

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE VOLITION

INTRODUCTION

In this study we are going to examine positive volition toward God and Bible doctrine. Positive volition is a consistent attitude wherein believers make clear cut and confident decisions to study, learn and apply doctrine without allowing obstacles to get in the way. The word positive means: 1) to express clearly and confidently a certain action. 2) A motion or decision that is definite, unyielding, constant or certain in its action.

There is a deep desire or a yearning in all believers, especially those new to the faith. Just as the physical body needs food and the soul desires stimulation, the human spirit which has been created within the believer at the moment of salvation by God the Holy Spirit, also hungers to be filled. This desire has been placed within the believer by God. It is a very delicate and sensitive desire that can be hindered by arrogance or emotionalism and it can ultimately be extinguished by hardness of the heart, scar tissue of the soul and an inordinate occupation with the details of life. Unfortunately, not every believer does what is required to have this desire fulfilled. Consistent growth in the spiritual life allows the believer to become stronger and stronger with the capacity to handle the most difficult situations in life. The writer of Psa 119 had this compelling desire even as he was being dragged into slavery. Psa 119:16 *"I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word."* In verse 24 he again reveals his positive volition by stating, *"Thy testimonies also are my delight; They (doctrine and testimonies) are my counselors."*

Positive volition toward Doctrine is the driving desire which motivates believers to overcome all obstacles and center their life in Doctrine. It causes the believer to stay occupied with the Word of God in time of disaster. It gives him spiritual energy in time of pressure. Often the different trials and tests of life become a source of frustration for believers and they just want to run for cover. However, but the believer with positive volition can take comfort in doctrine. The words of Jeremiah shed light on this burning desire, Jer 20:9 *"But*

if I say, I will not mention Him or speak anymore in His name, His word is in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.” Positive volition toward Bible doctrine is manifested by a burning fire within that cannot be quenched. Psa 42:1 says, *“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God.”*

The question is: Why does this desire reside in some but not in others? Well, new believers are in a state of ignorance regarding the thoughts of God; if one is receptive to doctrine, they will grow in grace and knowledge, but if indifferent and distracted, ignorance will continue because of this negative volition. However, once the believer has had a taste of Bible doctrine, he is not satisfied with a little, he must have more. Psa 63:1 *“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”* Because positive volition toward Doctrine is so important and determines the believer's status with God experientially, the Lord has provided everything needed to fulfill this desire:

1. God has provided the mechanics of inspiration for the formation and preservation of the canon of Scripture.
2. God provides the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit inside the Pre-designed Plan of God (PPOG) enabling us to understand the mechanics for the execution of His plan.
3. God provides the Divine plan for the Church and the PPOG for the Royal Family of God.
4. God provides a right Pastor-teacher for every member of the royal family who is positive to Doctrine. There is no such thing as a self-made Christian.
5. God provides the privacy of the royal priesthood for the perception of mystery doctrine. Every believer is given a royal priesthood for the purpose of freedom and privacy.
6. Logistical Grace Support. Every member of the royal family is kept alive for the equal privilege and the equal opportunity to execute God's plan. This includes the provisions for food, clothes, shelter, transportation and the other necessities of life.
7. God provides the local church as the classroom for the royal family to learn His Word.
8. God provides human volition as the means of integrating Doctrine into the life of the believer.

These are the provisions that God provides so that Christians may exercise their positive volition and grow in grace and knowledge. Remember, doctrine loves those who diligently seek wisdom, Pro 8:17 *“I [doctrine] love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me, will find me.”*

POSITIVE VOLITION AND CHURCH AGE DOCTRINE

The New Testament Canon of Scripture contains the mystery doctrine of the Church-age. It is called mystery doctrine, because it had been hidden from all previous dispensations. The Church-age is not a period of miracles; it is a period of utilization of Divine dynamics or power acquired through the use of positive volition toward Bible doctrine. For example, all Christians have a destiny, and they learn about this destiny through the knowledge gained from the study of the Word of God. The more you learn about Doctrine, the stronger your motivation to learn Doctrine becomes, resulting in greater positive volition. The greater your positive violation, the more you learn about God's plan, purpose and will for your life. Positive volition toward doctrine is an active desire to know God. When this happens the believer should appreciate the invisible work of God and recognize that even the maturing of his own positive volition is from God. As the believer grows, his positive volition expands. Being firmly grounded in the truth, his doctrinal thinking becomes his outlook on life. In other words positive volition becomes a blessing in itself, a blessing which allows the believer to fulfill the conditions of the PPOG, making the motivation of positive volition a driving force and a source of even greater blessing in the believer's life. The concept of positive volition is expressed in Rom 14:19 *“So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”* The word *pursue* expresses positive volition toward that which gives us all the details regarding God's plan for our lives after salvation. This includes the perception, metabolization and application of the mystery doctrine of the Church-age as the means of executing the PPOG. The execution of the PPOG results in the manufacture of spiritual champions.

