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“When the Helper Comes ...” (John 15:26)

Pastor Gene Giguere, May 3, 2026

Introduction

- 1) Now, we are studying God the Holy Spirit because we explained that to understand what it means to be spiritual, we have to first understand the One to whom we are to yield our lives.

So, we began last time looking at the Holy Spirit through the lens of biblical theology. We moved all the way from the creation of the heavens and the earth through the ministry of Jesus and we left off just before the day of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit’s relationship with believers changed forever.

- 2) We saw that in the Old Testament era the Holy Spirit was not a mere ‘force,’ but God Himself. He shared in all of the work of creation with the Father and the Son. The second verse in the Bible, **Genesis 1:2**, says: “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”
- 3) In Old Testament time however, before the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit didn’t permanently indwell believers as He does in the Church today.

He might come upon certain men or woman so that they might accomplish some important, divinely-appointed task, but He would leave them when the task was complete. We see this ‘temporary resting-upon’ all throughout the Old Testament. That’s why David pleaded with God: “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me” (**Psalm 51:11**).

But just before Jesus was crucified, He had a lot to say to His disciples about the Holy Spirit – and He indicated that a REALLY big change was about to occur.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17).

- 4) This statement was a giant step forward in Jesus’ revelation of the new relationship the Holy Spirit was about to have with human beings. Understand this: “the prayer of the Son of God cannot be unanswered and the Spirit who was “*with*” them was soon to be “*in*” them.”¹

Then Jesus gave them a foretaste of the indwelling of the Church which would soon be universal, when He appeared to the then-apostles, save Thomas, after His resurrection:

“... the doors being locked ... Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side ... ²¹ Jesus said to them ... “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:19-22).

But this was *not* the *permanent indwelling* of the Spirit; it was only *a temporary* enabling of the Spirit for the difficult days ahead. The disciples still were told to wait for the “promise of the Father.” What was the “promise of the Father”? That they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” a few days after Jesus’ Ascension into Heaven.

In **Acts 1:4-5**, we read that, just before His ascension into Heaven, Jesus was “staying with them [and] he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act by which the Spirit places the believer into a now-and-forever union with Christ and comes to dwell within that person permanently. That hadn’t happened prior to the Day of Pentecost, not even to the Apostles.

¹ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He That Is Spiritual* (Moody Press: Chicago, 1918), p. 12, underline mine.

When Jesus was with them, teaching them for 40 days after His resurrection, He was still talking about the soon-coming of the Holy Spirit.

In **Acts 1:8a, 10-11** , He said to them: “[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses [ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες] ... ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes [uniforms of glory], ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

And then the Day of Pentecost came – and the relationship between believers and God the Holy Spirit changed radically.

The Holy Spirit After Pentecost

- 1) On that day, the Church and individual believers who make up the Church, *became the permanent dwelling place of God.*

This has *two aspects*, the *individual* indwelling of each believer, and the *corporate* indwelling of the Church (all believers together).

- a) There’s an abundance of Scripture that declares the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each individual believer of this age (**John 14:17; Romans 5:5, 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 3:2, 4:6; 1 John 3:24, 4:13**, etc.).

Before Pentecost, the Glory of God would dwell in the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple signifying His presence ‘with’ His people.

But since Pentecost, God has dwelt in a Temple made ‘of’ His people!²

And so, Paul calls us the “temple of the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 6:19**).

And we are the dwelling place of God *individually*.

² The word *shekinah* is not found in Sacred Scripture, but concept of the shekinah certainly is. It’s a word/idea developed in rabbinic Judaism from a Hebrew word which means, “he caused to dwell” – thus carrying the idea of the dwelling of YHWH on earth.

b) However, *corporately*, the Church as a whole is being built, brick-by-living-brick, into the dwelling place of God on earth as His Church grows.

Ephesians 2:22: “In him [Jesus] you [second person plural of $\sigma\upsilon$] also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

This refers to the Holy Spirit’s *corporate* “dwelling” (as in **1 Corinthians 3:16** and **2 Corinthians 6:16**).

The ‘temple’ in view here consists of all Jews and Gentiles that have come to faith (and are coming to faith) and who are being built up into a building for the Lord’s indwelling.³

And so, the Spirit is dwelling *here* (point inward) and *here* (point outward).

