

ISOLATION OF SIN

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins]. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

THE LAWS OF SPIRITUALITY AND CARNALITY

But when they [scribes and Pharisees] persisted in asking Him [Jesus], He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7)¹

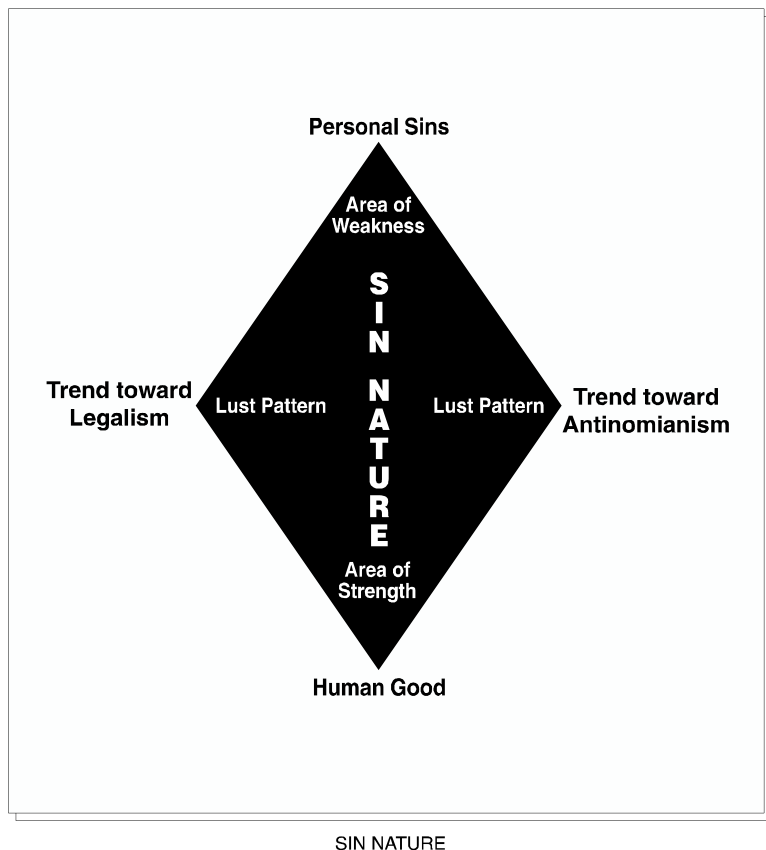
AFTER THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SPOKE these words, there were no rock throwers. Even the self-righteous, religious scribes and Pharisees who were present on that day understood that every member of the human race has sinned and failed the Lord (Rom. 3:23).

Suppose the Lord had said, “Let him who is without sin serve me in the Christian life.” Who could meet that standard for service or

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures in this book are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB). Those marked KJV are quoted from the King James Version; those marked “corrected translation” are my translations of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Bracketed commentary clarifies the meaning, correlates the passage with the discussion at hand, or reflects exegesis taught in Bible class lectures. Recordings of Bible classes are available without charge from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries.

production? The Lord would have no ambassadors on earth! Therefore, God in His matchless grace² made provision for all believers to overcome sin and the sin nature so they could serve Him and be His representatives in the devil's world (John 12:31; 14:30).

The sin nature is the center of man's rebellion toward God and is variously designated in Scripture as "sin" (a singular noun—Rom. 7:13),



2. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind on the basis of the saving work of Christ on the cross. Mankind can never accomplish or achieve the approbation or favor of God through his own efforts, work, energy, or morality.

“flesh” (Gal. 5:16), and “old man” (Eph. 4:22, KJV). The sin nature was acquired by Adam at his fall and is subsequently transmitted genetically by the male through procreation (Gen. 5:3; 1 Cor. 15:22). With the exception of the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, the sin nature is an integral part of every human being that resides in the cell structure of the body (Rom. 6:6; 7:5, 18). At the moment of physical birth when God imputes soul life, He also imputes Adam’s original sin to the genetically formed sin nature (Rom. 5:12).³ Therefore, every person is born physically alive, but spiritually dead. The sin nature is sovereign over human life (Rom. 6:12). The sin nature is composed of an area of weakness, the source of temptation for personal sins (Heb. 12:1); an area of strength, which generates human good (Isa. 64:6; Heb. 6:1); a trend toward legalism, which is self-righteousness (Rom. 7:7); a trend toward antinomianism, which is licentiousness (Gal. 5:19–21); and a lust pattern, which is the motivation toward either trend (Eph. 2:3).⁴

Your sin nature is the source of temptation to sin, but your *volition* is the source of sin. The sin nature cannot make you sin, it can only tempt you to sin. When you choose to succumb to the sin nature, you cannot live the Christian life or serve God. The sin nature will dominate and control your life unless you understand and apply the principles of rebound and isolating your sins. These principles are based on the laws of spirituality and carnality.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free [ἐλευθερώω, *eleutheroo*] from the law of sin [nature] and of [spiritual] death. (Rom. 8:2)

The first law is the law of spirituality, or “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” You cannot be spiritual until first you have believed in Christ by faith alone (Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8–9).⁵ At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit enters you into union with Christ

3. R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 60–70. Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

4. Thieme, *The Plan of God* (2003), 9–16; *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993), 6–9.

5. See pages 24–25.

through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).⁶ You have a new position “in Christ.” You are a “new spiritual species” (2 Cor. 5:17, corrected translation), a personal possession of God forever (1 Pet. 2:9–10).

This *positional* truth has two parts: retroactive positional truth and current positional truth. In retroactive positional truth you are identified with Christ’s spiritual death,⁷ physical death, and burial which signifies the rejection of human good and evil.⁸ Your old self, the sin nature, was “crucified with Him” (Rom. 6:6). Your identification with Christ breaks the rulership of Satan and the sovereignty of the sin nature acquired through spiritual death (Rom. 6:1–4). You retroactively share in the victory of the Lord on the cross. Current positional truth is identification with Christ in resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of the Father. You are declared righteous (Rom. 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:21) and have a secure position in union with Christ (Rom. 8:38–39). You share all that He is and has in His exalted position in heaven. When God takes away the power of the sin nature by retroactive positional truth, He substitutes by current positional truth, positional sanctification⁹—the *potential* to live the unique spiritual life with all its blessings.