Positive volition is never automatic; any believer at any time, in any stage of spiritual growth can become dull of hearing described in Heb 5:11-12, *“Concerning Him [Christ Jesus] we have much to say and it is hard to explain (difficult to teach) we have many doctrines to communicate and hard to explain because you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, but you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid*

food.” The writer of Hebrews is describing believers who at one point were anxious to hear the Word of God, but over time they faded away. Repeated negative volition produces a believer who is dull of hearing. Through a process of reaction, bitterness and emotionalism, they became dull and boring. These verses tell us that they were taught so well that they should be teaching others by this time. But, a believer can lose the doctrine that has been attained through a series of negative decisions. Then the believer has to start all over again, and this is a difficult thing to do. So, there was once a time that the believer was gun-ho for doctrine. They loved the teaching and the doctrine and had positive volition. Then carnality and legalism creeps in closely followed by self-righteousness and arrogance. They became deceived and confused, not realizing that they simply needed to recover the filling of the Holy Spirit and move forward. Believers in this fallen state start to demand entertainment and gimmicks. They seek that which is shallow and superficial and reject what is deep. They partake only of the milk of the Word and are not mature enough to eat the meat of the Word.

Now compare this with the positive believers who keep on growing through the solid food of the Word:

In Jam 3:2 they are the ones who control their tongue.

In Eph 4:13 they are the ones who grow and mature in the knowledge.

In Heb 6:1 they are the ones who go on to advance doctrinally.

In 2Co 12:9 they are the ones whose strength is matured in weakness.

In Phi 3:15 they are the ones who do not quit.

In Jam 1:4 they are the ones who are patient during times of trouble.

In Col 3:14 they are the ones who operate in love.

In 1Jo 2:5 they are the ones who keep Doctrine in their soul.

In 1Co 13:11 the mature are the ones who are of one mind and who live in prosperity, and put away childish things. In 1Co 14:20 they cultivate their understanding.

In Heb.5:14 they partake of advanced doctrine and deeper truth.

In 1Jo 2:14 they overcome the temptations of life.

These are the mature believers, those with positive volition. Advanced doctrine

produces the ability to discern between being involved in grace and truth, or being involved in legalism, self-righteousness, and religion. And this discernment comes from the consistent intake of doctrine. Only the believer with positive volition toward doctrine can distinguish between grace and legalism or the honorable good and the evil good. Positive volition gives the believer proper motivation in life. Positive volition also leads to the believers' spiritual growth. Through the exercise of retaining doctrine that is learned, and then recalling that doctrine to deal with the details of life, the believer is building spiritual muscle that will carry him through any storm. The Christian way of life includes a series of tests that the Lord allows into the believer's path to see how much doctrine has been learned, and to allow for accelerated spiritual growth. When a test is passed through recall of doctrine, the believer has advanced in God's plan.

RECEPTION, RETENTION AND RECALL RELATES TO POSITIVE VOLITION TOWARD DOCTRINE

For Christians with positive volition, reception of Bible doctrine is the number one priority. Daily or consistent exposure to Bible teaching takes precedence over everything else, and no one can learn doctrine without the help of a prepared pastor-teacher. God has delegated the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher to certain male believers for the communication of His Word to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians with positive volition will find, or be led to, the pastor-teacher that God has chosen for them (Act 20:28; 1Pe 5:3). This pastor-teacher should be someone who is faithful in the verse-by-verse teaching of Bible doctrine; building line upon line, precept upon precept. Proper doctrinal teaching is based on three principles: 1) Isagogics- the Bible must be interpreted within the framework of its historical setting. 2) Categorical Communication of Doctrine- Scripture is compared with Scripture to determine the classification of Doctrine. 3) Exegetical Communication of Doctrine - Each verse of Scripture is analyzed to determine the exact meaning in relationship to the context as a whole, analyzing grammar, syntax and etymology. Daily exposure to Bible teaching can come either through attendance at a local church where doctrine is taught, this is called face to face teaching, or through a consistent program of teaching such as audio, tape, video, radio, TV. or the printed word. It should be noted here that a Christian with positive volition is commanded to not forsake the local assembly. So, even if there is no local assembly of others with positive volition, one can interact and serve in a ministry from another area. Of course it is a great blessing to have a doctrinal ministry nearby and be able to interact with them. The principle of reception of

doctrine includes the concepts of concentration and avoidance of distractions. During that time which is given for exposure to doctrine, the Christian with positive volition concentrates 100% on what is being taught, he is filled with the Holy Spirit, residing in his PPOG, shutting out all distractions. You need to be aware of succumbing to the following areas of potential distractions, blunting the life of positive volition:

1. Legalism
2. Money
3. Business
4. Family
5. Arrogance and hypersensitivity
6. Wrong priorities
7. Failure to use problem solving devices
8. Christian fellowship and services outside of PPOG
9. The Lust Pattern of the Old Sin Nature. Power Lust. Approbation Lust. Monetary Lust. Pleasure Lust. Revenge Lust. Crusader Lust. Social Lust. Chemical Lust. Criminal Lust.
10. Inordinate Ambition

Retention of doctrine is the spiritual function of converting academic (gnosis) Doctrine into metabolized (epignosis) doctrine. Only metabolized doctrine provides spiritual growth and momentum. It provides spiritual energy for living the Christian way of life. Remember, the Christian way of life is a supernatural way of life and requires a supernatural means of execution. It is the only way to execute God's plan and purpose for your life. This spiritual function requires positive volition under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. First of all there is Retention, which works like this: First the believer chooses to listen to doctrine taught by a prepared pastor-teacher, this is the first positive decision. Next is Retention where the believer chooses to believe that which is being taught, this is the second positive decision. Then there is Recall, which is the application of metabolized doctrine resident in the soul structure of the believer to the various and diverse experiences of life. It is the utilization of all assets necessary to meet both adversity and prosperity, enabling the positive believer to have the same perfect happiness in all situations. The only issue is one's positive volition. The positive believer will use the proper mechanics to convert

academic knowledge to metabolized knowledge. Once Doctrine is metabolized through the 3-Rs, Reception, Retention and Recall, the believer is able to live the Christian way of life. Therefore we have this principle; Consistent positive volition toward doctrine results in the attainment of spiritual growth and the experience of having a personal sense of destiny.

