

**Borrowing from Fannie Crosby’s fantastic hymn, “Blessed Assurance”:
WHAT IS YOUR STORY, WHAT IS YOUR SONG?**

Revelation 5:6-14
www.prshockley.org

I. Introduction:

In his thought-provoking work on the historical meaning and significance of church design, *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals*, Richard Barron observes the following:

If you were to study the Gothic cathedrals in Europe you would find that almost all the Gothic cathedrals face the rising sun.

The eastern point of a typical Gothic church is where the altar is located and where communion takes place (called an apse). The altar area tends to be semi-circular in shape.

When the medieval priest conducted communion he was situated here at this eastern point, looking to the east, towards the altar and further, the rising sun, and not towards the people. The audience, following the priest, was also facing the east. This architectural orientation of the altar area was intentional, the design spiritually intense. The symbolic idea of worshipping God facing the east was done to be both a reminder to believers to look to Jesus Christ who is the light of the world and foster longing for Him who has risen and will one day return.

But let me add: When we turn toward something you inevitably turn away from something else. In other words, to set your face upon something is also to set your back on something. Therefore, the west side or front of the cathedral was used to symbolize the Christian resistance to all that is opposed to the light of Christ. Barron states, “*If the apse faces the rising sun, the façade, or the front of the church, confronts the setting sun and the powers of darkness.*”¹ It was the intention of the church’s architects to communicate “no” to the works of the devil. This explains why these facades, the front of these Gothic churches, bear designs that are gloomy, bristling, and are often fierce or scary looking; it is symbolic of the fighting face of Christianity against the works of the devil.² It calls evil by its name and seeks not to confuse, intermingle, or pretend that evil is somehow on some level decent; good and evil are polarized opposites...as the east is from the west.

Interestingly enough, if you go to the façade at the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, if you look closely, you see that the lines and rhythms of the façade are just a bit off. In fact, it leaves you with the impression that the architects were imprecise in their measurements for there is a lack of symmetry, parallelism, and balance. For example: There is a triangular design over the left side but not the right; the openings in the bell towers are all of slightly different widths; the number of kings on the left side is eight while the number on the right is seven. Now the question becomes “*Was this accidental or intentional?*”

¹ Robert Barron, *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals* (New York: Crossroads), 55-6.

² *Ibid.*, 56.

It was intentional. See, the medieval architects sought to communicate the idea of imperfection, disproportion, and a lack of symmetry that often effectively masks itself behind the veneer of beauty. And so the church points to the impact of the original sin upon creation, leaving creation disproportional, displaced, and fallen.

But in the very heart of this intentional, uneven, flawed design is the famous breath-taking circle, the stain glass rose window. Interestingly, medieval thought considered the circle to be the perfect shape, having no beginning or end, subsisting in splendid geometrical harmony.

So, when you look at the front of this cathedral the spiritual lesson communicated by the designers of the Gothic church is clear: Into our imperfect, disharmonious world has come the Son of God, Jesus Christ, He who is eternal, no beginning and no end, who is perfect, entered into our sin-cursed world in order to both save and restore us.

Now before you walk in through the main door or portal where the façade is located at the Notre-Dame cathedral you see right above the door a depiction of the Last Judgment. Jesus stands majestically in the middle, surveying the scene, while at his feet is the archangel Michael weighing in his scales the souls of the dead. Those who are not believers are led off by demons to damnation, and those who are worthy are led into God's kingdom. This, of course, is a depiction of the nations gathered before Christ where he is separating the sheep from the goats from Matthew 25.

So, right there as you stand before the gloomy if not scary façade outside of the Notre-Dame Cathedral where you see the gorgeous Rose Window depicting the beauty of Christ in the midst of flawed designs which symbolizes the results of the fall, as you walk through the main door (portal) into the Notre-Dame cathedral you walk under the reminder of the Final Judgment of all nations which is placed right above the door to the outside world.