2) Well, from Pentecost on, the Lord has been building the Body of Christ by continually *adding* to the Church.

Acts 2:47 says that the early believers were “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

And He still is! Notice: it’s *the Lord* who does the adding! Each and every day, all around the world, many are being added, many our coming to faith. And God the Holy Spirit is baptizing them into Christ’s body: *one* body, *many* members.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many ... ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose ... ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (**1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 18, 27**).

Now Paul tells us a number of important things here:

³ Cf., Hoehner, Harold W., “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II, 627–28.

✠ First, *there are not many bodies; there is only one.*

There are multitudes of congregations made up of local members of that Body, but all of them together make up only *one* Body. It is one of the seven essential, intrinsic Christian unities:

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (**Ephesians 4:4-6**).

✠ Second, *while there is one Body, there are many members – and all are necessary.*

Each one has been set within the Body in a specific place and equipped with specific gifts with which he or she is to serve the Lord together with other Body members. Just as a toe has a specific function and not every function, so each believer has a job to do in the Body.

If you are serving no role in the Body, something is seriously wrong with your spiritual life. You need to fix that. There are no unnecessary members of the Body; no one has a pass to neglect their divinely-appointed responsibility. Those who do will suffer the loss of reward.

✠ Third, *it is God Himself who decides who belongs where in the Body.*

This is not determined by *the need*, but the combination of one’s *spiritual gift* and *passion*. If I have (1) the gift of *teaching* and (2) a *passion* to see kids come to Jesus, maybe serving as a Sunday School teacher is where the Lord has sovereignly placed you. So, get to it! Determine your spiritual gifts and your passion and you’ll have a pretty good idea where God wants to use you in the Body.

But, mark it down Paul writes, “God [has] arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose” (**1 Corinthians 12:18**).

✠ Fourth, *Paul goes on to say that some parts of the Body are “more presentable” than others* (**1 Corinthians 12:23-24**).

To that I say, *'You know who you are, and you ought to be ashamed of your selves!'* No, seriously, Paul discusses this in order to stress that each and every member of the Body must be properly cared for.

God is deeply concerned that there “be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

✠ And finally, *it is God the Holy Spirit Himself who baptizes us into the Body.*

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). We receive this action!

This happens the instant a person *receives the action of* being saved – or, in Peter’s language, is “caused ... to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

3) So, here’s what happened: on the Day of Pentecost all those who believed in Jesus were baptized by the Holy Spirit into a brand-new thing that God was creating: the Body of Christ!

Acts 2 says, “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (**Acts 2:1-3**).

✠ The visible “tongues of fire” here were symbolic of the presence of God.

“Several times in the Old Testament God displayed Himself in the form of flames (**Genesis 15:17; Exodus 3:2–6, 13:21–22, 19:18, 40:38**; cf. **Matthew 3:11 & Luke 3:16**).”⁴

⁴ Toussaint, Stanley D., “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II, 357.

No believer was exempt from this astonishing experience. Luke tells us that these “tongues of fire” separated and came to rest on each of them. I think the *Berean Standard Bible* translates **Acts 2:3** well: “They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.” And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (**Acts 2:4**).

✠ These tongues were *known languages*, not some supposed angelic gibberish. Why was this necessary? Because **Acts 2:5-11** tells us ...

“There were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven ... [yet] each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

This is a description of the *true* gift of tongues: the supernatural ability to communicate *the Gospel* to unbelievers by followers of Jesus who don’t know their language. The Holy Spirit takes the words spoken by the believer and translates them in real time into the language the unbeliever speaks. It bears no resemblance to the fake ‘gift’ that was practiced by the Corinthians and is being practiced today by mixed up charismatics.

So, these believers, newly baptized in the Spirit, began sharing the Gospel and many were “added.” *God was doing some Body building!*

I love the word ‘added’! It’s a Bible word!

Peter, standing with the other eleven [Mathias had been added as an Apostle by the others, **Acts 1:12-26**], lifted up his voice and began preaching.

His sermon is recorded in **Acts 2:14-40**; it was VERY powerful! “Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (**Acts 2:41**). God immediately started *adding!*

And then came the most awesome day of all!

The day YOU heard someone preach, and God opened YOUR eyes, and YOU believed, and YOU were baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit and YOU were *added. Welcome!*

And so, today the Body of Christ continues to grow and grow and grow and will do so until the Rapture of the Church.