1Co 2:4-15 emphasizes the importance of this positive volition, *“And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God. Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man.”*

Positive volition is closely linked to the concept of privacy of the Priesthood. Privacy is that principle of freedom whereby an individual has the right to grow at his own desired pace without the manipulation and observation of others. The privacy of the Priesthood permits the function of both positive volition toward doctrine plus the right to metabolize and apply that Doctrine to the experiences of life. Privacy of the Priesthood guarantees that every believer has a right to live his own life as unto the Lord. This privacy guarantees that every believer has the right to live under the Plan of God without distraction or interference from others.

Believers with positive volition must resist the tendency to be arrogant and interfere with other believers' experiences. Every believer with positive volition has the right to assemble in the local church and receive doctrinal instruction without interference. They have the right to assemble without their personal life or business being an issue; without being maligned, gossiped about, or

criticized. This is an important principle to understand if positive volition is going to flourish in a local assembly. Only The Lord knows the spiritual status of each individual Christian. No one has the right to examine and scrutinize other believers, because no one is omniscient, no one has all the facts of another person's life. Note the following passages of Scriptures where the principle of privacy is taught. Rom.14:4 *“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”* Rom 4:10 *“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.”* Believers are taught only to examine themselves and their own motivation, not of others. 1Co11:28 *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat the bread and drink of the cup.”*

2Co13:5 *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?”*

2Th.3:11-12, *“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.”*

Believers are to exhort and encourage others to achieve excellence and not place roadblocks or improper standards in their way. The Lord will evaluate each and every one of His children. No one else has the authority to do this. It is no one else's business. Each believer must stand or fall on his own before The Lord. There are certain relationships whereby these principles do not apply in full like the parent-child and employer-employee relationships.

FINDING YOUR RIGHT PASTOR-TEACHER

At the moment of salvation, certain male believers are endowed by God the Holy Spirit with the gift of pastor-teacher. Eph 4:11 *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelist, and some as pastors and teachers.”* The purpose of the pastor-teacher is given in Eph 4:12 *“For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ.”* As a part of each believer's destiny, he is given access to the ministry of a well trained pastor-teacher. Positive volition is the tool that is needed to unlock the mysteries of Scripture, but the believer can't do this alone; he needs a dedicated, prepared pastor-teacher to lead the way to spiritual maturity. Let's look at two points in regards to the pastor-teacher and those under his charge:

1) every believer is called to study under a pastor-teacher. 2) A pastor-teacher has authority over only one congregation at a time. 1Th 5:12 teaches that believers have a pastor-teacher who has charge over them, “*But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.*” The phrase *appreciate* is translated from the perfect active infinitive of the Greek word *oida*, which also means to know, to perceive, to recognize, to become aware of. The perfect tense means that each believer must be convinced of the fact and know completely that there exists a pastor-teacher just for them. The active voice means the believer must make his own decision and choose his own pastor-teacher. The infinitive mood denotes that it is the purpose of the believer to know, to perceive, to recognize, to become aware of his pastor-teacher. Remember, no one is everyone's right pastor-teacher. God has given this gift to all types and character of men with many diverse personalities. So, with all these different types of people who comprise the body of Christ, it is natural for certain Christians to be drawn to certain pastor-teachers. The gift of pastor-teacher was given by God to equip and train the Royal Family for combat. Believers cannot afford to be without training for the spiritual battle which exists in this world. The phrase *diligently labor* is the present active participle of *kopiao*, meaning to grow weary, work hard, to toil. The present tense means they diligently labor habitually. The active voice means the pastor-teachers themselves produce the labor. The participle tells us that the labor is the pastor-teacher's job. It is what he is called to do and should do it as unto The Lord, with all his might. Finally, we have the phrase *have charge over you in the Lord*, the present middle participle of *proistemi* which means to be set over you, to have charge of you. The present middle tense means that in the Church-age no believer will ever be without some pastor-teacher who will have charge over them. The middle voice says that the pastor-teacher has received the charge, but it is to the believer's benefit, it is a gift from The Lord.

The second passage which amplifies this first principle is 1Pe 5:3, “*nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples of the flock.*” The Greek word *kleros* is the Greek word which means allotted to your charge and it refers to those assigned to the charge of a certain pastor. The new Thayer's Greek-English lexicon says this about this verse: “Those whose care and oversight has been assigned to one presbyter or pastor-teacher.” God's will is perfect and He makes perfect decisions regarding what pastor should be shepherding and overseeing a certain group of believers. He has perfect knowledge and knows exactly where every believer should receive instruction. (Other passages which illustrate this are Col 1:17, 4:17; Phi 2:25; 3Jo 4). The one thing that you should make sure of in choosing a pastor-teacher is to find one that gives you instruction based entirely on the Word of God using the principles of isagogics, categorical and exegesis. No believer is ever called to a ministry where a pastor-teacher is not doing his job of studying and instructing

his congregation in the Scriptures. Acts 20:28 helps to illustrate our second principle. Paul is addressing elders or pastors, upon whom the Holy Spirit has bestowed the gift of pastor-teacher, “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” The phrase *has made* is the aorist middle indicative of *tithemi* meaning also to place, appoint, assign. So, the pastor-teacher is assigned and placed in charge over a particular flock of believers. The word *overseers* is from the Greek word *episkopos*, meaning guardian of the flock, overseer, supervisor, superintendent and policy maker. An interesting principle is that the words flock and church are both in the singular, illustrating that there is one pastor for one congregation. Pastors are not to shepherd flocks or churches, but a flock or a church. The word *church* in the singular cannot refer to the entire church because it would be totally impossible for any pastor to take care of the entire church. As we have already seen, finding your right pastor-teacher means finding a man who is prepared, dedicated and faithful in the communication of Bible doctrine. It also means consistent exposure to his teaching either through attendance at a local church, called face to face teaching; or through a consistent program of non face to face teaching, such as audio, tape, video, radio, T.V. or the printed word.