Your new position in Christ is represented in the diagram by the ‘top circle,’ which depicts your eternal relationship. You can never get out of the top circle. Also, at the moment of salvation you are

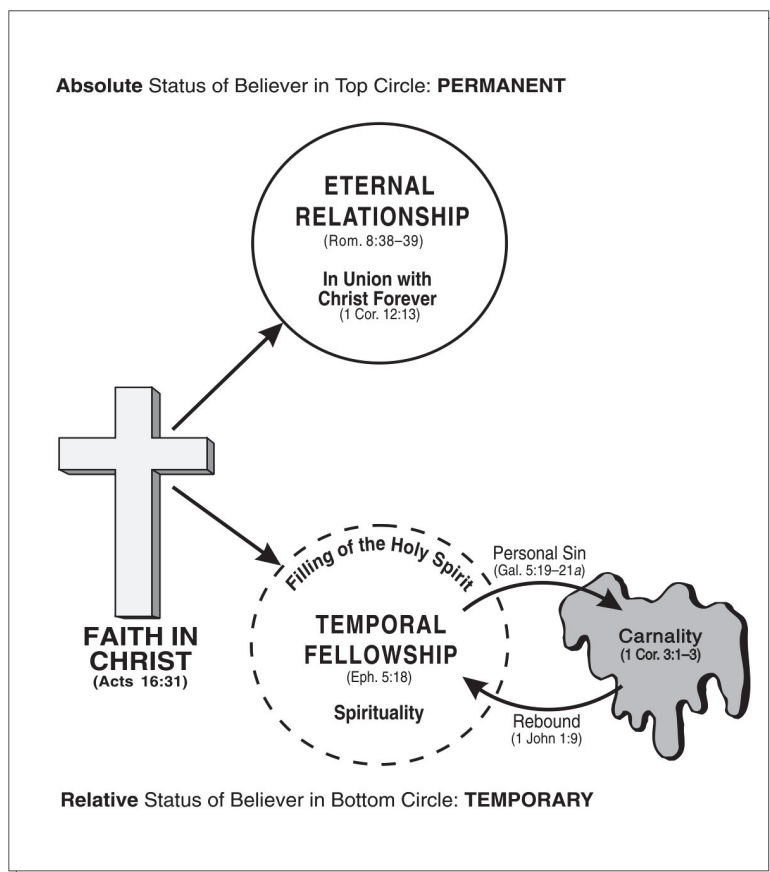
6. Thieme, *The Integrity of God*, 118–26; *Tongues* (2000), 30–36.

7. The spiritual death of Christ is defined as His separation from God the Father as He was being judged for our sins. God could not have a relationship with Christ as He was bearing our sins in His body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24).

8. Human good is the benevolent production or deeds of the believer who is in carnality, under the control of the sin nature. The good deeds of a carnal Christian are indistinguishable from good deeds performed by an unbeliever, have no spiritual value, and are not rewardable in heaven. See Thieme, *Reversionism* (2000), 14–17.

9. Sanctification is a technical theological term meaning to be set apart to God for a special purpose. Every believer is set apart in three ways extending from the point of salvation to the eternal state (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:12). Phase one, *positional sanctification*, refers to the moment the baptism of the Spirit enters the believer into union with Christ so that he has the assets to grow to spiritual maturity and serve the Lord. Phase two, *experiential sanctification*, is the believer’s progress toward spiritual maturity and to actually serve the Lord during his life. Phase three, *ultimate sanctification*, is the believer in resurrection body.

entered into temporal fellowship, or spirituality, represented by the ‘bottom circle.’



TOP AND BOTTOM CIRCLES

As long as there is no unconfessed sin in your life, you remain in temporal fellowship with God and filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). When you are filled with the Spirit, you are spiritual and you walk “in the light” (1 John 1:7). In the state of spirituality you are liberated from the control of the sin nature. The aorist active indicative

of *eleutheroo*, “has set you free,” indicates that under the filling of the Holy Spirit, “the law of the Spirit of life” goes into effect and is the absolute authority in your life (Rom. 8:2a). However, the moment you sin you lose the filling of the Holy Spirit, are out of fellowship, and are back under the control of the sin nature, or the “law of sin” (Rom. 8:2b). Rebound is the only procedure of recovering spirituality after you sin (1 John 1:9),¹⁰ so if you fail to rebound, the “law of sin” remains in force.

This second law, “the law of sin [nature] and of [spiritual] death,” refers to the sin nature that has produced spiritual death in the human race since the time of Adam.¹¹ Faith alone in Christ alone removes the penalty of sin and spiritual death (John 3:3, 15), but the sin nature still resides in your body after salvation. When you succumb to temptation and sin, you are in the state of carnality (1 Cor. 3:1–3) and you “walk in the darkness” (1 John 1:6). When you allow the sin nature to control your soul, your life becomes miserable and your production is stifled. You are useless to the Lord. You are liable for discipline from the Lord.

One of the signs of our salvation is divine discipline for sin:

FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES [skins alive with a whip] EVERY SON
[male or female] WHOM HE RECEIVES. (Heb. 12:6)

God loves us with an infinite amount of love. When God disciplines His children, it is never His intention to inflict torture. His discipline is never capricious: “For He does not afflict willingly, Or grieve the sons of men” (Lam. 3:33). His discipline is a demonstration of His love and is always for our benefit in training and blessing.

When you allow unconfessed sin to keep you in perpetual discipline, it is impossible for you to grow up spiritually, to produce divine

10. See Appendix A. See also Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

11. The spiritual death of the human race is separation from God in a state of sin (Eph. 2:1) due to divine condemnation at the Fall. Adam’s original sin resulted in his immediate loss of relationship and fellowship with God. The imputation of the penalty of Adam’s original sin to the genetically formed sin nature at birth in subsequent generations results in every person, except Jesus Christ, being born physically alive but spiritually dead (Rom. 5:12, 18; 6:23).

good,¹² or to function as an ambassador for Christ. However, when you recognize a sin in your life and confess it to God the Father, what happens? You are forgiven, and your discipline, if it continues at all, is turned to blessing.