While Gothic churches are designed to foster deep reflection upon what is evil and good, sin and sacrifice, damnation and glory, hell and heaven, the Book of revelation gives this most spectacular future scene of what happens just prior to the Great Tribulation. Consider the following words in chapter 5:

Read passage: Revelation 5:1-14

Friends, contemplating the worthiness of Christ should bring us to our knees! As H.A. Ironside once wrote, "The very world in which the Lord Jesus died is going to be the sphere in which the glory of God will be displayed..."³

Consider, Jesus is worthy of all of creation's worship. ***If Christ alone is worthy of this type of worship, then we should offer him no less; He should be the object of our utmost affections.***

Last time in our study of Revelation 5 the scene opened with the One sitting on the throne holding a scroll in his right hand. A question was made by an angel: Who is worthy to take and open this seven-sealed scroll? A search was made to determine who is worthy to take and open the scroll and no one was found. So John weeps, cries out in mourning. But an elder said to John not to weep for there is one who is worthy to take the scroll. The Lion, from the tribe Judah and the Root of David, is the Lamb standing, as if slain; He is worthy.

³ H.A. Ironside, *Revelation* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), 95.

II. Exposition of Revelation 5:6-14:

Verses 6-7: And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.⁷ And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

A. Now, looking more closely at verse 6 let's make some observations.

1. *First observation: Jesus is the centerpiece of worship.* Now Christ is described as a Lamb standing in the middle of the throne area. I suspect He is standing in the inner center of all the angelic creatures that surround the throne when the phrase states, "**standing between the throne.**" How do we know? First, in Revelation 3:21 we have observed that Jesus sat with the Father on His heavenly throne. Then, we have a clue found in Revelation 7 following the sealing of the 144,000. Let me read Revelation 7:9-16.
2. So, when Jesus comes to the Father to take the scroll in verse 7 John is merely depicting his movement from beside the Father to a position where He could receive the scroll.⁴ I personally picture it as moving from the throne area to the front of the Father's throne.
3. "**a Lamb.**" When you look at this first characteristic of Christ, He is described as a "Lamb." The Greek word for "Lamb" here is not the ordinary word for lamb. Rather, this word is chosen by John to be a very specific word in the Book of Revelation to describe the crucified Messiah (instead of *arnon* we have *arnion*). In fact, this word occurs 29 times in the Book of Revelation (chapters 5-7, 12-15, 17, 21, & 22) and to my knowledge it is only used once elsewhere in the N.T., John 21:15). The word, Lion, on the other hand is only used once in the Book of Revelation.⁵ Interestingly, the definite article is absent next to the word "**Lamb.**" By not having the definite article it *focuses our attention even more to Christ as the sacrificial lamb.*
4. "**Standing as one slain.**" *The Lamb who was sacrificed is standing.* Here you have a seeming paradox. On the one hand, the elder describes **Jesus as the lion of the tribe of Judah**" (5:5), depicting His supreme power. On the other, His appearance is that of "**a lamb standing as having been slain,**" which speaks of a supreme sacrifice. His supreme-sacrifice led to His kingly crown and rule just as summarized in Philippians 2:5-11.

⁴ Robert Thomas, *Revelation*, 1:390.

⁵ It is also used in the LXX 4 times.

5. J. Vernon McGee offers a very helpful comparison:⁶

Jesus as the Lion	Jesus as the Lamb
the lion character refers to His second coming	the lamb character refers to His first coming
the lion speaks of His majesty	the lamb speaks of His meekness
as lion He is sovereign	as lamb He is Savior
as lion He is Judge	as lamb He is judged
the lion speaks of the government of God	the lamb speaks of the grace of God

6. The phrase, “*standing as one slain*” does not imply that the Lamb “appeared to have been killed” because Scripture (as historical documents) overwhelmingly affirms that the Lamb, i.e., Jesus did actually die for our sins and actually bodily rose from the grave bearing the marks of his crucifixion.⁷
7. Even though the Lamb was slaughtered, He is standing. In fact, the way this participle, “*standing*,” is used in such a way to intensive (perfect tense), to point out the continuing character of the Lamb though the death wounds on the body still remain. Thus, *our next observation is that Jesus, who was slain, is standing, bearing the marks of His sacrifice.*

