am not happy." What kind of happiness is that that depends on a fish that's got a worm on the end of a line, with another worm holding the line at the other end? That's the world's kind of happiness.

It's not dependent on the things you possess; your circumstances; or, the people. This is something that is a quality within that is part of the fruit of the Spirit that God the Holy Spirit produces. It stabilizes your emotions so that this mentality of your soul is governed by doctrine. So you're not fluctuating between depression and exhilaration. This is the capacity to enjoy life; to express love; and, to remain stable under adversity in the spiritual warfare. This is the capacity of inner happiness. It is a quality of peace that only God can produce.

In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul describes this quality with the word "distresses." These develop an inner joy in spite of external pressures.

There is one thing more. After you've built up this pentagon of defense and of attack in your soul as a Christian soldier, you can lose it, practically overnight. And boy, I have seen people who have lost it practically overnight. You do it this way. It starts with being negative toward divine viewpoint. You're negative toward divine viewpoint with the doctrine you've been taught, or with a view that's been expressed in the ministry that God approves for you, that you don't think is right, but God says, "That's what I stand for." This is any negative attitude toward a divine viewpoint. So when you go negative on what your pastor-teacher says; toward what your Bible teacher says; toward what your church administration is doing that your congregation votes on; or, so on, you better be very sure that you're right and they're wrong. That is a dangerous position to start. Once you think that some decision that was made was a wrong decision, boy, you better be very sure that God says it's a wrong decision, because you have started on a dangerous trail.

That first flicker of negative volition creates a vacuum in your soul. The vacuum in your soul, that Ephesians 4 describes for us, is a vacuum that brings in darkness spiritually. It blocks out spiritual enlightenment. When spiritual enlightenment is blocked out, a vacuum is created in the soul, and consequently, human viewpoint is drawn in. A great deal of false opinion and misconceptions are drawn into the soul. The result is that your mind; your emotions; and, your will become calloused. I'm not going into a lot of detail here now, but the facets of your soul become hardened. That's what Ephesians 4 tells us as a result of this human viewpoint that is drawn into the soul. The Christian soldier then becomes insensitive to divine guidance in the midst of the angelic conflict. He loses his perspective of the evil that he's fighting. He is losing his perspective of the deception of Satan, and he becomes a spiritual casualty.

The result is that his spiritual maturity structure that he's built up in his soul takes such a beating that it becomes incapacitated in its functioning, and it is practically destroyed. The tragic thing about this is that you want to remember that maximum accomplishments in the spiritual warfare occurs when the spiritual maturity structure is intact, and built to its strongest maximum level. That's called super grace status. You do not reach super grace status overnight. If you permit the spiritual maturity structure to be destroyed, it takes time to build it up. While it is building up, you're out of maximum combat effectiveness, and you're out of maximum rewards for your living. And those days that you live under those conditions are days that are gone forever. You will never be able to restore them. You'll never be able to possess them. You have only so many days. This is why the Bible warns you not to live in such a way that God cuts your life short. Why would you die before your time? What's so bad about that if you're going to heaven? I'll tell you what's so bad about that. The rewards that you lose in heaven because you did not have the time of your life that was required to invest in those rewards.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)