When the last person to be saved in this current dispensation is saved, our Lord Jesus Christ will rapture His Church! The Body is one and will be raptured as one – this includes the ‘dead in Christ’ and those who are alive at the time.

1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17: “[T]he dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

So, this is how the Holy Spirit’s relationship to believers has changed throughout human history.

Men Walking as Trees

- 1) Now, we’re just getting warmed up here – these are very deep wells for us to drink from – but I want to try to give you an illustration from Scripture of the beautiful process of Christian maturity.

The great challenge of the Christian life is to stay in fellowship with the Holy Spirit as much as possible. Those who prioritize the filling of the Spirit will be *carried to* maturity. We looked at the passive voice of **φέρω** [“go on”] in **Hebrews 6:1a**. The writer of Hebrews urges us to, literally, “leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and be carried to maturity ...” Those who do not, will remain spiritual infants.

But, mark it down: spiritual maturity is far more than the measure of what we *know* – how much doctrine we’ve learned – it is the measure of all we’ve *learned and applied* to our lives. The mature are those who care about both sides of the coin: *the hearing* and *the doing*.

Now, I want to look briefly at a fascinating story that has something to say, I think, about the process of maturity.

In **Mark 8:22-25**, Jesus and the disciples “came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. ²³ And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.” ²⁵ Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

This is the only healing that Jesus did in stages.

‡ Stage one: Jesus spit upon the blind man’s eyes:⁵

“And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” (**Mark 8:23**).

Note Jesus’ tenderness here: He takes the man by the hand and leads him *away from the crowd* so as not to make him a spectacle or curiosity.

This is the polar opposite of the modern-day fake healers who perform their faux-miracles in front of 30 cameras and broadcast them throughout the world asking for money.

When Jesus spit upon the man’s eyes, his blindness was gone.

But, while he could see, he didn’t have *clear* vision; his vision was blurred. He could only discern *the sense* of what he was seeing. He said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking” (**Mark 8:24**). At that

⁵ Sproul, R.C., *Pleasing God: Discovering the Meaning and Importance of Sanctification*, Classic Theology Series, (David C Cook publishers, 2012), pp.9-21.

very moment he could see. He would no longer have to be led by the hand. But while he could see, his vision was not clear; it was blurred.

✠ Stage two: Jesus' second touch:

Mark 8:25: “Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”

The NASB95 translates that last phrase, he “*began* to see everything clearly.” This brings out the grammar of the text better, I think. “Saw” or “began to see” translates the *imperfect active indicative* of the Greek verb ἐμβλέπω, which means *to look at something intently, to look at, to gaze upon*.⁶ “The *imperfect tense* portrays an action in process ... without an assessment of the action’s completion.”⁷

Well, Jesus' second touch brought everything into sharp focus. The man could now distinguish between men and trees. The first face he ever saw clearly was Jesus' own face.

2) Notice it: we're all born blind, but salvation gives us the ability to distinguish between light and shadow.

Stage one is *instantaneous* – our blindness is removed at the moment of salvation [‘something like scales’ fall from our eyes, **Acts 9:18**].⁸

Stage two is *progressive* – our vision is made clear only through the consistent study of the Word and fellowship with the Spirit.

After salvation, our spiritual vision is still quite clouded – often because of sin, and immaturity, and the lack of availability to God. Paul hints at this in **1 Corinthians 13:12**, where he says, “For now we see *through a glass* [ἕσποτρον, *a mirror*], *darkly* ... now I know *in part* ...”

⁶ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 321.

⁷ Heiser, Michael S., and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Lexham Press, 2013; 2013).

⁸ Stage one is also *immediate*. Not in the sense of *time*, but in the sense of *without means* (without the use of secondary causes). The Latin *immediatus* actually meant *without intermediary*. No intermediary means without medicine, helpers or faith from the subject. Sproul: “We are no more able to regenerate ourselves than a blind man is able to see by a sheer act of the will.” Sproul, R.C., *Pleasing God: Discovering the Meaning and Importance of Sanctification*, Classic Theology Series, (David C Cook publishers, 2012), p.16.