Spirituality and carnality are absolute states. They are in constant conflict within you. Either you are filled with the Spirit or you are not. Spirituality and carnality are, therefore, mutually exclusive in phase two.¹³ If you are to execute the Christian way of life, the law of spirituality must supersede the law of carnality in your soul.

A Third Law

In Romans 8:3, a third law is introduced: the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament Law was “holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12) because it was from God. The Law had a definite purpose, providing the moral, spiritual, and civil principles for the nation of Israel. The Law presented the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and explained His role as Savior through the ritual of the Levitical offerings and the construction and furnishings of the Tabernacle.¹⁴ The Law was powerless to free man from sin, it could only point the way to salvation. The Law was “weak,” limited by the residence of the sin nature in every human being. This weakness is manifested by man’s self-righteous and legalistic distortions in trying to keep the Law in order to gain salvation and favor with God. The Law was never designed to provide salvation or spirituality for mankind. Jesus Christ, sent by God the Father, is the only efficacious “*offering* for sin.” Not only was He judged for sin as our perfect substitute, but He also destroyed the power of the sin nature through His spiritual death and resurrection.

For what the [Mosaic] Law could not do, weak as it was
through [limited by] the flesh [the sin nature], God [the

12. Divine good is any Christian service or deed performed by a believer under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Only divine good, which has intrinsic and eternal value, is acceptable to the perfect standards of God and receives recognition and reward in heaven.

13. Phase one is salvation; phase two is the Christian way of life, which begins immediately after salvation and continues until either death or the Rapture; phase three is eternity.

14. Thieme, *Levitical Offerings* (2004).

Father—author of the divine plan] *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh [humanity] and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned [judged] sin in the flesh. (Rom. 8:3)

Christ fulfilled the Law. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” In His incarnation, Christ demonstrated the perfect righteousness demanded by the Law. For hundreds of years, the Law had been waiting for someone to keep every jot and tittle, yet no one ever could. The presence of the sin nature in every member of the human race precluded even the possibility of living a sinless life. But here was One, born of a virgin, without a sin nature, without imputed or personal sin, who came into the world as true humanity and undiminished deity in one Person,¹⁵ and lived a perfect life. The Law is “fulfilled in us” because His perfect righteousness is imputed to us at the moment of salvation.

In order that the requirement of the Law [perfect standard demanded by the Mosaic Law] might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to [the control of] the flesh [sin nature], but according to [the control of] the Spirit. (Rom. 8:4)

Freedom from the power and control of the sin nature comes through the death and resurrection of Christ. Freedom is accomplished when we believe in Christ by faith alone, but that freedom is experienced in our lives only through the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit. “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are *not* under the [Mosaic] law” (Gal. 5:18, italics added). This filling of the Holy Spirit is the divine provision for temporal fellowship, for comprehending Bible doctrine, and for walking “according to [the control of] the Spirit,” which is executing the spiritual life (John 14:26; 16:13; Gal. 5:16). We can have victory over the sin nature only as long as we live under “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

15. The union of two natures, divine and human, in the one person of Jesus Christ is called the hypostatic union. These natures are inseparably united without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal.

OPERATING UNDER THE LAW OF SPIRITUALITY

To operate under the law of spirituality, there are three procedures you must follow when you sin:

1. Rebound;
2. Isolate past sins;
3. Keep moving.

Rebound

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins [to God the Father], He is faithful [He always does it because He is immutable] and righteous to forgive us [to blot out completely] our sins [the personal sins we are aware we commit] and to cleanse [purify] us from all unrighteousness [sins we commit or wrongdoing of which we are not even aware]. (1 John 1:9)

How can a righteous God forgive unrighteous human beings? The justice and righteousness of God were satisfied or propitiated when all the sins of mankind were imputed to Jesus Christ on the cross and judged. “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us [continuously] from all sin” (1 John 1:7b). The blood of Christ refers to His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross.¹⁶ The work of the “blood” is twofold: the forgiveness from all presalvation sins at the moment of salvation, and the forgiveness and purifying from postsalvation sins of the carnal believer at the point of rebound.

Because of the work of Christ on the cross, God is absolutely just and fair in forgiving sins. When you simply name your sins, you are citing sins that have already been judged and are no longer a barrier between you and God. You are not only back in fellowship, but as of that moment—for one second, at least—you are filled with the Spirit. But before you can take another breath, you may be out of fellowship again because of failure in the second step.

16. Thieme, *The Blood of Christ* (2002).

Isolate Past Sins

Have you ever observed a chain smoker? He lights one cigarette from the other, never using a match. That is the practice of many believers; they are ‘chain sinners,’ lighting one sin upon another. They claim that rebound does not work! Well, of course rebound does not work for them! They sin, confess the sin, and then they start worrying about that sin as though God had not forgiven them. The old sin lights up a new sin of worry, anxiety, guilt, self-pity, bitterness, or revenge so that these carnal believers never advance in their Christian life. They jump in and out of the bottom circle, never staying in fellowship long enough to know whether rebound works or not.

If you get out of fellowship because of a sin already forgiven, you have just started chain-sinners. This disastrous habit will keep you continually out of fellowship—not for the original sin, but for the current sin that grew out of failure to isolate the first sin.¹⁷

Perhaps you have some adversity or crisis in your life that you blame on a sin in your past—a confessed sin and therefore, a forgiven sin. We will call that ancient sin the ‘skeleton in the closet,’ and everyone has one. If you associate all discipline with your skeleton, you are out of fellowship and will remain there as long as you cling to that earlier sin. You will be confused and miserable. You will go through life experiencing discipline, pressures, trials, heartaches, all kinds of problems but never understanding why. You may even try to alleviate remorse over that bygone sin through some system of penance. You may try confessing to a friend, to a psychologist, to a pastor—anything to obliterate the guilt of your past sin.

It is amazing what a long memory you have. You remember incidents for years that God has already forgiven and graciously blotted out. You look backwards, dreading the consequences of your old skeleton. You assume this sin is the worst one you ever committed and that God could never forgive such a heinous failure. On this assumption, you remain out of fellowship, ignoring the present sins that are truly responsible for your distress. In fact, your suffering actually originates from harboring a guilt complex, or gossip, or bitterness, or jealousy, or

17. See Appendix B.

envy, or hatred, or any other devastating sin.¹⁸ Because you keep returning to your skeleton and fail to isolate the old sin, the problem is never resolved.