To find your right pastor-teacher you need to understand what to look for and where to find it. So let's look at some biblical terms for the pastor. In Eph 4:11 Paul uses two words in the Greek from which we get our term pastor-teacher, “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.*” The first word is the *poimen*, which means shepherd and denotes the pastor's authority over a specific congregation. The second Greek word is *didaskalos*, which emphasizes the idea of one person teaching a group of people. The authority resides in the teacher while congregation assembles to learn doctrine as students under authority. Between these two words is the conjunction *kai* that coordinates them instead of subordinating them, so the correct translation is pastor-teacher. This category of the pastor's authority cannot exist apart from positive volition. Wherever positive volition exists, God will provide a communicator of doctrine. Every Church-age believer has his own right pastor-teacher to satisfy his need and desire for doctrine. Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ controls history, He knows where positive volition will exist in each generation. In times of great positive volition, there will always be enough pastors to meet the demand. It may not be a totally convenient situation, but if a believer has a positive volition God will provide him or her the place to exercise it.

Another Greek word used to refer to the pastor is *episkopos* and is translated bishop in the King James. This word is found in Phi 1:1; 1Ti 3:1-2; Tit 1:7; 1Pe 2:25 and means guardian of the flock, overseer, supervisor, superintendent and policy maker. Through faithful communication of doctrine, the pastor becomes

the guardian and the chief policy maker for the local church. His policy making is based on his teaching of the Word of God.

Finally, the last Greek word that we are going to look at is *presbuteros* which means *the old man* in the sense of being in the highest authority, the commanding officer. It appears in 1Ti 5:17-19; Jam 1:5; 5:14 and 1Pe 5:1 among others. Every local church has only one commander and he has no greater responsibility than that of leading those in his congregation with positive volition to spiritual maturity through his faithful teaching of doctrine. The greatest doctrinal teaching in the world from any pastor is no guarantee of spiritual growth; it is merely the first phase. It is the believer's decision to either accept or reject that which has been taught. If the believer is positive, the Holy Spirit metabolizes the doctrine and it is stored in the soul structure of the believer. Metabolized doctrine is a private matter between the believer and the Holy Spirit. The believer provides the positive volition and the Holy Spirit then metabolizes the doctrine.

So, God has provided a means of executing His plan for every Church-age believer. God provides prepared pastor-teachers who faithfully teach doctrine. The believer has the volition to accept or reject this teaching, in the privacy of his priesthood. If accepted, God the Holy Spirit teaches the believer and stores the doctrine in the soul of the believer. This enables the believer to grow spiritually. By using this stored doctrine to solve the problems of life, the believer advances and becomes more conformed to the image of Christ Jesus day by day. Positive volition is the key that gives the believer the chance to learn more doctrine and apply it to the circumstances of his life. Each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, at the moment of salvation, is baptized or incorporated by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Those men who have been chosen by God the Holy Spirit to receive the gift of pastor-teacher are the joints and ligaments that hold the Body of Christ together. Eph 4:16 says in corrected translation, "*From whom [Jesus Christ], the whole body being fitted [Baptism of the H.S.], and being inculcated [repetitious teaching of the mystery doctrine] by that [doctrine] which every joint supplies [pastor-teacher] on the basis of the operational power of each individual part [omnipotence of Trinity] causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*" Joints provide unity of the body and give it cohesion permitting motion and coordination. They are the points of contact and the connection between various parts of the body which allows the body to function properly. Different parts of the body represent the variety of differences among believers from the standpoint of spiritual gifts, growth, progress, function, and personality. In First Corinthians there are 12 different parts of the body mentioned which represent different spiritual gifts in the Royal Family of God. At salvation every believer receives a spiritual gift. Just as there are differences in the joints of the body, so there are differences among pastor-teachers. God the Holy Spirit has given the gift to a multitude of

various personalities, but personality is not the issue. The only job that the pastor-teacher has to concern himself with is to inculcate and indoctrinate his congregation in Doctrine. He must be prepared and persistent, teaching line upon line, precept upon precept, consistently studying and teaching. The doctrinal taught then links the members of the Body of Christ together. Therefore, all members of the Royal Family of God are linked together, not by personalities, not by conformity to a standard of legalism, not by human rapport and not in conformity to false standards or false doctrine, but by the doctrinal teaching from the pastor-teacher. Joints also provide the basis for exercise and strength building in the body. Without joints, the human body couldn't move and would eventually decay. Likewise, without the function of pastor-teachers, the body of Christ would lack spiritual growth and retrogress from lack of spiritual food, vitality, and power. Just as physical muscle is constructed through exercise, so also is spiritual strength built through the consistent teaching of doctrine. As a result of consistent perception, the believer grows as a part of the Body of Christ, possessing strength, endurance and coordination. It is the faithful teaching of the Mystery Doctrine of the Church-age by faithful pastor-teachers which provides the dynamic energy for the Royal Family of God. Without this there would be no fulfillment of God's plan, no production of Divine good, and no spiritual champions. Believers cannot attain spiritual maturity and become spiritual champions apart from the perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. This is the motivation to have and maintain positive volition toward doctrine.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