“Mirrors were often made of bronze ... [b]ut even the best mirrors reflected images imperfectly ...”⁹

The word translated ‘darkly’ here is **αἴνιγμα**, which we get our English word *enigma* from. It literally means “*that which requires special acumen to understand because it is expressed in puzzling fashion.*”¹⁰

We see this two-stage principle again in **2 Corinthians 3:14-18**. Speaking of the Jewish people, Paul writes:

“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. But we all [believers who are pressing to maturity], with unveiled face [being saved] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [‘carried’ to maturity by the Spirit] into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Notice:

Stage one: “... whenever a man turns to the Lord, *the veil is taken away.*”

Stage two: “We all [believers], with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, *are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.*”

Plato’s Cave Allegory

- 1) Now, before I came to the Lord, I was fascinated with philosophy – the ‘love of wisdom.’ The word *philosophy* comes from the Greek word **φιλοσοφία**, a compound word which comes from two smaller Greek words: **φίλος**, meaning ‘to love’, and **σοφία**, which means ‘wisdom.’

⁹ Keener, Craig S., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 1 Corinthians 13:8–13.

¹⁰ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 27.

I still find philosophy fascinating. Philosophy has its origin in the Pre-Socratic thinkers (Thales, Anaxagoras, Hericlitus, Pythagoras, Anaximenes, etc.); then came Socrates, and then came Socrates' great student Plato. And finally, Plato's great student Aristotle, who was the personal tutor of Alexander the Great who conquered much of the then-known world.



In Raphael's great masterpiece, *The School of Athens* (Fresco, 1509–1511, Apostolic Palace, Vatican), Plato, famous for his metaphysics, points *up*, while Aristotle, who's philosophy is grounded in the earth, motions *down*.¹¹ I'm far more enamored with Plato than Aristotle.¹²

¹¹ From *Musei Vaticani* online; <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/stanze-di-raffaello/stanza-della-segnatura/scuola-di-atene.html>

¹² There is a VERY fascinating place in the *Republic* where Plato (who lived c. 428 to 348 B.C. – so, some 400 years before Christ) seems to have anticipated the coming of Jesus (Plato, *Republic: Complete Edition with Focus Notes, Concept Maps and Illustrations*; illustrated by Umberto Caffaro, translated by Benjamin Jowett, 2025, Book II, 360-61). More than three centuries before Christ, the Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 B.C.) presented a dialogue between Glaucon and Socrates, in which Glaucon says that “if ever there was a truly righteous man, after being deemed righteous, he [would] be scorched, tortured, bound ... and at last, after suffering every evil, he [would] be crucified” (or “[T]he just man who is thought unjust will be scourged, racked, bound—will have his eyes burnt out; and, at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled.” Plato, *Republic*, <http://www.idph.net>, 2002, pp.214-215).

Remarkably, it was the early Church Father Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215 A.D.) who first suggested that Plato foreshadowed the Crucifixion of Jesus in Book 2 of *The Republic*. The setting is a hypothetical dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon regarding the fate of a perfectly righteous man. In the passage, Glaucon describes a man who is “totally righteous,” but falsely accused of being the “worst of men,” remaining steadfast until he is scourged, tortured, bound, and ultimately crucified (or impaled). Clement was wise enough to know that this wasn't a literal

Aside: If you are interested in this type of thing, I devoted several lessons to it back in 1994 – lessons 33-36 of *The Bible in Ancient History*, available here: <https://harvestcommunity.net/sermon-topic/bible-in-ancient-history/page/2/>.

- 2) Well, Paul’s phrase, “*now we see obscurely in a mirror*” (or “*in a mirror, darkly*”) reminds me of a very famous analogy that Socrates developed in Book 7 of the *Republic*. *The Allegory of the Cave* is a dialogue recorded by his student Plato. In it, Socrates is speaking with Plato’s brother, Glaucon. As presented by Plato, Socrates’s allegory of the cave imagines ...¹³