You go in and out of fellowship, piling up sins. You never experience anything but discipline. This chronic carnality triggers some type of adverse reaction, such as discouragement, disillusion, or negative volition toward Bible doctrine. Before you know it, you are launched into the first stages of reversionism.¹⁹

As soon as you confess a sin, you are commanded to forget it. You have put your problem in the hands of the Lord. The problem no longer belongs to you! Since God has blotted out your sin, what right do you have to look back, to cry, or to feel guilty about it? When you take the sin back and fret over it, you only create self-induced misery. If you want to live this way, it is your business; but you should realize that worrying about your past sins or having a guilt complex only perpetuates carnality. You must rebound and isolate your sins before reversionism reaches the latter stages where recovery is far more difficult.

Once you have confessed *any* sin, your greatest challenge is to stay in the bottom circle. Only by isolating your sins can you begin to utilize your spiritual assets and move on toward the objective of spiritual maturity.

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet [gained possession of spiritual maturity]; but one thing *I do*: forgetting [ἐπιλανθάνομαι, *epilanthanomai*] what *lies* behind. (Phil. 3:13a)

Epilanthanomai denotes both “forgetting” and “disregarding”—in other words, “to assign to oblivion.” Once you rebound, assign that sin to oblivion! Never look back—always look ahead! This can be accomplished by maintaining fellowship through rebound and keeping your eyes on the Lord by using the faith-rest technique.²⁰

18. Thieme, *Christian Suffering* (2002), 18–25.

19. Reversionism is the way of life the believer chooses when he turns away from God’s plan, will, and purpose for his life and returns to a former belief, a former viewpoint, a former *modus operandi*. The reversionist has not lost his salvation but is under the influence of Satan’s cosmic system (1 Tim. 4:1). See Thieme, *Reversionism*.

20. Thieme, *Christian, at Ease!* (1993); *The Faith-Rest Life* (2004).

Faith-rest mixes the promises of God's Word with faith to generate tranquillity and confidence of soul that overcomes the torment of guilt of past sins (Heb. 4:1–3a). You must *know* the promises of His Word and then *believe* them. Concentrate on those promises and reach the doctrinal conclusion that when you rebound, your sin is forgiven. Then, keep on trusting and waiting on Him (Ps. 37:7a). When you faith-rest, your mind is stabilized and you can reach “forward to what *lies* ahead” (Phil. 3:13b)—growing to spiritual maturity through the intake of ever more Bible doctrine. You must forget the guilt and keep moving. God is waiting patiently (Isa. 30:18) to convert discipline into blessing so that you can grow up. If you do not isolate sins, you will never reach spiritual maturity.

There are three categories of sins—mental, verbal, and overt sins—by which you perpetuate chain-sinning, harbor skeletons in the closet, and stifle your spiritual life.

MENTAL ATTITUDE SINS

Guilt Complex. When you remember a sin with horror, when you have nightmares about it and become discouraged and despondent, you have developed a guilt complex. If you keep dwelling on past sin, either you do not believe God has blotted it out, or you do not *feel* forgiven. To retain in your mind sins that God has already blotted out is tragic and detrimental to your thinking process.

Straighten out your thinking right now! If you have a guilt complex about anything in your life—*anything at all*—you are out of fellowship. You are a miserable loser! As long as you carry that guilt complex around, you can never represent or serve the Lord or produce divine good. You may try to assuage your guilty conscience by performing good deeds, but human works are only wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:12–15). What a waste of time! Your efforts do not count because you did not claim 1 John 1:9, you were not filled with the Holy Spirit, and you did not believe the Word of God. However, you are still alive on this earth and God's purpose for you continues.

Self-Recrimination. A by-product of the guilt complex is the mental attitude of self-torture, which I call “self-recrimination.” You could not torture yourself more effectively by holding your foot in a hot fire or driving bamboo stakes into your fingernails! In the Middle Ages,

when a person did not feel that his sins were forgiven, he often had someone beat him with a whip, or he beat himself, or he would lie down on a bed of nails, or sharp glass, or splinters for a number of hours. He erroneously concluded, "I hurt; therefore, I am being forgiven!" He was inflicting physical pain in an attempt to escape his mental anguish. In self-recrimination you can torture yourself better than anyone else can.

How you feel, the pain you inflict on yourself, does not affect in any way God's forgiveness. You are forgiven because of who and what God is. Unless you appropriate the grace of God by rebound and then isolate the sin, no matter what you do, or where you go, or who you know, you will never have one moment of true happiness in your life. Through your own self-punishment, you deny yourself the blessings God has provided for your benefit. You fail the grace of God.

Hatred, Hostility, Jealousy. Perhaps in the past you developed animosity toward a person. You confessed your antagonism, but by a continuing jealousy of that person you perpetuate the sin into a state of hostility (James 3:14, 16). You have said in effect, "The sin is dead! Long live the sin!" But the sin *is* dead because God buried it; only you dug it up! You will be disciplined, not for the original sin of antagonism, but for the escalation of the sin to an intense hatred.

You hear people describe the wonders of the Christian life, the marvelous grace of God and how it works, the happiness, inner peace and production, all of which are available to you, but you never experience any of these blessings. Why not? Because you are spending your time in jealousy, or fostering hostility, or seething with hatred for your real or perceived enemies. All these insidious thoughts stem from failure to isolate sin.

Bitterness. No sin in the Word of God is as vicious as bitterness. It is the undistilled arrogance of the soul (Job 10:1; Acts 8:23; Heb. 12:15). Bitterness turns love into hatred, happiness into malice, respect into vilification, blessing into cursing. Bitterness generates the rampant emotionalism of reaction, produces paranoia, increases insecurity, distorts reality, and eliminates the virtue and self-discipline so necessary for overcoming adversity. Prolonged bitterness can even

degenerate to personality dysfunction—neurotic or psychotic behavior.

When you react in bitterness, you find a ‘patsy’ and make that person responsible for your sin. Sometimes you may even blame God! But as long as you harbor bitterness toward any member of the human race or toward God, you will stay perpetually out of fellowship. You have chosen to immerse yourself in the law of carnality.