The spiritual gift of pastor-teacher describes the active authority in the Royal Family of God only during the dispensation of the Church-age. During the dispensation of Israel, there were no pastor-teachers and after the rapture of the church, they will never function again on earth. The pastor's authority is described in Heb 13:7 *“Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”* Heb 13:17 *“Obey your leaders, and submit to them: for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”* Pastors don't rule over you in the sense of telling you what to do or interfering in how you live your life, but in the sense of teaching you what God expects from you and how to execute His plan. You submit to the pastor's authority by listening to their communication of doctrine and learning what he has prepared for your enlightenment. His authority is established on the basis of his teaching of

doctrine, the issue is not the man, but the message. His ministry is not to violate the privacy of the individual's priesthood. The apostle Paul, in one of his last epistles, provided some principles and commands that the pastor-teacher should follow in conducting his life. 2Ti 2:15 *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”* 2Ti 2:24 *“And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged.”* 2Ti 4:2 *“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”* Your right pastor should be someone who works very hard in teaching Doctrine, working to the point of exhaustion (1Ti 4:10). Their job is to study and teach, concentrating on learning the Word of God and teaching it to his congregation. He has humility and is free from arrogance, recognizing that it is not his ministry, but the Lord's.

Let's review a few major points:

- The function of the pastor-teacher is to teach and inculcate his congregation with Church-age mystery doctrine. This is the means by which the body of Christ grows as each individual member advances through the stages of spiritual life (Eph 4:16).
- Through this teaching, members of the body of Christ advance to maturity. Spiritual champions are manufactured and God is glorified.
- Spiritual growth occurs in only one way, growth through the perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. There is no growth through church programs, Christian fellowship or Christian service apart from Doctrine.
- No believer advances in the Christian life through any form of works, sacrifice or service.
- God uses prepared, faithful and doctrinal men as pastor-teachers.
- Pastor-teachers should function under the principles of preparation, patience and perseverance.

People will come and go, their interests will rise and fall, so the pastor-teacher can only stand and teach to the best of his ability. Let's take a look at some of the elements that contribute toward the making of a good congregation. Most of the members of a good congregation have identified their right pastor-teacher. They are content to remain under his authority and submit to his teaching. They are willing to support the policy he puts forth, and are consistent in their intake of Bible doctrine, utilizing positive volition, objectivity, poise and good academic discipline while being under the guidance of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Good congregations are also thoughtful of other members, and

recognize the privacy of others by avoiding distractions like mental attitude sins. Through spiritual growth and progress, the good congregation follows the pastor in his spiritual advance, staying hot on his heels. They come to be blessed of God in time and are relaxed about their blessings, occupying themselves with Christ, sharing His happiness and enjoying their capacity for life. They are not jealous or envious of one another, rather they grow together, each at their own pace, rejoicing with those who rejoice and comforting those who weep. They are bound together by doctrine, the Holy Spirit and their occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when a pastor has positive volition toward doctrine and is faithful in carrying out his duties, he has the opportunity to receive a special reward designed only for pastor-teachers. A good congregation can inspire him to reach this goal. Those in his congregation who have attained spiritual maturity are the crown of glory for the faithful pastor. 1Th 2:19-20, *“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”* So the happiness of the pastor comes from the positive response of those faithful to his teaching of the Word of God and together they can enjoy the blessings of time and the rewards of eternity. 1Pe 5:4 *“And when the Chief Shepherd [Christ] appears [the rapture], you [faithful pastors] will receive the unfading crown of glory.”* Phi 4:1 personalizes this concept: *“Therefore, my brethren, loved ones [congregation who is respected for their faithfulness], deeply desired ones, my happiness and my crown, keep on being stabilized [winners of the crown of righteousness].”*

POSITIVE VOLITION AT THE GNOSIS STAGE OR AT THE POINT OF RECEPTION

Let's take a look at positive volition as it functions at the point of reception of doctrine. This stage will be divided into four segments: Stage one is communication by the pastor teacher. Stage two is the Holy Spirit teaching our human spirit. At stage three, doctrine is transferred to the left lobe of the soul where it becomes gnosis doctrine. Stage four, the Holy Spirit converts gnosis doctrine into epignosis doctrine when you have positive volition toward the doctrine that has been taught. In stage one, the pastor teaches doctrine to a group of believers in either of the two different categories which we already noted; in a local church to a group of assembled believers or in a non face-to-face situation via modern technology. He interprets Scripture within the framework of its historical setting or prophetic environment and in the original languages in which it was written, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. In this sense, he is a detective, going back to the ancient world and associating the

words in the Bible with life at that time, and how those words were used. Each verse in a given context must be analyzed grammatically and syntactically from the original language. Stage one includes the pastor's preparation of his message. In this area, he must realize that there are certain important principles related to his authority in the teaching of the Word of God. First, there is revelation where God makes known the unknown. It is doctrine from God reduced to writing in the Canon of Scripture. Next there is inspiration which is the divine means employed whereby Doctrine is accurately transmitted into the written form of the Canon of Scripture. Then there is illumination which is the enabling power of the Holy Spirit providing the pastor with the ability to understand doctrine. No pastor can succeed apart from a maximum relationship with the Holy Spirit. Finally, there is interpretation which is the pastor's verbal expression of doctrine to the congregation under the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

