

# Defending the Faith



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January 2018

## Something Holy Lives Within Us

Paul often talked about living in the Spirit as opposed to living in the flesh. He said that the Spirit of God lives within each Christian. This deserves some contemplation. What does this really mean? One part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, holy and pure, lives within each one of us. As Christians, somewhere deep within us, some part of us is Holy! For me, this thought inspires awe and fear! It is astounding that God would choose to give us such an incredible gift, the gift of Himself within us. At the same time, that Holy part of me is living so near to those dark recesses that shrink in shame in the presence of a Holy God. Yet, at this very moment, I realize that this is how the Holy Spirit brings light to the dark places of my soul. By shedding holy light on my sins, I become humbled in the presence of God within me. I mourn the sad state of my sinful condition, and I comprehend the need for mercy and forgiveness. All this overwhelms my emotions, as I realize I have just experienced God's presence!

How can we know, if we have experienced God's presence? For me, I am brought to tears. I feel His love overflowing. I feel humble. I can actually feel my Spirit filling up with something that I cannot put into words, something deep within me. However, I know that when I pray in God's will, when I visualize our suffering Christ on the cross dying for me, when my heart fills with love for Christ, I experience God's presence. The Holy Spirit stirs within me. This immediately causes me to feel grateful that He is such a loving and merciful God. This is living in the Spirit.

On the other hand, living in the flesh is filling our hearts and minds with earthly desires, thoughts of physical pleasure and self-gratification. They are transitory. They involve our physical senses, and once that sensation has ceased, the pleasure is gone. To experience that pleasure again, one must feed the desire repeatedly. If I take pleasure in the taste of a piece of chocolate, I must have another piece of chocolate to relive that pleasurable experience. How many pieces of chocolate can I eat before I begin to feel sick? When we live in the flesh, we are preoccupied by what we can get, rather than what we can give.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with His divine love. As Christians, it is God's love, which motivates us, not our pursuit for selfish pleasures. It is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us in our weaknesses and comforts us in the midst of our suffering. Through the Holy Spirit, we are blessed with spiritual knowledge of God. We develop a more profound understanding that He is our all-mighty and all-knowing eternal Creator, who gave His Only Son, sinless, full of

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## Something Holy Lives Within You (cont'd)



love and goodness, to die in our place and take the punishment for our sins. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals God to us and thereby increases our faith. He reveals spiritual truths to us and allows us to be in the presence of a Holy God.

According to Paul, when we live in the Spirit, we utilize our free will to do the will of God. Therefore, we are confident that *“all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). In this passage, the Greek word “synergy” is translated as *“work together.”* Synergy was a term used by the

early church fathers to describe our cooperation with God’s will. In other words, we work in cooperation with God’s will to produce good in our lives. Who are called? Everyone is called, but those who love God *“are called according to His purpose.”* What is God’s purpose? *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family”* (Romans 8:29). We comprehend that God has preplanned for us to ultimately become like Christ, pure, righteous, and holy. We become part of the family of God, *“When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him”* (Romans 8: 15-17). How do we suffer with Christ? We suffer by denying ourselves, denying our fleshly desires, by seeking not to receive, but rather to give. This is how we live in the Spirit.

To live in the Spirit, Paul instructs us, *“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you”* (Philippians 4:8-9). We are to keep our minds and hearts on those things which are good. We are to keep our minds and hearts on God. Paul also instructs us to *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Praying is just talking to God. We can talk to God at any time in any place, at home, at work, or even in the car as we are driving. This is also how we develop our relationship with Christ. We talk to Him, and we must also listen to Him. It is a two-way communication that allows a relationship to flourish.

As we contemplate the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, Paul eloquently concludes in Romans 8:31-39:

*What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us*

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*from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Have a beautiful New Year filled with God's love and many of His blessings!**

Helen Kamenos  
Readers' Favorite Author

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## Announcing....

### **“A Journey Toward Perfection” Book Club on Facebook**



I have received feedback from many of you who have requested a forum to discuss my book, *A Journey Toward Perfection*. I have just launched an online Book Club on Facebook in response to your requests. **“A Journey Toward Perfection” Book Club** is an opportunity to learn more about our Christian faith from one another. It is a place where we can discuss issues, ask questions and share thoughts about our journey through life as Christians as discussed in the book. It is a friendly forum meant to engage others in a

meaningful conversation. We can delve into questions, such as how can the Beatitudes guide our lives, how can we meet the challenges of everyday life, how can we develop a real relationship with Christ, how can we become more Christ-like or how can we interpret Christ's instruction to “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Is this even possible? Join our group today and begin the conversation at:

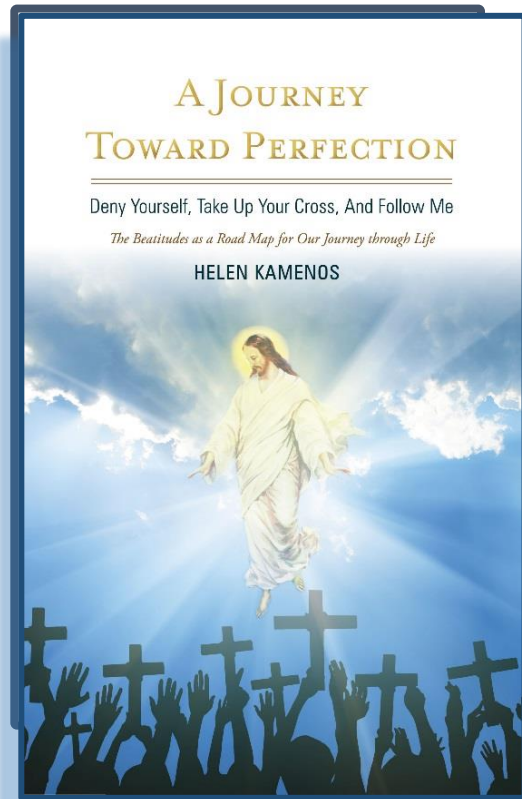
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## Recent reviews

**By Father Lawrence Farley, author and contributor to Ancient Faith Ministry's blogs and podcasts**

"Everyone needs a friendly neighbor who can speak to them in down-to-earth direct language across a cup of coffee in their kitchen and share their own experience of the Christian faith in terms they can easily understand. Books by professional theologians are complex, deep, scholarly, nuanced—and often hard to understand. Helen Kamenos speaks to us like the neighbor we need, and she has written a book about how to work out one's salvation, a sizeable meditation upon the Beatitudes and the virtues God calls us to acquire. Anyone who would like such encouragement should invite her into their literary kitchen and listen to her neighborly voice as she shares with them her own experience of the journey toward perfection."

**By Lisa Dobson posted on Facebook – "A must read."**

"This book is a must read! I have been reading and discussing it with my WSC, Patrice Wheeler. Every chapter is like a gourmet meal, meant to be taken slowly, the words savored. Each chapter keeps coming back in Full

Circle with scripture. It's amazing, the deeper understanding of the Word, discussing how it applies with today's circumstances! My spiritual growth can't be measured. I greatly appreciate this book and look forward to additional growth in my walk with my Lord. Thank you for writing this. Really, there are not words to describe how amazing it is."

**By Gus Sapon posted on Facebook -**

If you want to read a book that will bring you closer to God, then I would highly recommend you reading "A Journey Toward Perfection." This book made me think and had me continually questioning myself, "Am I living a life that God would approve of?" The author does a wonderful job of covering all of man's weaknesses, such as asking for forgiveness, judging others, and being humble. I found these topics very difficult, until I realized only Christ lived a life without sin. Just as the title of this book infers, God is asking us all to make an effort to live a life towards perfection. Helen, I commend you. This book is beautifully written and a true reflection of the incredible spiritual, loving heart you possess. Well done!

**By Jaime Contreras on Amazon – "One of the Best Christian Teaching Books"**

"This book was written with love and faith. I praise the work of the Holy Spirit leading Ms. Helen Kamenos in this work. I rate this one of the best Christian teaching books I have ever read."

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## Baptism and The Feast Day of Epiphany

The Feast of Holy Theophany (Epiphany) is celebrated on January 6. For the Greek Orthodox, it commemorates the divine revelation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Jesus Christ, where all the persons of the Trinity were manifest, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:13-17):

*Then Jesus came from Galilee to John (the Baptist) at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*

As Christians, we too, are baptized for the remission of sins and to be initiated into Christ's church. Our baptism is symbolic of Christ's death and resurrection. When we are immersed in the water we die to our old sinful selves, and when we are raised out of the water, we are raised into our new selves or born again into Christ. During baptism we renounce the works of the devil and dedicate ourselves to a life with Christ. For the Orthodox, baptism is a supernatural transformation, which mystically unites us to Christ through the Holy Spirit who takes residence within us.

The Baptism of Christ initiated His three-year ministry. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, He was "led by the Spirit to go into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 40 days and 40 nights" (Matthew 4:1-2). After this time of trial and suffering, the devil left Him and the angels came and ministered to Him.



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