

CHAPTER ONE

Who Needs Deliverance?

The answer to the question “Who needs deliverance?” is simple: all men and women need deliverance as long as they can acknowledge that they themselves are sinners. We are living “in the flesh” (that is, we all possess human nature), and as such, we are sinners and will continue to have weaknesses, and sin as long as we still remain on this earth.

But we may ask, “What about Jesus?” While Jesus was 100 percent human, He was also 100 percent God. He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, not by human contact, but by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). As a man, He too was subjected to temptations, but Satan failed to influence or control Him. Thus, He “*was without sin*”. (2 Cor 5:21)

To have a better understanding as to why, as sinners, we need God’s deliverance, let us look at the life of St Paul and his teachings.

Paul’s Background

Before Paul’s conversion, his actual name was Saul. He was a very educated man, a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 26:10), and he approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1). In his zeal to put down the followers of Jesus, he was violent. The Church in Jerusalem suffered a great

persecution and all the believers of Jesus were afraid of him. Saul went from house to house, dragged out all the believers of Christ, and threw all the women and men into jail (Acts 9:1-2). Such was the past life of Paul - but he encountered the power of deliverance and healing of Jesus...

On his way to Damascus, in pursuit of the believers, Saul encountered the bright light that brought him to the ground and he became physically blind. Then, he heard the voice of Jesus. It was this personal encounter and experience of Jesus that opened his "inner eyes" to see his own faults and wrongdoings. Deliverance had taken place in Saul. He was blind for 3 days, and during that time he neither ate nor drank; a sign of his deep repentance. After this deliverance, Saul was healed of his blindness when Ananias laid hands on him; he was also filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:3-19).

This great miracle of deliverance and healing in Paul brought about a deep change in him. It was a genuine transformation that surprised not only the Pharisees, but also the believers of Jesus.

Paul's New Life

When Paul accepted Jesus as his Lord, he began his spiritual journey. With his deep desire to know more about Jesus, and the realization that he needed to change his old way of life, the Spirit began to work actively in him. During his progress in the new life, God's deliverance worked continuously in him to help him realize his weaknesses. From then onwards, Paul learnt what it meant to be a disciple - to be submissive and obedient; and finally, to become like the master.

Paul understood what this new life meant; everything else was "rubbish" compared to having Jesus. Thus, he had a deep

desire to die to himself and let Christ's nature grow within (Rom 13:14, Gal 3:27). This transformation in Paul's life was made possible by the power of the Spirit that produced many "self-deliverances" that set him free from his many weaknesses. As Paul grew in his faith, the life and ministry of Jesus became ever more evident in his life. Hence, we can say that Paul truly preached the full Gospel of Christ - that is to say, he not only preached about Jesus but, at the same time, he also demonstrated the power of Jesus!

Paul's Faithfulness

Many are called, few are chosen and fewer still will remain faithful (Matt 22:14, Rev 17:14). But Paul remained faithful to Jesus till the end. His discipleship was a living testimony of Jesus living in him, and his acceptance of Jesus as his "Saviour and Lord". This acceptance by Paul was not only in his head but in every aspect of his very life. The life and power of Jesus resided in him. Even in times of problems, hardships and sickness, Paul ensured that none of these would affect his faith in the Lordship of Jesus. Not even the dark powers of the occult were able to make him change his mind. Instead, in faith he challenged these powers (Acts 13:9-12).

Paul's Teachings on Human Nature

There was a big difference between Paul's past life and his new life. Paul's new life benefited him spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally. He bore the fruits of the Spirit (Jesus' character as mentioned in Gal 5:22) and the gifts of the Spirit (Jesus' power as described in 1Cor 12:4-11). As such, he was a very Spirit-filled person, and this enabled him to teach much about the Spirit. It was this spiritual empowerment that

made Paul humble enough to acknowledge that he was himself a sinner.

“I know that good does not live in me - that is, my human nature.” (Rom 7:18). What Paul had benefited in this new life, he wanted us to also understand and experience. Let us see what Paul said about our human nature:

“What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions, in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have before: those who do these things will not possess the Kingdom of God.” (Gal 5:19-21)

“Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants. To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. And so a person becomes an enemy of God when he is controlled by his human nature; for he does not obey God’s law, and in fact he cannot obey it. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God.” (Rom 8:5-8)

“If he plants in the field of his natural desires, from it he will gather the harvest of death; if he plants in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit he will gather the harvest of eternal life.” (Gal 6:8)

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires.” (Gal 5:24)

“But take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop paying attention to your sinful nature and satisfying its desires.” (Rom 13:14)

I specially chose Paul because his life and teachings give us an excellent reflection. Like us, he was an “ordinary man”. Unlike the twelve apostles who had the opportunity to accompany Jesus, listen to Him directly, and were witnesses of the many miracles and healings worked by Jesus, Paul was not able to do so. Paul’s encounter with Jesus and what was revealed to him on the way to Damascus was purely the work of the Spirit. Paul’s life was filled with the Spirit, and he became one of the great apostles and evangelists. Paul’s teachings were simple and direct, and his very own life was a “living proof” that “Jesus is alive!”

Christians are a spiritual people - we need to put more emphasis on our spiritual lives. This ultimately means developing a closer relationship with God. We call Him, “Father.” Thus, we are His children because He has sent His Spirit to us, making us sons and heirs (Gal 4:7). “Father and children” denotes a relationship that is family in nature. Thus, God is a “family God” because God wants to have a loving family relationship with us.

The new life given to us by Jesus needs to be fully appreciated by all of us. This new life is what leads to our salvation, and we should desire that this new life grow steady and strong, not through human ability, but by relying on the power of the Helper, the Holy Spirit. However, whether or not to let this new life grow is left to our own freedom to choose.