There are two kinds of believers: the great believers who profit from their failures and the believers who are buried by their failures. Great believers never look back. David never looked back. Abraham never looked back. Joseph never looked back. The apostle Paul never looked back. These men failed, but they did not recall their sins; they moved forward, kept advancing, and glorified God.

Unconfessed and unisolated mental sins inevitably branch into sins of the tongue and overt sins.

SINS OF THE TONGUE

Heretofore, your sins of jealousy, hatred, or bitterness have been confined to your thoughts. But now, you begin to talk about the person who is the object of your jealousy, hatred, or bitterness. Your tongue becomes the lethal instrument of a chain of verbal sins—a vicious and vile form of carnality (Ps. 5:9). You may indulge in sins of the tongue casually, thoughtlessly, haphazardly, even stupidly, but more often your motive is calculated and deliberate, springing from implacability, vindictiveness, or some other mental sin. You may repeatedly criticize, slander, or malign some victim. You may unite with a group in a relentless attack to destroy a person’s reputation. Your sins of the tongue operate on the principle of building your happiness on someone else’s unhappiness.

Commonly overlooked and generally excused, verbal sins in the local church can wreak havoc on an entire congregation (James 3:5–6). In fact, believers are commanded to separate from anyone in the local church who is repeatedly guilty of sins of the tongue (Rom. 16:17–18).

Maligning or Judging. Maligning is the flip side of the coin of judging, and means to vilify someone who has become the object of your hatred or hostility. Someone toward whom you are bitter and

hostile seems to be happy and prosperous, sending you into an explosion of envy. In anger you begin a campaign to malign him, to attribute certain sins, real or imagined, to him so that others will ostracize him and he will be degraded or hurt. The unkind things you say about him may be true, but that is not the point—you are still committing the sin of judging. In judging, you superimpose your volition over the divine prerogative of judgment and condemnation.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY, SAYS THE LORD.” (Rom. 12:19)

While your intent in maligning and judging is to torment the object of your jealousy and wrath, ironically you do that person the greatest favor. How? God takes discipline that belongs to him and pours it on you! Thus, you not only receive discipline for your sins, but you also receive the discipline of someone you maligned! That is why the Bible says in Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge lest you be judged *yourselves*,” a literal translation from the Greek. Matthew 7:2 will help you to understand this better:

“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”
(Matt. 7:2)

If you want to be miserable as a Christian, just continue your judging and maligning. Before you know it, you will be under triple-compound discipline. First, there is discipline for the mental sin that sponsored the sin of the tongue. Second, the verbal sin also carries discipline, doubling the punishment. Third, God transfers to *you* whatever discipline would have gone to the one you accused of sinning—you get a portion of your quarry’s punishment.

All maligning, criticism, or ‘sour grapes’ produce the most horrible discipline and suffering possible in the life of the believer. If you malign more than one person in the situation, you could multiply your discipline until the pressure is almost unbearable. That is what is commonly called “asking for it.” Sins of the tongue are three of the seven sins God is said to hate (Prov. 6:16–19). The self-righteousness involved in promoting yourself as a ‘judge’ always hurts you far more than it hurts others.

Gossip. To say something derogatory, to tattle, to be a rumormonger, to consistently report behind-the-scenes information, especially something intimate or sensational about a person, is to gossip—a violation of the privacy of the royal priesthood. When a fellow believer sins, his privacy is still to be respected (Matt. 18:15). Privacy means you are not to be a busybody (2 Thess. 3:11–12), but to live and to let live.

Live your life as unto the Lord and afford others the same courtesy. The lives of others are none of your business. If you do gossip, you will only hurt yourself—God’s discipline will fall on you, not on the victim of your gossip. If you, however, are the victim of gossip, do not try to explain yourself; in fact, an explanation usually makes matters worse. Let the Lord vindicate you. People always believe what they want to believe. If you are walking in fellowship with the Lord and maturing, what matters is what the Lord thinks, not what people think and say.

Manufacture of Controversy. Because self-centered and arrogant believers fail to resolve their differences with other people, they complain to outside parties to gain sympathy and support. Wives complain about husbands and vice versa; workers whine about the boss; members of the congregation express resentment toward their pastor. These manufacturers of controversy create dissension when they recruit uninvolved and innocent persons to join in against the object of their hatred and malice.

Public Confession. Some people think that a revival begins with open confession of sins—a heresy that has been practiced throughout history. Public confession is to ‘start a fire’ with your tongue. It puts the thought of your sin in the minds of all who hear the confession. Public confession can initiate a reaction of mental attitude sins of self-righteousness, gossiping, or judging in the listeners. Public acknowledgments can reopen the wounds of an injured party, embroil previously uninvolved parties, or reveal sins particularly revolting and shocking to others.

“But,” you say, “confessing my sins publicly makes me feel better!” You may think you feel better for the moment, but it does not stop your discipline; in fact, serious damage can result both to yourself and to other believers. That is why a pastor should never permit anyone to stand up and confess his sins to others.

You must control the urge to confess sins to anyone else. Sins are an affront to God and need be named only to God the Father in the privacy of your soul (Ps. 51:4a). James chapter three is the great passage on self-control.

For we all stumble in many *ways*. If anyone does not stumble in what he says [sin of the tongue], he is a perfect [or mature] man, able to bridle the whole body as well. (James 3:2)

You can always recognize a mature believer. He neither judges, maligns, nor gossips. He is not guilty of the sin of the 'long proboscis.' He minds his own business.

It is frightening to contemplate the havoc the human tongue is capable of wreaking. So small a part of our anatomy, yet it can nevertheless determine the course our lives will take, as well as destroy the lives of others. Horses may be controlled by bridles, ships by rudders, and even wild animals can be tamed. But taming the human tongue is accomplished only through the power of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine in the soul. By consistently applying God's Word in our lives, we recognize and avoid these devastating sins of the tongue.

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us [and they do], we direct their entire body as well. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! (James 3:3-5)

OVERT SINS

The third area in which you can fail to isolate sin is overt behavior. Murder, adultery, drunkenness, and stealing are overt activities that the Bible names as sins (Ex. 20:13-15, 17; Rom. 13:9). Flagrant perpetuation of mental or verbal sins, or both, can result in doing something you know will hurt someone else. Your fear, hatred, or maligning becomes so intense that you yearn to take revenge for some

real or perceived insult or wrong. Your retaliation may even involve overt harassment or violence.