(vs. 6) *having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth*

8. In the OT the “*horn*” is a symbol of strength or power and was later used in Hebrew to symbolize dynastic force and royal dignity. The horns are seven in number which indicates completion, fullness, or perfection. *Therefore, the sacrificial Lamb with seven horns is the all-powerful Warrior-King.*⁸
9. Not only is the Lamb the all-powerful Warrior-King, *but He is also Omniscient.* Perhaps we have an illusion to Zechariah 3:9 and 4:10, “*The eyes of the Lord that range to and fro throughout the world.*” Nevertheless, this idea of that this is a reference to Jesus’ omniscience is clarified further when John states, “the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth. Just picture this:
- a. We are told in Revelation 1:14 that the eyes of the exalted Christ are like a flame of fire.
 - b. We are also told in Revelation 4:5 that the seven spirits of God blaze like torches before the throne of God which is symbolic of the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the throne room we have all three members of the one and only Triune God.

⁶ Chart from www.netbible.org, “The Sealed Book and the Lion Who was Also the Lamb (Revelation 5:1-14) by J. Hampton Keathley, III.

⁷ Net Bible, 2275. See the writings of Gary Habermas on historical records regarding the existence, death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (e.g., *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus Christ*).

⁸ Thomas, *Revelation*, 1:392.

- c. Here we have the seven spirits are sent out into the entire world on a worldwide mission. Now we are not told what the purpose is for this worldwide mission but I speculate it is conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. In fact, in the Upper Room Discourse Jesus states He will send the Holy Spirit into the world (John 16:7).
10. Summary: In summarizing our observations of this 6th verse we see the following: the Lamb who is the Warrior-King, all-powerful, and all-knowing, is the center-piece of worship because He is the redeemer who died but lives. But as someone once stated, “Not only is Jesus worthy to judge the world, but He alone has the ability to do so.”
11. But before we move on let me digress for a moment into the enthronement ceremonies in the ancient world which may shed some interesting light into the portion we have just examined. According to Beasley-Murray:⁹
- a. The steps of ancient enthronement follow this order: exaltation, presentation, and enthronement.
 - b. If we apply these historical insights into to chapter 5, the exaltation is seen in the conquest of the Lamb referred where it states Jesus is the one who “conquered” or “prevailed” (5:5);
 - c. The presentation of the Lamb is seen when it mentions Jesus is standing, as if slain (5:6) before the One sitting on the throne.
 - d. The bestowal of authority is found in verse 7 where Jesus came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.
1. What does Jesus do? (verse 7): “***And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne***”
- a. In a very dramatic moment the Lamb came forward (aorist) and now “***has taken***” the scroll (I consider the scroll to be a “*scroll of doom*”) from the right hand of the One who sat on the throne.
 - b. This verb “***has taken***” is focusing so much on the act that there is no room left for the results [Dramatic or Aorist perfect].¹⁰ In other words, in the most dramatic and vivid depiction, Jesus, who is worthy, takes the “*scroll of doom*.”
 - c. And what follows is one of the most beautiful, poignant, and powerful scenes in all of Scripture: universal adoration of Jesus Christ! From a bird’s eye perspective, looking at verses 9-14 this is what we see:
 1. Four living Creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb and they sing a new song (vv.9-10);

⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 110.

¹⁰ Dan Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 578-9.

2. Then thousands upon thousands, countless multitude of angels who are around the throne and the Four Living Creatures, and the 24 elders offer a new expression of worship (vv. 11-12);
3. Then every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth and on the sea expressed worship (vs. 13)

So, once the Jesus takes the scroll, the singers of God's praise to the Lamb increase from verse 8 to every creature in all creation in verse 13.