Before my spiritual growth started, I did not go to church regularly; neither did I pray the rosary nor read the Bible. There was a real absence of prayer in my life then. As such, in my early stages of spiritual growth, I made an earnest desire to

change: prayer, the Word of God and attending Church are the foundations of a spiritual life, and they gradually became part of my daily life. Next, the Lord revealed to me the need to be transformed.

One night, after my prayers, and while I was resting, I saw a tiny sparkle of light coming from a distance. As this light came closer to me, I could see more clearly the form of a man. To my great surprise, this man looked exactly “like me”. In fact, he represented me. He looked so horrible. His body was covered with sores and boils, and not even a single spot of his skin was not covered with sores. His shirt was tattered, and he stank like a dead, rotten rat. I was filled with fear looking at myself in this condition, and suddenly a voice spoke to me:

“My son, this ‘man’ that you are looking at is your very own true self and shows you, spiritually, where you stand. Do you want my help to scrape off these sores for you?”

I immediately cried out “Yes Lord, please help me.” This spiritual phenomenon helped me to understand the need for me to change, to die to my sinful self, and to grow in the new life that Jesus had given me. Those horrible sores and boils, the tattered shirt and terrible smell, represented my sinful human nature, my bad character and attitudes. They also included all my weaknesses; like pride, selfishness, jealousy, envy, anger and destructive behaviours. What I saw made me realize that the sinful nature in me was real and was not good, and that I needed the help of Jesus to change me.

Through this deep realization and acceptance of the need to change, the Holy Spirit then convicted me in my thoughts, words and actions. Each time I sinned or failed, I became very alert and sensitive to the Spirit’s conviction, and asked for God’s forgiveness and deliverance. This kind of continuous self-deliverance was most important in changing my life. Step-

by-step the changes in my life became more visible and evident.

Table I summarizes the key differences between my past life (without spiritual growth), and my present life (with spiritual growth).

	Past Life	Present Life
1)	Absence of God's deliverance. No realization of my own sinful self (and the need to change), filled with pride, no spiritual growth and no fear of God.	Aware of constant need of God's deliverance; with humble acknowledgement of own sins, faults and failures. Seek help of Holy Spirit to change. Continuous spiritual growth. Above all, there is fear of God.
2)	Do not understand love. Instead, clouded by doubts, fears, despair, frustration and anger. Weak in faith.	Express love within the family, for church, and others. Through love, peace becomes evident; even in times of hardships, trials and sickness. Fear gives way to the joy of the Lord
3)	Lived a defeated Christian life.	Experience the victory of Jesus and recognize God's blessings in all situations; in both good and bad times. Problems and trials provide spiritual lessons. Experience unity in family. Value the relationship with wife, children, and grandchildren above all worldly things.
4)	Fear of Darkness	Used by God in the Ministry of Deliverance & Healing

5)	Great fear of dying	Ability to pray, “Lord, when are you going to take me home?” Able to recognize God’s blessings are not only for present family but for “generation to generation.”
6)	Ignorant of the Holy Spirit	Constant need of the Helper, for the Spirit’s in-filling to truly worship God. Welcome the Spirit’s help in prayer; His guidance in my thoughts, words and actions, and to understand the Word of God. Allow His Gifts & Fruits to flow and operate. Guided by His wisdom, and learn from spiritual experiences. Experience wonders and miracles through His power.
7)	Very selfish	Become more generous in giving my time for God. Have deep concern for all Christians and their spiritual growth, and value deeper Christian fellowship, e.g. treat core-leaders as extension of own natural family. Understand and empathize with the weaknesses of others in the community, Church & world.

Table I

As Christians, let us ask ourselves: **“Are we sinners?”** If we say “no,” then this book will not have any benefit or meaning for us. However, if our answer is “yes,” then it is worthwhile reading this book and benefiting from it. We are clouded with many problems and fears, and the main cause of all these is our lack of spiritual growth and maturity.

Many Christians have the wrong perception and understanding about deliverance. More often than not, they think that deliverance is meant for those who are possessed or demonized by evil spirits. Some even think that they are “religious and holy enough”, and thus “have no need for deliverance”. While others think that since they already “know Jesus”, the devil should be afraid of them and so cannot make an entry into their lives.

If your life has similarities with my past life, I would encourage you to have a sincere and deep desire for God’s deliverance. Welcome the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Becoming a Christian is good, but not enough; and “faith” may perish if we take it for granted. We need to have a vision of how to live out this Christian life, and experience true fulfilment.

The following wise advice from the book of Proverbs is worth reflecting upon:

“It is the Lord who gives wisdom; from him come knowledge and understanding.” (Prov 2:6)

“You paid no attention to me. You have ignored all my advice and have not been willing to let me correct you.” (Prov 1:24-25)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way.” (Prov 3:5-6)

“Son, when the Lord corrects you, pay close attention and take it as a warning. The Lord corrects those he loves, as a father corrects a son of whom he is proud.” (Prov 3:11-12)

“The Lord puts a curse on the homes of wicked men, but blesses the homes of the righteous. He has no use for conceited people, but show favour to those who are humble.” (Prov 3:33-34)

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” (Prov 4:23)

“Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone.” (Prov 5:15)

“There are seven things that the Lord hates and cannot tolerate:

- 1. A proud look*
- 2. A lying tongue*
- 3. Hands that kill innocent people*
- 4. A mind that thinks up wicked plans*
- 5. Feet that hurry off to do evil*
- 6. A witness who tells one lie after another*
- 7. And a man who stirs up trouble among friends” (Prov 6:16-19)*