So you punch someone in the nose! What have you solved? Nothing! Two wrongs do not make a right! You are a frustrated, confused believer to ever think that violence will solve your problems. You have only brought shame and discredit on yourself. When you resort to revenge tactics, you dedicate yourself to perpetual discipline and suffering. You fail to produce for the Lord and therefore you fail to accomplish the purpose for which you are left in this life—to move to the high ground of supergrace.

Keep Moving

And reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus [rewards and decorations in eternity]. (Phil. 3:13b–14)

God's purpose for every believer is to advance toward maturity and the supergrace life.²¹ God has made grace provision for reaching this goal through the gift of the pastor-teacher who communicates Bible doctrine and the volition of the believer who learns doctrine through the filling and mentorship of God the Holy Spirit. This is the function of the *grace apparatus for perception*.²²

We never stand still in the Christian life; we either progress or regress. The rate at which we advance or retreat depends on our consistency or failure to learn and apply Bible doctrine. When we accomplish the goal of spiritual maturity, we become winners in the

21. Supergrace is the status of spiritual maturity in which the normal function of the Christian life and divine good begin. It is the "greater grace" of James 4:6, the place of utilization of grace in either adversity or prosperity. Characterized by spiritual and material blessings, this is the road to glorify God for the believer who has maximum doctrine in his soul. See Thieme, *Follow the Colors* (2002).

22. The grace apparatus for perception (GAP) is a nonmeritorious system of spiritual comprehension empowered by the filling of the Holy Spirit. GAP enables every believer to understand, learn, and apply the whole realm of Bible doctrine, regardless of education or human IQ. See Thieme, *Reversionism*, 3–7.

spiritual life and witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ in the angelic conflict.²³

FAILING THE GRACE OF GOD

See to it [ἐπισκοπέω, *episkopeo*] that no one comes short [ὕστερέω, *hustereo*] of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up [φύω, *phuo*] causes trouble [ἐνοχλέω, *enochleo*], and by it many be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)

Hustereo, coming short of the grace of God, has several connotations: “to fall short, to be below standard, to fall back, to miss out on.” In other words, *hustereo* indicates refusal to avail yourself of the grace provisions for advancing to spiritual maturity. You are failing the grace of God, but the grace of God never fails you. His grace is immutable! The objective of the Christian life and the purpose for which you are left on this earth is to utilize the grace of God.

When you use the rebound technique, God applies the same principle of forgiveness that canceled your sins at salvation. When you confess your sins to God, He graciously forgives and purifies you from all wrongdoing. Your sins are blotted out (Isa. 44:22); you are back in the bottom circle and filled with the Spirit. You did not earn forgiveness at salvation and you do not earn forgiveness afterwards. To possess the happiness, peace, blessing, joy, and power that God has made available to all believers, you must first appropriate His grace in rebound.

If you think you can help God to erase your sins by changing your behavior through some form of sublimation, or ‘agonizing in the closet,’ or trying to work up some ecstatic or emotional experience, or fasting and praying, or through some system of good works or giving, or because you are ‘holy’ or use ‘holy’ language, then you have failed

23. The angelic conflict is the invisible spiritual warfare between the forces of Satan and the forces of God. Satan recruited one-third of the angels and ignited this prehistoric revolt, and subsequently they were tried and condemned to the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). Satan appealed this judgment, and God in grace created the human race to resolve this ancient conflict, which continues as spiritual warfare in human history. See Thieme, *The Angelic Conflict* (2012); *Satan and Demonism* (1996).

the grace of God. All human works are contrary to grace and can never remove the misery of your failure. The most difficult issue for some of you to understand is that God *forgives* you and *blots out* your sins immediately when you name or cite them to Him. The rebound procedure is so simple—the grace of God in action!

The Greek word *phuo*, “springing up,” actually means “to sprout in the mind.” In order for anything to sprout, first of all there must be a seed. And what must the seed do before it can sprout? Die! When you remember a sin that is dead and buried, forgiven and forgotten, you nurture the “root” of bitterness. The root from the dead seed grows downward and sprouts shoot upward. What do you suppose those sprouts are? From your bitter soul shoots up a devastating chain of mental, verbal, and overt sins resulting in even more misery and discipline. Your discipline now is not for the sin that is dead, but for the sprouts that have surfaced: bitterness, gossip, maligning, revenge, harassment, vindictiveness, ostracism.

The present active subjunctive of *enochleo*, “trouble,” indicates that you allow your skeleton to keep on troubling you. The inevitable root of bitterness in your soul causes others to be defiled by ‘Operation Fallout.’ Whenever you fail to isolate your sin, the repercussions never stop with you. Your failure is pervasive, spreading to everyone around you. Not only are you miserable, but you cause misery to those with whom you associate. You cause others to become bitter; you generate revenge activity; you influence other people to become gossips and maligners; you engender emotionalism, guilt complexes, and self-flagellation. You not only drive people away from you, but you drive people away from the Lord and His Word. When you succumb to this type of carnality, you always hurt the people you love most.

However, there is a gleam of light! The subjunctive mood of *enochleo* is potential, which means that bitterness does not have to trouble you, if you will confess your sin and forget it. Hebrews 12:15 commands you to forget your skeleton in the closet. Dispose of it where God has already taken it.

As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
(Ps. 103:12)

You need never look back!

Checking on Yourself

Now look at the first three words of Hebrews 12:15. “See to it” is a phrase of mental attitude. The present active participle of *episkopeo*—“keep on seeing to it,” means “to ride herd on yourself,” “to check yourself constantly.” What should you check? That you do not allow sin to be prolonged. Ask yourself, “Do I have a guilt complex about my sin? Do I keep thinking about it? Do I keep reliving the situation? Do I get upset and associate past sin with every difficulty in my life? Am I bitter? Do I want to bellyache to everyone because it makes me feel better? Do I want to take revenge? Does it make me happy to see someone crawl who has wronged me?” If so, you are failing the grace of God.