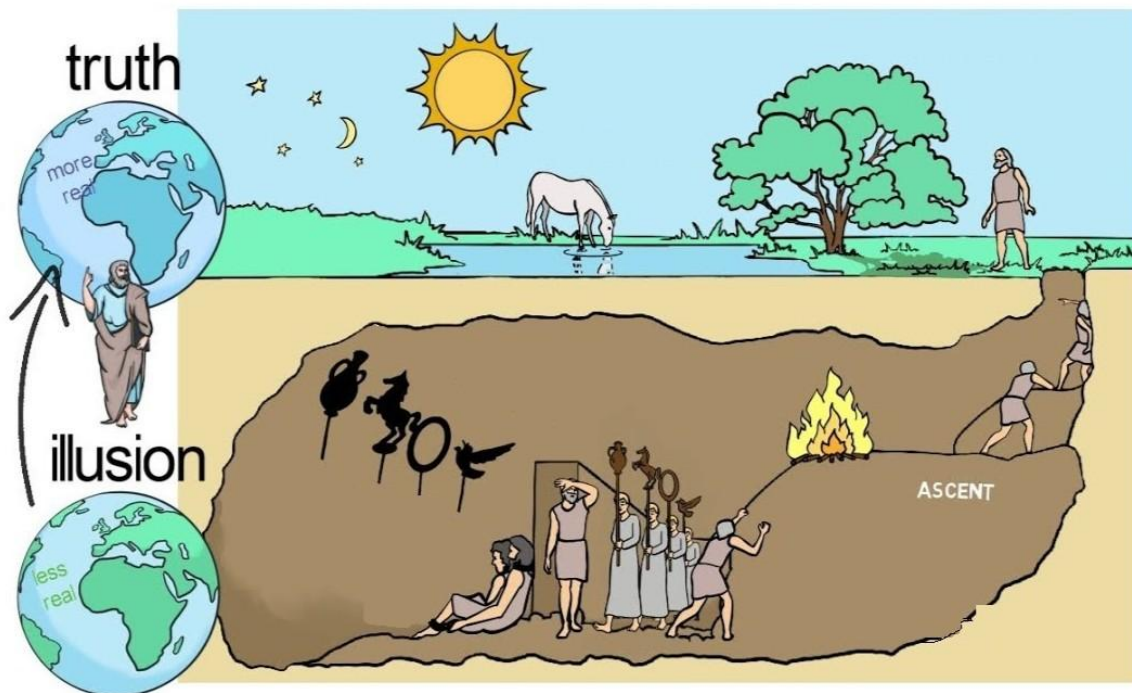
prophecy, but he saw it as a philosophical anticipation where Plato was “all but predicting the economy [history] of salvation.” To Clement, God used Greek philosophy to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus.

In his fine book, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, Professor Jaroslav Pelikan of Yale University writes: “This remarkable passage is from a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon in Plato’s *Republic*. Drawing a distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness, Glaucon postulates that, instead of beings who are both righteous and unrighteous, as most of us are most of the time, there would arise one unrighteous man who is entirely unrighteous and one righteous man who is entirely righteous. Let this ‘one righteous man in his nobleness and simplicity, one who desires ... to be a good man and not merely to give the impression of being a good man,’ now be accused of being in fact the worst of men. Let him moreover, ‘remain steadfast to the hour of his death, seeming to be unrighteous and yet being righteous.’ What will be the outcome? The answer, for those whose gruesomeness Glaucon apologizes in advance to Socrates, must be ... the following: he shall be scorched, tortured, bound ... and at last, after suffering every evil, shall be impaled or crucified” (Pelikan, Jaroslav, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, Yale University Press, 1965, pp. 44-45; also cited, without references, in Draper, Edythe, *Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992, entries 11524-11526).

Long before Jesus’ appearing, Glaucon got it! Walking in *genuine* integrity now, as then, can be very costly! And a man who walks in it is always a *genuine* threat to the world! Paul put it this way in 2 Timothy 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

¹³ I found the images below on the internet. I could not find any authorship information for them and I believe they are copyright free.

- † A group of slaves are chained together inside an underground cave as prisoners.
- † Behind the prisoners there is a fire, and between the prisoners and the fire are images or puppets being moved on a raised walkway along a low wall by people.
- † The slaves are unable to see anything behind them – they’ve been chained and secured so they can only look forward in one direction for their entire lives.
- † As they look at the wall of projected images before them, they believe that the shadows are real images. Why? Because it’s all they know. They think the figures they’re watching move across the wall are real; they’re not, they’re shadows. They think they’re living things; they’re not.



They’re the projected images of inanimate objects. *All they know is what they see* – and what they see is deceiving; it’s far from the whole picture. They think the light behind them is the source of true light. It’s not. The light from the fire is an inferior light; the light of the sun – the true source of light on this planet, is outside the cave.