4. Afterwards, the four living creatures kept saying "***Amen.***" And the elders fell down and worshiped (vs. 14).

Let's take a closer look at these expressions of praise in chronological order:

Verse 8 "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

1. Four living creatures and 24 elders fall down before the Lamb.
2. Twenty-four elders are "***holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are interpreted as the prayers of the saints.***"
 - a. **The harp** is a traditional music instrument that is associated with joy and gladness. In fact, the harp is used in Scripture in direct praise and worship of God more than any other musical instrument.¹¹ Secondly, if these elders are angelic creatures, then this is the only place I know of in Scripture where angels are praising God with harps.
 - b. **The bowls** contained the prayers of God's people that serve as the fragrant aroma of burning incense to Him (cf. Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10). Looking at this more carefully here is what we know:¹²
 1. The elder's possession of bowls of incense is reminiscent in Judaism of the angels as carriers of the prayers of men. Later in Revelation 8:3 we see the function of angels in connection with human prayers as well.
 2. In O.T. times the efficacy of an offering as being acceptable comes only when it was accompanied by incense. Interestingly, the fragrant smoke from a worshiper or an altar was cited widely in ancient times as a natural picture of prayer ascending from earth to heaven.
3. **Now what are these prayers and who gave them?** Now there is wide debate on the subject but I would simply contend, following Robert Thomas, that since the saints of all previous dispensations are in heaven, these saints are perhaps those who have been martyred by the

¹¹ Thomas, *Revelation*, 1:396.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:396-8.

enemies of God during the Great Tribulation. We see this in Revelation 12:17; 13:7-10); they are objects of persecution by the Antichrist and are the ones who cry out to God for vindication after their martyrdom. So, I take it that this symbol of their prayers is preparatory to the opening of the seven seals, furnishing a hint as to the role these prayers will play once the Great Tribulation begins.¹³

Let's look closer at this first expression of worship in chapter 5:

***5:9-10: "And they sang a new song, saying,
'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'***

1. We first need to cover some textual issues in both verses 9 & 10 that may impact our understanding of the nature of the elders (which we explored in our study of Revelation 4) and this song:
 - a. In verse 9 we have the following variant:
 1. Some translations (e.g., AV) render this song in the first person (AV): "*You have redeemed us . . .*,"
 2. Others put it in the third person (NASB): "*You have redeemed men ...*"
 - b. Then in verse 10 we have another textual variant:
 1. For example in verse 10 of the NKJV reads, "*And have made us kings and priests to our God*"
 2. whereas the NASB reads, "*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests.*"
 - c. According to Bruce Metzger, Robert Mounce, and Robert Thomas, there is greater textual support for interpreting verse 9 to say "*You have redeemed men.*"
 - d. The textual support in verse 10 seems to be evenly weighed, "*you have made them to be a kingdom and priests.*" But if we take the context all together, it is preferable, at least in my opinion, to read verse 10 in keeping with verse 9 (esp. in its immediate context).
 - e. Though we can't be dogmatic on this point, if it is read as the Bruce Metzger suggests, then there is even more evidence that the 24 elders are angels. If the original source does read "*us*", then it perhaps gives proof that the elders are not angels but humans. But what we do know for sure is that there are 24 elders!

¹³ Ibid., 1:398.

2. First, they sing at the honor of Jesus Christ for He is worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals. Notice closely that the first word of the song is “**worthy**.” This word, “**worthy**” summarizes the theme of this song. Interestingly, Christ is addressed as worthy in the same manner as the Father was in 4:11; “*You are worthy.*”

a. Why is Jesus worthy? 4 reasons are given:

1. Because of His death. Jesus is worthy because He was “**slain**.” This word “slain,” which means to slaughter, is used only in Revelation to describe the death of Jesus. We were bought with a price and this phrase with “*your blood*” denotes the price, the blood of the Lamb.

2. Because of the redemption Jesus provided from every **tribe** (lineage), **tongue** (language), **people** (race) and **nation** (political orientation; habits, customs, and social mores). As a moderate Calvinist, I believe He made everyone “*saveable*” (unlimited atonement), then those benefits are applied to those who believe (which are the elect).

a. Both the words “**slain**” and “**redeemed**” or “**purchased**” look back to the once-for-all action of the work at Calvary.