The Bible is filled with wonderful doctrines, but you will never understand them if you let even one sin in your life be the basis of more sins. The Bible contains all the principles of inner happiness, peace, and joy, but you will never experience them unless you isolate your sins. When you make a ‘patsy’ of your old sins and blame all your other weaknesses, failures, and difficulties on them, you are totally divorced from reality. Under perpetual discipline you will always wonder, “Why is this happening to me?” You think life is passing you by. You think no one understands!

But cheer up! The Bible understands you because the Bible is the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). In effect the Lord says, “It is not that no one understands you—you do not understand Me or My Word! You have no concept of My grace! You think your discipline is for something you did in the past. Oh, no! It is discipline for something you are doing right now—for a mental attitude sin, for a sin of the tongue, for an act of revenge.”

You are a spiritual ‘humpty-dumpty’ that has fallen off the wall of God’s grace. When you do not isolate a confessed sin by the faith-rest technique, your life goes to pieces and you set in motion an interminable misery machine. You cannot place blame for your misery and bad decisions on others. The devil is not after you. *You* are the ‘monster’ chasing yourself!

But, as long as you are alive, it is never too late to rebound and isolate your sins. The time to start is now! When a sin dies by confession, the Holy Spirit then controls your soul; God takes over; you are

able to produce divine good. Back in fellowship you have a different type of sprout. You have a new mental attitude of patience, tolerance, impersonal love.²⁴ You do not hate anyone; you are relaxed; you live and let live.

Whatever you have done in the past, you cannot go back and undo. But this does not mean that you can welsh on your obligations! If you have debts, it is your responsibility to pay them. Under the filling of the Holy Spirit you are able to fulfill your responsibility without becoming bogged down in any past sins connected with your failure. From this point you can stop looking back and move forward. You are able to function under GAP, advance to spiritual maturity, and produce divine good. Now, you can begin to have the happiness, peace, stability, and inner beauty that God has designed for you.

Every winner believer in the Bible sinned or failed at some point in his life. There are no Bible heroes who did not fail. But what did they do: Sit around and cry about it? They did not! They confessed it, forgot it, and kept moving. They were great because they isolated their sins. They never looked back; they never remembered. As a result, when suffering came to them, they knew it was suffering for blessing from the Lord (Ps. 119:67). Whether they were in suffering or prosperity, they had inner happiness. Why? Because they were in fellowship, and they were advancing in their spiritual lives.

We all have a certain amount of pressure, adversity, trial, heartache, and difficulty. As a matter of fact, spiritual maturity is accelerated through suffering and pressure. Just as physical muscles are developed under pressure, so spiritual muscles are increased under adversity. Ultimately, all suffering is for your blessing, but suffering for discipline is designed for your correction. If you are suffering for discipline, then you must evaluate your life and ask, "Where have I failed? What is the sin? What do I need to confess?" When you discover and confess that sin, your slate is wiped clean. Should the

24. Impersonal love is the consistent function of individual integrity toward friends, enemies, loved ones, strangers—a non-emotional, unconditional regard for the entire human race that does not require intimacy, friendship, attractiveness, or even acquaintance with the specific object of love. Impersonal love is derived from the virtue of the subject built on Bible doctrine and personal love for God the Father, not from the appeal or merit of the object of love. See Thieme, *Christian Integrity* (2002), 31–33; *Freedom through Military Victory* (2003), 75–76.

suffering continue, it is no longer for correction but for blessing. How can God do that? Grace!

Everything you ever do that counts—anything that might be construed as great, or as victory, or as honoring the Lord—is not because of who you are, but because of who He is and what He provides. Since He provides forgiveness and blots out your sins, why will you not forget them? Isolate your sins and keep moving!

THE PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

The object of this message is not to discourage you but to wake you up to reality. To be without peace, happiness, and blessing in your Christian life because you fail the grace of God is a tragedy. God's grace never fails you! You are still alive—God still has a purpose for your life! He wants you to have the blessings, inner peace, happiness, and production that will count for eternity.

All blessings designed by God for you are potential by virtue of your position in the top circle in union with Christ, but they can be realized only in the bottom circle of temporal fellowship. Your capacity for blessing depends on your ability to stay in fellowship by isolating sins, your use of faith-rest, your attitude toward Bible doctrine, and your progress toward spiritual maturity. Doctrine resident in your soul becomes the “cup” into which God pours out His blessing (Ps. 23:5b).

Your production in the Christian life can occur only while you are in the bottom circle. When the sin nature is in control of your life, nothing you do counts for God. Any good deed generated by the sin nature is human good and totally unacceptable to God (Jer. 17:9; Heb. 6:1). The only source of divine good is the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit produces in your life only while you are in the status of spirituality. When you fail to appropriate the grace of God, you ‘snub’ the Holy Spirit; you grieve and quench Him (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). He is locked up in a corner where He cannot produce in your life. You cannot serve Jesus Christ, function in your priesthood, fulfill your ambassadorship, or witness for Christ unless you utilize the grace of God.

So the issue in your spiritual life is “Which law will you serve?” Serving the law of carnality through failure to isolate your sins, lighting one sin on another, will burn down your life, as well as those around you. To serve the law of spirituality through rebound, isolating sin and advancing in your spiritual life means not only to receive blessing from God but to be a witness for His perfect plan. Somewhere in your vicinity, there is someone who needs Christ; someone waiting to see the power, stability, peace, and happiness that you can have in adversity or prosperity; someone waiting for a demonstration of the dynamics of God the Holy Spirit in your life.

THE ISSUE OF SALVATION

This message has been for those who are believers in Jesus Christ. But, perhaps you have never made that most important of all decisions. The Lord Jesus Christ bore every sin that you have ever committed or ever will commit in His own body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). Now, there is no barrier between you and God—not even sin—only your own rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can possess eternal life right now because God the Son has provided salvation. “Whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (John 3:15). Just as in confession, so faith alone in Christ alone is nonmeritorious.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)

By a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ, you can be born again; you can become a child of God and a member of His royal family forever. This is yours for the taking. Jesus says,

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

“The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37b)

This is your opportunity. Wherever you are, you can offer a silent prayer: “Father, I am believing in Jesus Christ. I am receiving Him as my Savior.” That is the moment of your eternal salvation.