‡ Then Socrates (whom Plato is recording) begins to imagine what would happen if one of the prisoners were unchained and left the cave. What if he encountered the ‘real’ world? Instead of looking at the *shadow* of a projected tree, what if he saw a *real* tree and touched it?

What if he, instead of viewing the effects of the artificial or inferior light of the fire could finally see the moon and the stars and the sun? It would require a major adjustment, right? He’d been living in a cave. His eyes would squint and have to adjust to the real sunlight.

His tactile senses would explode with new stimuli as he touched the real tree. Would he believe what he was seeing? What if he went back into the cave and put his chains back on and stared at the wall of projected images? How would he see the shadows he thought were real now?

What if he returned to the cave and tried to ‘free’ the other prisoners by telling them the way things really are, what’s really just outside the cave? Would they believe him? Socrates and Glaucon don’t think so. In fact, they conclude that if the enlightened slave should return to the cave to liberate – or enlighten – the other slaves, they’d most likely kill him.

Think of what has happened throughout the Christian centuries to those who’ve come to know Jesus and left the cave of spiritual ignorance tried to tell others about Him. In many cases, it’s led to their martyrdom.

Most people like the comfort of the cave. They enjoy the safety of it; it feels like home. They like projected images more than they like real ones. They like *stories* – for the Greeks, *myths* – more than they like thinking about things as they really are. Dealing with things as they really are is challenging at best.

3) I think you know where I’m going with this.

‡ *Before we’re saved*, we’re chained slaves looking only at images projected on the wall, never seeing things as they really are.

‡ *The moment we’re saved* the chains are removed and we begin to look around the cave – we see the fire, and the puppets, and we see how the shadows are projected on the wall.

‡ Then comes the big question: *what will we do with our new freedom and insight?* Will we begin walking up the shaft into the world as it truly is and see the real sun, the real trees? Or will we sit back down and set our gaze again to the shadows on the wall? Many Christians, after having been freed, sadly, choose the latter.

Stage one: "...whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

Stage two: "... with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [maturing Christians] are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

This transformation is the process of being carried to spiritual maturity and of seeing things that are only ever imparted to the mature.

- 4) Now, let's be clear, there are distractions that the enemy will place in our paths to keep us from leaving the cave: internal ones and external ones.

Internally, there's the sin that is an ever-present part of our fallen nature – a nature we'll continue to struggle with until Jesus redeems our bodies.

Externally, there's busyness, failing to prioritize things that are vital over things that are merely necessary.

Also *externally*, we have an enemy who is committed to seeing us remain immature and carnal – an enemy who is determined to keep us from climbing out of the cave.

He often accomplishes this through the process of deception. That's why Paul warns us over and over again about deception:

‡ **1 Corinthians 15:33**: "Do not be *deceived*: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

‡ **2 Corinthians 11:3**: "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent *deceived* Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be *led astray* from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ."

‡ **Galatians 6:7:** “Do not be *deceived*, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

Getting us to fall prey to deception is Satan’s most effective strategy for keeping us from growing up in Christ. He wants to keep us from reaching maturity, from being transformed into the image of Christ, from leaving the cave and stepping in to the *real* SONlight. Why? Because when we do, we become a real threat to his wicked kingdom.

While salvation unchains the slaves and gives them the freedom to walk toward the true light of the knowledge of the deep things of God, many take a quick look around the cave, and then turn their gaze back to the shadows on the cave wall and remain in spiritual immaturity.

- 5) And the devil is delighted when we do just that! Why? Because he knows something that most of us don’t: *becoming spiritually mature allows us to experience eternity in time.*

Galatians 6:7-8: “[T]he one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

1 Timothy 6:12: “[T]ake hold of the eternal life to which you were called ...”

That’s the fullness of the experience in Christ that Satan wants to keep us from.

So, what will we do with the freedom Jesus has given us in our new birth? Will we sit down and content ourselves with shadows?

Will we begin to walk up the shaft toward the outside world, the real world, only to turn around when the traveling gets tough and retreat back to the cave, the realm of shadows?

Or will we begin the ascent from the cave and with the Spirit’s help, step into the true light of biblical maturity, of deeper spiritual understanding?

Only the Holy Spirit can lead us up the arduous climb to the reality of the world as it truly is! And He is here to do just that!

Let’s ask the Lord to help us to be steadfast in that climb. Amen?