So, stage one finds the faithful pastor studying the Word of God under the filling of the Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit provides the ability to comprehend, concentrate, organize, categorize and interpret, so that he can then communicate that doctrine to the congregation. This stage is the believer's first option regarding doctrine. The believer expresses his positive volition at this point by being where doctrine is taught and listening to it. Then, he must use his positive volition to be filled with the Holy Spirit enabling him to concentrate on the teaching with poise, good manners and academic discipline. Human I.Q. is not the issue in the perception, metabolization and application of doctrine. The only issue is that you are exposed to doctrine and have a positive attitude toward it. In stage two, the enabling power of the Holy Spirit teaches the human spirit of the believer the content of Bible doctrine communicated by the teaching of the Word of God. This principle is taught in 1Co 2:14 "*The natural man [unbeliever] cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them because they are discerned by the Spirit.*" The term *natural man* is translated from the Greek word *psuchikos* and can better be expressed as the soulish man. The unbeliever has only a body and a soul; he does not possess a human spirit. At the moment of salvation, God the Holy Spirit creates in the new believer a human spirit, which qualifies him to receive spiritual information and function in the pre-designed plan of God. So, in stage two the pastor communicates the doctrine that he has studied, and when the believer listens and concentrates while filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit puts that information into his human spirit so that he understands it as spiritual phenomena. Now make sure you understand that the teaching content of the sermon or Bible study can be converted into spiritual phenomena only by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the communicated doctrine that is received by the human spirit, and makes it understandable as spiritual phenomena. Where there is positive volition, the Holy Spirit will turn that information into spiritual phenomena that can be understood. Once the doctrine

has reached this point, it is ready to be processed to stages three and four. As we have seen the first conversion comes to the believer who allows the Holy Spirit to take communicated doctrine and make it understandable. This means that the believer is willing to listen to the teaching of Bible doctrine. In stage three the doctrine has been prepared for the believer's second decision- will he make the positive decision to allow the Holy Spirit to turn the gnosis doctrine into epignosis doctrine? In the next chapter, we will discuss more fully stage four of the spiritual process metabolizing doctrine.

POSITIVE VOLITION AT RETENTION OR HAVING GNOSIS CONVERTED INTO EPIGNOSIS

No one can effectively live the Christian way of life apart from epignosis doctrine, which occurs when the believer with positive volition allows the Holy Spirit to transfer doctrine to the soul where it is metabolized and stored in the right lobe (heart) as epignosis doctrine. There is no spiritual momentum apart from epignosis doctrine. The doctrine must be digested and stored in the heart of the believer so that it can be recalled when necessary to deal with the circumstances of life. This gives the believer the capacity and contentment to enjoy life to the fullest and live a productive life which brings glory to God the Father and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. You can have a world of zeal for God but if you do not have epignosis or metabolized doctrine your zeal is meaningless. Rom 10:2 teaches this point, *"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with (epignosis) knowledge."* Without epignosis Doctrine, the believer cannot grow spiritually. Metabolized doctrine is needed to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and to please Him in all things (Col. 1:9,10). It is the only way that the believer can ever understand the mystery doctrine of the Church-age.

Stage four is the retention stage of learning doctrine, where gnosis doctrine turns to epignosis doctrine. Remember that stages 1-3 are the perception of doctrine or the reception stages. Doctrine is communicated by the pastor-teacher and the Holy Spirit converts it to spiritual phenomena. Then it is automatically transferred by the Holy Spirit to the left lobe where it becomes gnosis doctrine or academic perception of doctrine without spiritual benefit. Once Doctrine is stored, the believer can apply it to the experiences of his life. Without learning Doctrine, you can't properly evaluate your spiritual walk. The ability to relate Bible doctrine to everything in your life is developed through Doctrine. This is called wisdom.

The expression of positive volition at the epignosis stage can only occur inside

the PPOG. It is especially important here because it is the enabling power of the Holy Spirit that allows the believer to respond by faith. Once the Doctrine is understood as gnosis, the believer responds positively or negatively. If the response is positive, the Holy Spirit converts believed gnosis into epignosis. And the interesting thing about all of this is that the entire process is grace at work. It doesn't depend on any human factor, only positive volition. So through positive perception while in the PPOG, God the Holy Spirit converts gnosis into epignosis if the believer is positive. The Holy Spirit can only metabolize that which is believed. An illustration of this process is the metabolization of food. Food on the grocery shelf is analogous to a pastor communicating doctrine. The food on the shelf doesn't do your body any good. It can't be of benefit until it is bought, prepared and eaten. Food on the table is analogous to the Holy Spirit converting doctrine into gnosis or understandable doctrine. It's prepared, it is ready to be eaten, but it has no value in and of itself. It must be eaten to be of benefit. So, food being consumed is analogous to the metabolization of doctrine. The only food that does the body good is that which is eaten, just as the only doctrine that does any good is that which is metabolized.