3. “The third reason for praise is the creation of a kingdom and priests for God for God by the Lamb’s death (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Priesthood involves immediate access into God’s presence for praise and worship as well as the privilege of priestly service.”¹⁴

4. The fourth is the blessing of His people by allowing them to rule with Christ in His millennial kingdom and even the eternal state which is not often mentioned when we discuss our reign as “servant-kings”). Listen to the words of Revelation 22:3-5:

“There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”

Like Dr Charles C. Ryrie states, “The curse and all darkness will be excluded, and service, communion, and reigning will be the believers’ privileges.”¹⁵

5. In summary, listen to the words of Allen P. Ross. “This is one of the most significant songs ever to be sung. It comes at the time of the fulfillment of prophecies, the coming of the Lord in judgment. Because Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, he

¹⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes to Revelation*, 61.

¹⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: Expanded Edition*, 2044.

is worthy to judge the world. Because, he, the Lord, paid the penalty for the sins of the world, the world must answer to him. Not only did his death purchase people from every tribe and language, but it also defeated all powers of creation and cleared the way for the new creation and new order, in place of the old that was ruined by the Fall. God's people will serve him as they rule and have dominion on the earth."¹⁶

Now we come to the second expression of worship!

Verses 11-12: Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands and thousands, (vs. 12) Saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

1. An innumerable host of angels now joined the four creatures and 24 elders in ascribing worth to the Lamb.
2. The phrase, "*myriads of myriads, and thousands and thousands*" means countless multitudes; it defies human calculation!
3. Perhaps there is an illusion or parallel in Daniel 7:10 which we may draw upon; it speaks of "*thousands upon thousands... ten thousand times ten thousand who stood before the Ancient of Days to minister to Him.*"
4. The following seven words [though this debated], "***Power, riches (wealth), wisdom, might, honor, and glory and blessing***" are not benefits that the Lamb is about to receive but qualities He possesses and for which He is worthy to be praised. I agree with Robert Thomas when he states that Christ is worthy to receive adoration for the things that He already possesses. The fact that the number of these qualities is seven may be significant; seen together they may point to His perfection as well.¹⁷
5. But there is something else we need to note: Look closely...do you see the repetition of the conjunction "***and***" between each of the qualities highlighted by the angels? This repetition of "***and***" between each word gives a "*kind of solemn dignity*" to each word, requiring us to seriously reflect upon each one separately:

Power...riches...wisdom...might...honor...glory...blessing.

- a. **Power** is emphasizing His omnipotence. Power is not normally mentioned first in the doxologies to Christ in revelation. I believe it is stated first to emphasize the power of the Lamb since this is a prologue to the Great Tribulation.
- b. **Wealth** includes not just spiritual wealth but also unconditional wealth in all realms as befitting and all-sufficient God.

¹⁶ Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 484.

¹⁷ Thomas, *Revelation*, 1:405-6.

- c. His **wisdom** demonstrates itself in the conscious and purposeful creation and His plan of the ages as He sovereignly governs creation to His intended destiny.
- d. **Might** is His possession whether or not it he exerts it.
- e. **Honor** is his rightful possession.
- f. **Glory** refers to His divine and heavenly radiance, the loftiness and majesty of God, the mode of His being.
- g. **Blessing** or praise is that quality of Christ evoking our thankful response for benefits received. “[Praise]... is a willingness, unaccompanied by coercion, to return blessing for blessing conferred.”¹⁸ In other words, “*praise*” or “*blessing*”, is the acknowledgement of what He possesses in Himself, distinguishable, at least in thought, from what the creature returns to Him.¹⁹

Now we come to our last expression of worship:

Verses 13-14: And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshipped.

