

**The process of
perfecting God's image
through perseverance**

LIVING WATER RESOURCES

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The process of perfecting God's image through perseverance

The process of perfecting those reborn in the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit is a divine proving progression. It is the progressive exchange of a life which has begun in the flesh according to the natural inclinations of man, for a life made new in the Spirit which is now inclined to the will of God.

Natural man's desires are focused on the earthly things. Thus material possessions, physical achievements, sexual prowess, food and drink, emotional highs, intellectual and spiritual insights and personal control become the ideal goals to be satisfied; with the result they become the idols to be worshipped rather than the Creator God. However life in the spirit is concerned with heavenly things.

The satisfaction man seeks through earthly things can only be temporary, just as physical life is temporary. Only life in the spirit is long lasting because only spiritual life is eternal. In order to

have ongoing life and peace on earth, mankind must be subject to God our Creator through submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the only saviour of mankind.

On the one hand life without Christ as Lord who is to be obeyed daily, means what God meant for good becomes polluted, thus causing damage to human relationships on earth and separates man from God in heaven. On the other hand Jesus Christ calls us to abundant spiritual life by coming to die with Him by denying our self in taking up our cross so we can receive His life in the Spirit.

The mindset of natural man is not able to be subject to the will of God; (Rom 8:7) but the mind set in subjection to the Spirit of God guarantees life and peace all the time. But in order to live in peace personal discipline is needed all the time, because a single moment without discipline is all it takes to turn the mind to seek after sinful desires, which, having being acted upon, grieves the Spirit which can lead to spiritual death.

The disciplined life is a life of walking in the spirit in humble obedience to the Spirit's leading, choosing to always put off the desires of natural man which the Bible calls the flesh, in order to be faithful to Christ who died for us so we can have His eternal life in the Spirit in order to walk with God. Walking in the Spirit means we deal with the darkness of a life according to natural man in the flesh in ourselves before we attempt to solve the problems in others. Reacting negatively to the darkness out there in others means joining ourselves with the darkness and ensuring its dominance in the world.

Matt 5:39 Matt 7:4-5 1 Pet 3:9 1 Thess 5:15
Rom 12:17-21

Those in Christ are to have a new life with a new mind

'For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.' Rom 8:5-6

'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.' Rom 12:2

The new mind the disciple is to have is explained in the teaching of Jesus and the remainder of the New Testament.

'That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.' Eph 4:22-24

Passing God's Examination

In order to assist us in gaining the full benefit of our new life in the spirit, God tests us to prove our faith as we are transformed into the image of His Son.

Just as refining gold nuggets from the ground in a fiery furnace does not to destroy the gold but

remove all imperfections; our testing is not to see if we will fail; it is for the continual maturing of the Christ life in us because God is seeking our highest good. Testing is the process of purification to make us perfect; it is needed if we are to make progress in our spiritual transformation in our walk with God.

So we need to: '*Count it all joy when you meet of various trials.*' (James 1:2-4) In the process of proving our faith God uses difficult people and circumstances in our testing to encourage us to trust and obey Him according to our rebirth in His image and likeness. Therefore testing will reveal whether we are obeying the Spirit's leading or still reacting, grumbling and unloving according to the darkness of the fallen world. (Phil 2:12-14) If our behaviour shows we are not true to our life in Christ, God wants us to turn again to obey Him and put off that which is inconsistent with the Christ life. Consequently all things are working for our good in assisting us to be transformed into the image of God's Son. Rom 8:28-29

Therefore give thanks in all your circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. For you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Thess 5:18 James 1:2-4, 12

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you

do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.’ 1 Peter 1:3-9

Perfecting life through perseverance

The Bible teaches us that the goal of Jesus’ redemption is that we shall be fully conformed to His image by a process of continual transformation until we go to meet with Him in Glory.

‘For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.’ (Rom 8:29) *‘But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.’* 2 Cor 3:18

The Lord Jesus wants us to grow up to be like Him, this is the life of a disciple. Effective spiritual change comes by the Spirit’s leading when we work out our new life in Christ which

God has worked in us. The only way we can do that is by living by God's Spirit according to the word of God. *'If we walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.'*

Gal 5:16

Consequently we are no longer to live according to the flesh of our former life; we are to live according to the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us, who is now our life.

'You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.'

Rom 8:9

Those who are born again of God's Spirit have His personal power (Eph 3:20) to obey so we can live our new life without sin controlling us.

Rom 6:6-7, 14

We are personally responsible for persevering in God's testing

As new creatures in Christ, we live by the Spirit so we have victory over sin. Therefore, because we have received His divine nature (2 Pet 1:3-4) and

His divine power, our spiritual life must have priority over our fleshly human nature by the powerful working of God in us. Jesus came to restore the divine nature of God in us so we can have fellowship with Him and share in His life; for this is the meaning of eternal life. John 17:3

However, it is impossible to have fellowship with Him and follow His example, and to walk as He walked if we still think of ourselves in human terms and therefore as fleshly. (Rom 8:7-8) It is also impossible to follow Jesus and do as He has commanded if we don't know what He taught.