Only epignosis doctrine contributes to spiritual momentum, spiritual energy and spiritual growth. The Christian cannot function properly without metabolized doctrine, just as the body can't function without food. God's will for the Christian is to grow in His grace and knowledge, and the only means to comply with this mandate is through the perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. Grace and peace are only multiplied through epignosis doctrine (2Pe 1:2). Spiritual champions are manufactured out of metabolized doctrine and wisdom. One of the greatest gifts to the believer is how the Holy Spirit manufactures metabolized doctrine. It is policy borne entirely of the grace of God. This is the only way we can grow spiritually and fulfill God's plan, purpose and will for our lives. Under the principle of recall, epignosis doctrine is the basis for dealing with the experiences of life and solving problems. Since each believer acts as his own priest, doctrine must be learned in order to be applied. The believer's goal is to build an inventory of doctrine to meet every demand of life. The Bible teaches that wisdom in the heart is refreshing to the soul. Pro 2:10 *"For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;"* Pleasant to your soul indicates the presence of problem solving devices in your soul as you become spiritually self-sustaining. Pro 3:3 *"Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."* Writing them on the tablet of your heart means that you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and He is bringing to your memory and heart the appropriate doctrine which has been learned. The Bible also teaches that an intelligent person will seek the truth and enjoy fantastic peace. Pro 15:14-15 *"The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly. All the days of the afflicted are*

bad, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.” With positive volition everything falls into place. The believer develops a frame of reference which he utilizes to conquer the problems of life, and live a life filled with contentment and power.

Believers with positive volition develop a craving to be filled with the Word of God. There are several passages in Scripture which equate this craving with eating the Word of God. Jer 15:6 *“Your words were found, and I ate them; and your words (Doctrine) became happiness to me, and the delight of my heart.”* Eating God's Word is the equivalent of gnosis doctrine being converted to epignosis doctrine. Psa 119:103 *“How sweet are thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”* Psa 22:26 *“The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever!”* Isa 55:2 *“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good. And delight yourself in abundance.”* Remember, the pastor can only take you as far as your volition. He cannot give you wisdom; he can only give you knowledge. When doctrine is at the entrance of your soul and mind, it is up to you whether you will let it in or not. Inevitably, the whole process of learning doctrine is the work of the Holy Spirit, without Him none of this would be possible. The relationship that Church-age believers have with the Holy Spirit never existed in any previous dispensation; and it will never again exist in any other dispensation.

THE DISTRACTIONS TO POSITIVE VOLITION

There are many distractions to Bible doctrine, but we are going to focus on the one that causes the most problems – arrogance. Arrogant subjectivity can extinguish or suffocate positive volition toward doctrine. Arrogant subjectivity causes a believer to concentrate on personal problems instead of focusing on the doctrine that is being taught. If problems are on your mind while listening to doctrine, you won't hear anything; you'll just be trying to make the doctrine fit your problems. The Word of God is the essence of life and demands perception, concentration and focus. You can't think about problems and learn at the same time. You will always have problems, everyone has problems. The believer must use self-discipline and restrain himself, not thinking about the problems, but concentrating on the doctrine that is being taught. That which Bible doctrine teaches should be reality to the believer, but if you think your problems more important than anything else in life, you are disassociated from reality. Under the principle of self-discipline, the believer must be filled with

the Holy Spirit in order to approach Doctrine with objectivity and concentration. Self-discipline demands that learning overrules preoccupation with personal problems. The filling of the Spirit helps to restrain occupation with personal problems during Bible class. Rom 12:3 says, "*Stop thinking of yourself in terms of arrogance beyond what you ought to think.*" When you think of your problems during Bible class, you are operating in a form of arrogance and have distracted yourself. You might not immediately need what is taught in class on a particular night, but the doctrine that is learned will be needed at sometime. Doctrine is an interlocking, interdependent system of applying God's thinking to human life; it (doctrine) is the mind of Christ.

Personal problems are a distraction to objectivity and the ability to metabolize Doctrine. When you are in class, all personal problems become non-essentials, and doctrine becomes the center of the universe. Failure to set aside problems creates roadblocks to the perception and metabolization of that which is being taught. It leads to arrogance and ultimately to rationalizing the doctrine in order to fit what you believe to be the solutions to your problems. This arrogance divorces you from the reality of what the passage is actually teaching. It is arrogant to presume that every Scripture should be related to your current personal problems or that God is speaking directly to you concerning what is presently going on in your life. This type of attitude neutralizes positive volition and hinders spiritual advance. You are saying that your problems are greater than God's ability to solve them. You are saying that your problems are more important than doctrine. This is a type of egotism that leads the believer into a cycle of unwarranted self-importance.

Christian fellowship can even be a major distraction to positive volition. If you are a believer, the plan of God calls for His Word to be your number one priority in life. The believer cannot see God, and there is no way to come to know Him except through His Word. A relationship with God is an invisible one; therefore it depends on your ability to assimilate doctrine that is the determining factor in how much you will learn about Him and His activities. Never put fellowship with people above fellowship with God.

Now, let's note some of the disadvantages too Christian fellowship:

1. Christian fellowship can cause the establishment of wrong priorities through interaction with confused believers, a case of the weak controlling the strong.
2. Christian fellowship can be a distraction to Bible doctrine through preoccupation with friendship or romance.
3. Christian fellowship can become the basis for the acquisition of legalism through association with legalists.

4. Christian fellowship can become the basis for involvement in antinomianism through association with promiscuous believers. Some use Christian fellowship to pacify their loneliness without ever solving the problem of loneliness. Some use Christian fellowship as a dating bureau and marriage pool.