1. The climax of the praise is reached here in verse 13 where all creation gives praise, honor, glory, and power to God and to the Lamb. This last song of praise is the grandest, in scope, content, and every way. Imagine: not one creature is omitted! “John saw that far beyond the immediate precincts of the throne there arose a volume of praise from the whole creation.” *Every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all that is in them*, joined in this universal acclaim, this doxology to God the Father and God the Son. No living creature fails to join in the great and final hymn of praise, just like Philippians 2:9-11 states will happen.
2. Each of these four words, “*blessing and honor and glory and dominion*” stand out as emphasized words to individually consider. Interestingly, the word “*dominion*” denotes active power. Like Robert Mounce states, “The tone is building and building up with each term furthering to heap up the ascription like a great tower of praise.” Endless blessing and honor and glory and dominion belong to the one sitting upon the throne and to the Lamb. The exaltation is not temporary. Rather, it endures infinitely with the phrase, “*forever and ever.*”
3. How does this fit in with Revelation 4 & 5 if this is a prologue to the great Tribulation for not every knee will bow before the Great Tribulation? It is a preview or what we call a “*proleptic*” scene at the end of human history when every creature will bow on their “*knees*” to Jesus Christ. This includes us as

¹⁸ Thomas, *Revelation*, 1:406.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:406.

well! Consider for a moment Philippians 2:-8-11. It is significant that one day we will be saying these words for all of eternity!

4. Now just consider for a moment at Jesus' earthly ministry and compare it to this preview:
 - a. The innocent infant in a borrowed manger;
 - b. The misunderstood Messiah;
 - c. The Suffering Servant;
 - d. The mocked Man;
 - e. The overlooked, rejected, neglected, and crucified Lamb of God is-for the first time receiving His due praise by all of His creation!

5. (verse 14) The four living creatures who were the first to offer their praise in the throne-room are the ones to bring this vision to a close. This phrase "*kept saying*" may mean that the four living creatures cry "*Amen*" after each of the seven attributes of verse 12 and the four of verse 13. The elders on the other hand, "*fell down and worshiped.*" As they fell before the one sitting upon the throne in 4:10, so now they prostrate themselves in worship before God the Father and Jesus Christ. The idea of prostrating themselves in worship reflects their complete subjection to Him and the Lamb with their entire beings seeking to exalt "*Them*" in praise and adoration.²⁰

III. What is Our Response to this Revelation?

1. Do you know these expressions of worship? Do you ponder these perfections of God? If not, why? As I pondered these songs I've thought to myself:
 - a. Since Christ is the only one worthy because He died for us, then why aren't we more grateful than we are?
 - b. Since Christ is the only one worthy because He redeemed us, then why do we still seek the approval of and/or compare ourselves with others?
 - c. Since Christ is the only one worthy because He is our God and we are His people, then why do we do so little to express our utmost affections for Him?
 - d. Since all of creation declares that God the Father and God the Son be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever, then why don't our daily lives reflect consistent godliness?

2. These questions go back to the issue of Jesus' worthiness in our daily lives. Why aren't our lives more expressive of Jesus' worthiness? Or let me put it this way, "*Why do our lives reflect the west side of the cathedral rather than the east?*"

3. For some the answer is ignorance. We don't know the Scripture because we are either new believers or are untaught. Meditating on the Scripture both

²⁰ www.soniclight.com, "Notes on Revelation" by Tom Constable.

individually and corporately and being personally disciplined by a mature believer can remedy that problem. But for those of us who have studied the Scriptures carefully and purposefully, still why aren't we more expressive of Christ's worthiness as we go about our daily lives? Yes, we know He is worthy! Yes we know Christ is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, and blessing! Yes, we know that one day we will fall down and worship Him without any hindrance (which shouldn't be an excuse)! But why aren't we unpacking these truths more effectively in how we live, moment-by-moment, day-by-day?

4. I submit to you that *one* of the major reasons why is because we find ourselves preoccupied with fleshly lusts, growing sinful appetites, and selfish tendencies.
5. How do you know what these fleshly appetites are? Ask yourself what sins you find yourself regularly committing or consistently confessing. You will likely see there is a pattern and I submit to you that along with it, you also find guilt and embarrassment. You may feel guilty because in retrospect you felt that your confession for that sin was sincere, acknowledging to God that it is wrong (1 John 1:9), but you find yourself committing it again, again, and again.
6. As I've mentioned before an old theologian once told me that the sins of his youth still haunt him today but as he has walked with the Lord over the years they have lost their attractiveness.
7. While sincere confession restores our intimacy with God, it does not deal with the sinful appetites we have fostered and fed due to our sinful disobedience. They are still lurking in the shadows. But we need to deal with these sinful appetites for two reasons.
 - a. If we desire our worship to be more Christ-centered, then we need to put them to death as Paul states in Colossians 3:5;
 - b. Because sinful lusts can take us places we never thought we would go.
8. Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sinful appetites.