If the only reason for coming to Jesus was to be forgiven our sins so we can go to heaven when we die, then we have not understood God's plan so we will fail the test because the Spirit has not given us life. (Rom 8:9) Jesus' plan is that all those who follow Him will become like Him. His plan is that His followers will also seek others who will also follow Him; and then teach them to obey all He has commanded.

If we don't really believe we have died with Christ since we have been crucified with Him, (Rom 6:4-5) we will not be able to believe we have been born again and no longer live according to the flesh, so that it is no longer us who live but Christ who lives in us. Gal 2:20

Now that God has done all we need for life and godliness; (2 Pet 1:3-4) we must take responsibility for our new life and obey all He has commanded us. In order to know what God want we must know what the New Testament teaches about this new life in Christ. We need to understand the Word of God so we can match our lives with its teaching. Therefore we must spend much time in God's word so that it becomes part of our everyday thinking so that our minds are always alert to the truth of God and the error of men.

God provides all we need to help for this task

God gives us a new life in the Spirit, and we need to live according to His will if we are to walk with Him and be blessed with His eternal life. And since we did not actually die to our physical

bodies, we need to put the Kingdom of God before all things on earth. We need to seek first the Kingdom of God so we can do the will of God.

Therefore we must constantly transfer our allegiance to God and what He has had written for our understanding. We are made to serve God only. Therefore our responsibility is to work out the salvation that God has worked in us without grumbling. (Phil 2:12-14) The more we work on what God has worked in us, the more we can see Jesus at work in us.

To be like Jesus according to our new nature in the Spirit, we must put to death that which is still earthly in us. We must deny the flesh life that remains. God promises us, *'If by the Spirit you are putting to death the flesh you will live.'* Rom 8:13

We are called on to do this by being transformed by the renewing our mind. Rom 12:1-2

Our renewal requires that we must understand what the Bible teaches about the will of God, so we need to learn what God wants for us. But we can only do this if we allow ourselves to be led by

the Spirit and those He provides for our support. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to give us understanding of all Jesus taught, so we must fix our minds on His teaching as the word of God is explained to us.

Jesus didn't tell us to get people saved. Jesus told us to make disciples who would learn to become like Him by obeying all He has commanded us. He said we are to be baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and teaching them to obey all He has commanded. Now how can I obey if I don't know what He wants me to do? How can I become like Him if I don't know Him through a personal experience of taking up my cross? How can I be transformed if I will not be led by the Spirit?

Therefore, what we understand and accept to be true has a big impact on our spiritual identity. We can only be transformed by the renewing of our mind as we believe the truth of what God has done in us. Jesus said *if we continue in His word, we will know the truth and the truth will make us free.* (John 8:31-32) Therefore we must know the truth

of Jesus, only His truth will set us free if we continue to obey Him.

This is why we should read the Bible often, and *‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom’* so it soaks into our minds and hearts. This is why we are told we need to be renewed in the spirit of our minds.

This is why Jesus gives us teachers who will, *‘Proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.’*

Col 1:28

The Bible tells us the kingdom of God is made up of all those who are in Christ by denying themselves to take up their cross daily. And all those in Christ have been given spiritual gifts for the growth of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:16) Spiritual growth is not just up to the individual to act alone. God provides for this perfecting process as disciples are charged to obey all Jesus taught by those who are called and gifted as teachers under the Spirit of God’s governance and leading.

1 Cor 12:28 Eph 4:11 James 3:1

God's proving ground of perseverance

As God perseveres with us in transforming us into the image of His Son, we must persevere in the faith and the knowledge of God which we have received. God is always sovereign over all things; He is the supreme ruler of all there is, so no matter how bad our situation may become, nothing can separate us from the love of God but our own disobedience or unbelief. For God tells us we are secure in Him.

'Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Rom 8:35-39

Therefore the need to persevere is of absolute importance if we are to be like Christ. The word '*Perseverance*' is used to describe the Christian walk 22 times in the New Testament. Twice '*Persevere*' is used, and '*Diligence*' is used four times. And then, just so we don't get lazy, the word '*Endue*' is used 19 times.

Perseverance: *'We exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'* Rom 5:2-5

Persevere. *'Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.'* 1 Tim 4:16

Diligence. *'Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge.'* 2 Peter 1:5

Endure. Jesus said, *“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”* (Matt 10:22) *‘If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us.’*

2 Timothy 2:12

What better end to have than to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ?

The question is, do we want to be like Christ and walk with God to live in peace?

The overwhelming message the Lord gives us to share is that everyone needs to come to Jesus and die so they can live. This life of a disciple of Jesus is not for those who want to rely on human ability and find a comfortable life in this world, it is only possible for those who will die with Christ and surrender to God to be born of God and be led by the Spirit in all obedience and truth.

When we commit ourselves to following Jesus through the narrow gate, (Matt 7:13-14) we will know our own weaknesses, but when we are weak we are strong in Him because it is His power that

will work in us to will and to do for His good pleasure. And it is God's good pleasure that we would be like Christ. So will you surrender to Him and follow Him so you can be born again to walk with God in the same way Jesus walked on earth? Will you come and die with Him so you can be raised up with Him to eternal life?

The Lord is coming with His judgement

Jesus said: *"Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name."* Rev 3:1-12

Abide in Him

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Come to the river

'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.'

James 1:2-4

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