The alternative is clearly defined in the Scripture.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [by believing] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

Appendix A

DOCTRINE OF REBOUND

- I. Rebound is the grace provision for the carnal believer to recover the filling of the Holy Spirit (Prov. 1:23; Eph. 5:14; cf. Eph. 5:18) by naming postsalvation sins privately to God the Father (1 Cor. 11:28, 31; 1 John 1:9); the method of restoring the believer's fellowship with God to resume the spiritual life.
- II. The basis for the forgiveness of postsalvation sins is the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. The righteousness and justice of God the Father were satisfied, or propitiated, when all the sins of the human race were imputed to Christ and judged (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 1:7*b*; 2:2; 4:10). Based on this unlimited atonement and propitiation, God faithfully renders the same decision to forgive and to purify us every time we use the rebound technique.
- III. The believer sins after salvation, but such sin is carnality, never loss of salvation (1 Cor. 3:1–3; 1 John 1:8, 10). This assurance of eternal security (Rom. 8:38–39) is vital for understanding the rebound technique.
- IV. Both carnality and reversionism are results of succumbing to the temptation of the sin nature and refusing or rejecting the rebound technique.
- V. Rebound functions in the state of carnality because of the universal priesthood of the believer. Every believer in the

- Church Age represents himself before God and must personally cite his own sins to God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).
- VI. The mechanics of the rebound technique: confess (1 John 1:9); isolate (Heb. 12:15); and keep moving (Phil. 3:13–14).
 - VII. When works, restitution, or emotional reactions such as feeling sorry for sins are added to the rebound technique, forgiveness is canceled out.
 - VIII. There is no spirituality or spiritual life without rebound.
 - IX. Biblical synonyms for rebound.
 - A. “Confess,” cite, or name (1 John 1:9).
 - B. “Judged ourselves” (1 Cor. 11:31).
 - C. “Present yourselves” (Rom. 6:13; 12:1).
 - D. “Lay aside every encumbrance” (Heb. 12:1).
 - E. “Be subject to the Father” (Heb. 12:9).
 - F. “Make straight paths” (Matt. 3:3; Heb. 12:13).
 - G. “Arise from the dead,” or literally, “stand up again out from deaths” (Eph. 5:14).
 - H. “Lay aside the old self” (Eph. 4:22).
 - I. “Acknowledge your iniquity” (Jer. 3:13).
 - X. Rebound must be understood in the light of relationship with God and in the light of positional truth (Rom. 8:1).
 - XI. Alternatives to rebound: divine discipline and self-induced misery (1 Cor. 11:31; Heb. 12:6).
 - XII. Distractions to rebound: legalism and the influence of other carnal Christians (Luke 15:11–32).
 - XIII. Encouragement to other believers to rebound.
 - A. Live the spiritual life in word and deed.
 - B. Give failing believers the privacy to exercise their royal priesthood before the Lord; never approach in arrogant self-righteousness to reprove or foster guilt in them (Gal. 6:1).
 - C. A mental attitude of graciousness and impersonal love that forgives those who have wronged you (Matt. 18:23–35; Col. 3:13).
 - D. Reward for encouraging others (James 5:19–20).
 - XIV. Old Testament commands to rebound (Ps. 32:5; 38:18; 51:3–4; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 3:13a).

Appendix B

DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE

- I. Divine discipline is the sum total of punitive measures by which God punishes, corrects, encourages, trains, and motivates the believer to change his thinking and to bring him to the point of rebound or reversion recovery (Heb. 12:5).
 - A. Discipline is the alternative to blessing.
 - B. Discipline is from the love of God (Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19).
- II. Divine discipline must be distinguished from the law of volitional responsibility with its self-imposed, self-induced, and self-indulged forms of misery. While God is the source of divine discipline, man's free will is the source of suffering under the law of volitional responsibility.
- III. Two causes for divine discipline exist in phase two: carnality and reversionism.
 - A. Discipline for carnality is temporary and turned to blessing by the rebound technique.
 - B. Discipline for reversionism is progressively more intense and terminates in the sin unto death unless recovery through rebound occurs.

- IV. Divine discipline, no matter how severe, does not imply loss of salvation (Gal. 3:26; 2 Tim. 2:11–13).
- V. If the believer rebounds and the suffering of discipline is neither canceled nor diminished, then the suffering continues as blessing rather than punishment (Job 5:17–18).

	DIVINE DISCIPLINE	SUFFERING FOR BLESSING
ISSUE	Sin	Grace
STATUS	Arrogance	Humility
SUFFERING	Unbearable	Bearable
SOLUTION	Rebound	Faith-Rest
RESULT	Cursing Turned to Blessing	Acceleration of Spiritual Growth

- VI. All divine discipline is confined to time. At the judgment seat of Christ, where believers' production is evaluated, there will be some embarrassment for losers (1 John 2:28). There is no discipline for the believer in eternity (Rev. 21:4).
- VII. Triple-compound discipline combines self-induced misery with divine judgment.
- The mental attitude sins that motivate sins of the tongue are subject to divine discipline.
 - These sins of the tongue are the basis for further punitive action from God (Matt. 7:1).
 - Whatever discipline for sins attributed to the victim of sins of the tongue is also added to the maligner (Matt. 7:2).
- VIII. There are three stages of discipline for reversionism.
- The warning stage—God is standing at the door, knocking (James 5:9; Rev. 3:20). This is a general category of divine discipline which shows the believer that he is carnal and divorced from reality. The believer's discipline is designed to bring him back to reality so that

he can grow in grace. Warning discipline may be removed by the application of the rebound technique and resuming the spiritual life.

- B. The intensified stage—the believer is in the sphere of strong delusion (Ps. 38:1–14). Instead of solving the problem through rebound, the believer digs in deeper by piling wrong decision on wrong decision, wrong thinking on wrong motivation, all of which result in wrong actions. Intensive discipline includes loss of health and other extreme measures. Recovery requires rebound, isolation of sin, and a concentration on doctrine.
- C. The dying stage or the sin unto death—maximum divine discipline is administered to the reversionistic believer who dies without the benefit of dying grace (Ps. 118:17–18; Jer. 9:13–16; Acts 5:1–10; Phil. 3:18–19; 1 John 5:16; Rev. 3:16).²⁵

25. Thieme, *Dying Grace* (2004).

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