"First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood.

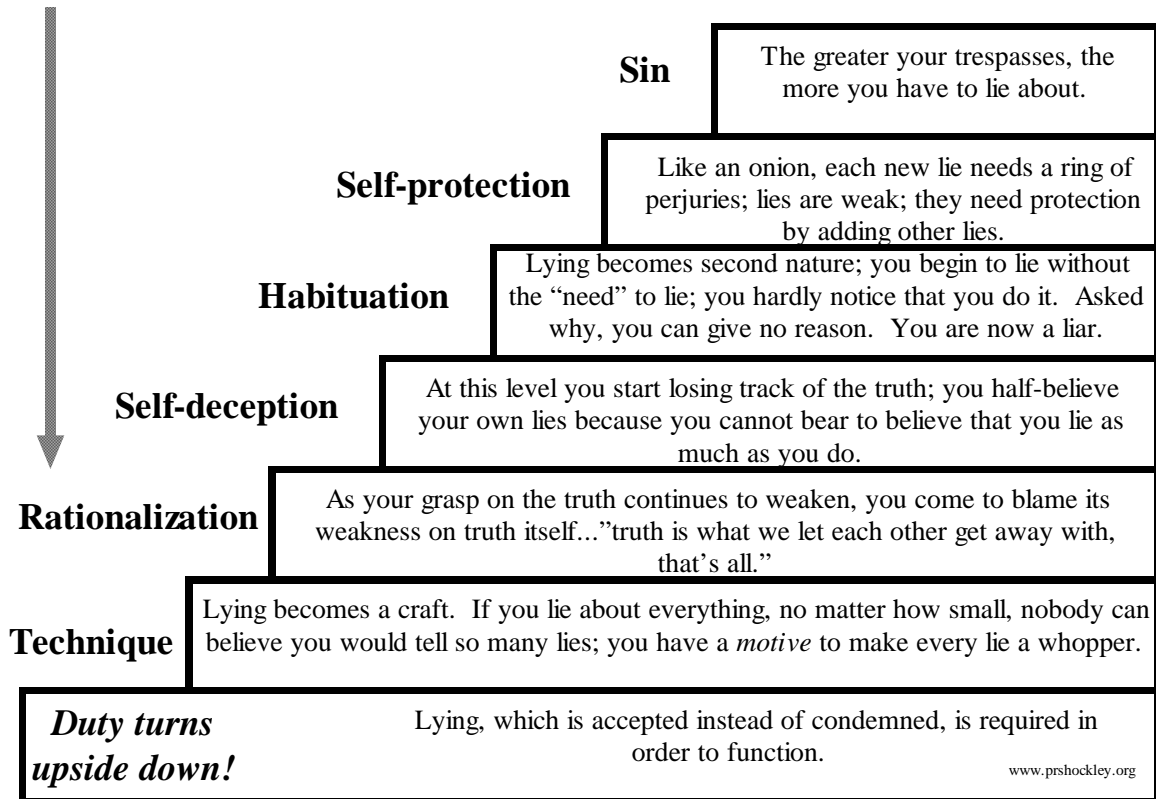
"Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his OWN warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more--until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!" It is a fearful thing that people can be "consumed by their own lusts."

9. Another way of looking at our fleshly appetites is by considering the downward steps we take when we do sin. And there is a lesson here in view of what I am about say: *The more we sin a particular sin the more we are taken by our sin.*

For example, let's consider the issue of lying.

The Seven-Step Descent of Dishonesty: The more we lie the more we are taken in by our lies.