5. Christian fellowship can lead to acquiring erroneous views of Bible doctrine.

2Ti 3:2-7 *“For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, implacable, malicious gossips.”* Fellowship with Christians who fall into these categories is detrimental to spiritual growth and will soon cause you to become self-centered and arrogant. It should be mentioned here that Christian fellowship can also be a wonderful thing. Whether fellowship is detrimental or wonderful does not depend on the fellowship as such, but the mental attitude and virtue of the Christians who participate. If you do not put God first, your relationship with people in any periphery will be a mess and will have no spiritual significance. If you have fellowship with positive believers who have virtue, integrity, and who recognize the privacy of your priesthood, you can have wonderful relationships and make some of the greatest friendships in this life. The advantage of such relationships is that you are not depending on people, but you are centering your life in The Lord.

Many times the Lord has to bring a certain amount of suffering into the life of a believer to intensify positive volition and to prevent the believer from living in arrogance. Preventative suffering motivates the believer into positive volition toward doctrine. Let's look at the results of this type of preventative suffering through a passage in the Psalms. Psa 119:67-72, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy word. Thou are good and doest good; teach me Thy statutes. The arrogant have forged a lie against me; with all my heart I will observe Thy precepts. Their heart is covered with fat, but I delight in Thy law. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes. The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.”* In these verses, the psalmist has learned that suffering eliminates arrogance and motivates the believer to learn doctrine. He developed such a love for the Word of God that it became more valuable to him than silver and gold. So, in analyzing the entire situation we discover that suffering is actually another grace provision from God. It is designed to protect us from the greatest sickness in the human race; the disease called pride. Suffering motivates the believer to be positive toward doctrine and that doctrine in turn insulates the soul from pride. Finally, positive volition toward doctrine leads to respect for the Lord, which in turn leads to a fantastic life on earth and indescribable riches and rewards in eternity. There are fantastic blessings given to those who respect the Lord as the following passages illustrate: Psa31:19 *“How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who take*

refuge in Thee, before the sons of men! And there is no lack of need for those who take refuge in Him.” Psa34:9 *“O fear the Lord, you His saints; for to those who fear Him, there is no want.”* Respect for the Lord is something which must be taught.

Psa 34:11 *“Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”* The Lord will give more grace to those who respect Him.

Psa 147:11 *“The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His loving kindness.”* Life is prolonged for those who respect the Lord.

Pro14:26 *“In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge.”* Riches and honor come from respect for the Lord.

Pro 22:4 *“The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life.”* Fellowship with other believers should be based on respect for the Lord.

Psa 119:63 *“I am a companion of all those who fear Thee, and of those who keep Thy precepts.”*

Psa 119:74 *“May those who fear Thee see me and be glad, because I wait for Thy word.”*

In conclusion, the believer with positive volition will become a winner in the eyes of God who then is eligible for rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. One of the main reasons for the believer being here on earth is to bring glory to the Lord and He is only glorified by what he does for us, not by what we do for Him. We can only be rewarded when we live inside the plan of God and grow in grace and knowledge to reach spiritual maturity. Rewards are for those believers who through thick and thin, through good times and bad, in periods of prosperity or disaster, did not give up on Doctrine. They fought the good fight and came out victorious through their positive volition toward the Word of God.

CHAPTER 8 – THE ESSENCE OF POSITIVE VOLITION

Once we become part of God’s family, we belong to God forever and he has a special plan and purpose for us. He wants to have a special relationship with us. This fellowship is only possible through the believer’s positive volition and its resulting filling of the Holy Spirit. It is by means of our daily decisions that we establish a firm foundation enabling us to move forward in the Christian way of

life. Here is an important principle to remember: Becoming saved is easy, but being a disciple is more difficult and requires much more effort. Salvation is a one time decision, dependant on faith alone in Christ alone, but being His disciple calls for daily positive decisions toward God and His Word. We express our willingness to be disciples by taking up our cross daily (Luk 9:23). This means that we should have the same mental attitude that the Lord Jesus Christ had when He was walking upon the earth. Our Lord's mindset throughout His life was to do the will of His Father who was in heaven (Joh 5:30). Joh 8:29 *"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."* Joh 14:31 *"but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here."* Joh 12:49-50, *"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."* During His entire life on earth, it was the Lord's purpose to always fulfill the Father's plan. He never wavered, not even once. When He was facing the most painful death that could be imagined, he did not back away. When He was facing the prospect of spiritual separation from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, He stayed the course (Mat. 26:39). This is what it means to take up the cross daily. (See also Joh 14:23-24).

We express our willingness to be disciples by a consistent prayer life. This is the way we that we talk to God; it is our open line of communication directly to the Throne Room of God. Our Lord opened this direct line by His work on the Cross. Now we can bring any and every petition before God, and He will give us a hearing. In fact, it is His good pleasure to answer the prayers of His children. It is a good thing to start and finish each day with prayer. In the morning we can thank God for a new day and another chance to see His wondrous grace in action and at night we can thank Him for guiding us through another day. Don't be afraid to pray, God looks forward to hearing from you.

We express our willingness to be disciples by studying God's Word everyday through the pastor/teacher that God has provided. Doctrine is God's way of talking to us; it is His way of telling us about Himself, His plan, His purpose and how we should live. It is His desire that you know Him, and think the same way He does. He wants to show you His wisdom and power so that you can handle any situation in life. God wants you to have a life of meaning and purpose, filled with great blessings. The more you read and study the Bible under the filling of the Holy Spirit, the more you will come to know about the things of God. The only thing standing between you and this wonderful relationship with God is your own volition. Don't miss out; be positive and take hold of all that awaits you as a His child.