~ adapted from *What We Can't Not Know* by J. Budziszewski (Dallas: Spence, 2003), 195-97.



Since we desire to honor God, what can we do about these fleshly appetites? We need to put them to death. Once again, I am not talking about confession of sin. Sincere confession of sin is *the* divine provision that restores the believer's intimacy with God as stated in 1 John 1:9. Rather, what I am talking about are those sinful appetites, those "patterned" tendencies that we too often find ourselves yielding to that produces the need to confess our sins to God. What I am talking about is dealing with those sinful appetites that so easily entangle us, keeping us from offering our utmost affections to God.

The following are ideas on how to put to death the deeds of the flesh which are adapted from Dr. John Hannah of Dallas Theological Seminary when he spoke at a spiritual life conference on having affections for Jesus Christ which my former church hosted:

The Mortification of Sin:

1. Consider the dangerous consequences of sin both vertically and horizontally.
 - a. Vertically: We experience guilt; loss of peace & strength, grieve the Holy Spirit and smother its ministry like water on a fire.
 - b. Horizontally: We burn bridges, we damage relationships, we hurt or even ruin the lives of others whether emotionally and/or physically.
2. Load the conscience with the guilt of sin (consider God's infinite patience & forbearance; God has been so good to you...why would you want to insult Him-He hates sin!).
3. Consider the state of one's self all times in terms of frailty, because of depravity, & vileness: the presence of sin; no one is immune to sin (no matter how much doctrine one knows!). Each time we give in to that temptation our appetite for it grows. For example, if we struggle with gluttony, then we don't need to go a buffet. If we struggle with internet pornography, then we need to take the internet out of our home.
4. Trace the particular manifestation of sin to its root. It is nearly enough to deal with the fruit; we need to pull out the root. If we don't deal with the root of the problem why we have affections for this particular sin, then odds are the appetite will re-grow.
5. Don't hurry to gain relief for your sin. Sure, we need to immediately confess it, but we need take time and consider why we are doing this just as when we send our kids into their room to think about their bad behavior.
6. Act quickly against the first temptations toward sin. Scripture says flee from sin but stand firm against the devil. I think there is a significant reason for this command!
7. Allow God to speak peace rather than assume you have it. See we can so easily deceive ourselves into thinking everything is okay in our fellowship with God; He is really pleased with our behavior. But because we are so hardened by our sin or so stubborn, if truth is known, we lack that hard pursuit of God; we are more carnal than spiritual. Usually our spouse is the one who knows where we truly are spiritually.
8. Other mental weapons in the struggle against sin involve whole hearted trust, faith, & obedience; the presence of right thoughts; the meditation upon and memorization of Scripture; yielding to the Holy Spirit, moment-by-moment; the recognition of God's sovereignty, the effects of sin; long periods of intense, sincere, fervent prayer; the love & kindness of God; the wonder of Calvary; the reality of indwelling sin. ~ Dr. John Hannah

IV. In Conclusion:

Let me conclude our studies on Revelation 4 & 5 by reading Oswald Chambers.

“Anything that disturbs our rest in Him must be rectified at once, and it is not rectified by being ignored but only by coming to Jesus Christ. If we will come to Him, asking Him to produce Christ-awareness in us, He will always do it, until we fully learn to abide in Him.

Never allow anything that divides or destroys the oneness of your life with Christ to remain in your life without facing it. Beware of allowing the influence of your friends or your circumstances to divide your life. This only serves to sap your strength and slow your spiritual growth. Beware of anything that can split your oneness with Him, causing you to see yourself as separate from Him. Nothing is as important as staying right spiritually. And the only solution is a very simple one— “Come to Me” The intellectual, moral, and spiritual depth of our reality as a person is tested and measured by these words [of Jesus Christ who says, “Come to Me”].²¹

Friends: As we put to death appetites that hinder our worship to God, we are aligning ourselves as in the cathedral with our face upon Christ, the Lamb of God who purchased our salvation, and with our back to the fallen world whose final judgment draws near.

²¹ Oswald Chambers, August 19th, *My Utmost for His Highest*.