

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men,
and He will dwell among them,
and they shall be His people,
and God Himself will be among them.”

Revelation 21:3

God is all we need

A vibrant field of tulips in various colors, including red, pink, yellow, and purple, is in the foreground. The background shows a calm body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, under a soft, overcast sky. The overall scene is peaceful and colorful.

God is all we need

God in us is all we need, because only God knows what we need. If God has us, we have God. The work of redemption means we go from being sinful enemies of God, to be the holy residence of God. The one who judges the unrepentant become the one who lives in the repentant. God is all we need if we have given our life to Christ, for then we have God in us.

In the beginning God

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Gen 1:1

Jesus Christ is God who created

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him." Col 1:15-16

"And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things." Eph 3:9

'God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.' Heb 1:1-3

'He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.' Col 1:17

The Holy Spirit is also God

The Spirit is the giver of life. God breathed His own breath of life into man. *"The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."* Gen 2:7

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5

'no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.'

2 Pet 1:21

We begin with God and we live with God

God the Father is the originator. God the Son is creator and saviour. God the Spirit is the giver of spiritual life, first to Adam, then to all who follow Christ.

While the Son of God had ministry only in Israel, the promised Holy Spirit of God was to be God available for the whole world of those who believed in Jesus Christ.

As Jesus walked amongst men in the flesh, God the Spirit would dwell in the hearts of men made alive from the dead, achieved by the blood of the cross of Christ, after repentance and by faith.

Jesus prepared His disciples for God the Spirit

As Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law and the teaching of the prophets, He told His disciples that God the Spirit who was promised in the prophets would come to dwell in them.

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."

Luke 18:31-33

Jesus' sacrifice in our place made it possible for us to have God come to live in us.

Jesus, the Son of God told us about the giving of God the Spirit after He was sacrifice and rose again. Jesus said the Spirit of God, God the eternal Holy Spirit will be in you. (John 14:17) This is the promise of God for all who repent and obey the Son of God.

*"If you love me, keep my commands. And **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you."*

John 14:15-17

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

John 16:13

'Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

Acts 1:4-5

The Spirit of God promised in the prophets came to dwell in us

*"And it shall come to pass afterward that **I will pour out My Spirit** on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."*

Joel 2: 28-29

*'**I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.'*

Ezek 36:27

*'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.'*

Acts 2:1-4

In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter pointed out that the promise of the prophet Joel had been fulfilled.

Acts 2: 15-16

*Then 'Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."*

Acts 2:38-39

*"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in **the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it continued to increase."*

Acts 9:31

*'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that **God's Spirit dwells in you?**'*

1 Cor 3:16

Therefore the Christian walk is dependent on the indwelling presence of God the Spirit

He gives life at the time of repentance.

He is to lead God's children, governing all thinking and behaviour.

He pours out God's love into our hearts so we can love as He loves.

His desire is that we love Christ as much as He loves Christ.

He lives in us because we are now His temple.

He will teach the believer all things concerning Christ.

He is to reveal the truth of God's word in the Bible.

He will give comfort and support in time of need.

He is therefore the only means of the believer's sanctification, but only as the believer sets their hearts to live for God.

Any attempt to be a Christian without the Spirit's moment by moment leading and governance, will be determined by fleshly thinking, and doomed to failure. Without our deliberate intervention to think on God, our minds fall easily back into the fleshly way of thinking.

'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.'

Rom 8:6-7

How empowering it is to learn, that our thoughts are the only thing on earth we can control. And our thoughts lead to our behaviour, so we have a very important part to play in our own satisfaction. Thanks be to God that the Spirit of God uses His presence to reveal to our minds what is inconsistent with our life in the image of Christ; but He will only do this if we desire holiness at any cost.

Fumbling along with an absent God in fleshly thinking will see little gain in spiritual maturity. The awareness of God in us gives great incentive to do the job well.

God the Spirit inspired men to write what we know as the Bible. All that is written in it is for our training in righteousness. Whatever conclusion people may have about life that is not consistent with the contents of the Bible must come from the fleshly minds of those who are not being led by God the Spirit but still seek the desires of the flesh.

Since God the Spirit is given to us so that we can be continually transformed into the image of Christ, our spiritual growth is dependent on our willingness to be consistently led towards His goal for our holiness. It is not part of His plan for our glory that we carelessly waste our time indulging ourselves in worldly thinking and pursuits as we once did before we knew Him. It is therefore plain and simple that we have as much of God as we desire, for God the Spirit withholds nothing from those who desire Him and love Him. Our ability to gain the fullness of God the Spirit is in our hands.

The presence of God the Spirit ensures that the fleshly thinking we still have will become self evident, it is then, at that precise time that we must put it away as unholy, or we will be consumed again by its passions and desires. Because we take part in the renewing of our minds under the Spirit's leading it is important *'that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'*

Rom 12:2

While God works in us, we have to follow Him if we are to carry out His desire for our ultimate glory.

Phil 2:12-13

The mysteries of God are revealed to us by the Spirit. *"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.'

1 Cor 2:9-10

To have God live in us, we must die to self so that God is all in all

We must begin with God and not our own ideas of religion.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."

Matt 7:21

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds."

Matt 16:25-27

This means God will dwell eternally in those who love Christ. The presence of God enables us to overcome the world that does not have God's life or His peace. The world persecutes God's spiritual children because the world is currently under the power of Satan who opposes God with deceptions of darkness and deceit; hoping to convince us that we cannot trust God so we have to rely on ourselves, with the result that he can claim everyone for his darkness.

To have God we must give up our personal ideas of goodness

A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 18:18

This man thought he was good because he kept religious rules. *"You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."*

Luke 18:20-21

Jesus soon revealed his weakness for the material world, and he went away saddened.

Luke 18:23-24

He was good up to a point, but no one is ever good enough; to be good enough you have to be as good as God. No one can earn enough points to gain heaven. No one can bring anything to please God, no religious services, no good deeds; nothing is acceptable but the blood of Jesus Christ. No one deserves to have intimacy with God by their own efforts. What is impossible for man is possible with God through the sacrifice of the Son of God. Therefore we are dependent on Christ, and He tells us what the cost is for us to have eternal life.

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Luke 9:23-24

Therefore to know God we must know the world is not His kingdom

How is the kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of the world? In the world of man, the fallen state of the heart of man generally means life is about the individual, "I am led to make plans and do things according to my will." And this planning is done as if God doesn't exist. This human behaviour is fleshly, which means the spirit of the person is dead to God, because the Spirit of God is given no priority that we should obey Him.

The world is under the rule of Satan. His plan is to hinder the work of God in redeeming mankind. Satan spreads the word that God is not important; that He may not even exist because He doesn't keep people from harm or prevent bad things happening. So if there is a God He is of little use to people in the world. So he tells us not to pay any attention to this supposed God.

What is God's kingdom?

Jesus said: "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" If we want to be happy, we don't look for our answer about happiness in this world. Happiness is not gained with things or the approval of people Happiness is with God's rule, but only through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the sins of the world. The kingdom of God is where God's rule is the only rule.

"The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all."

Psalm 102:19

'God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Phil 2:9-11

'for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.'

Rom 14:8-9

Jesus is the King of the kingdom

The kingdom of God is ruled by God's appointed Messiah, Jesus Christ who is not just the redeemer of His people but our anointed King.

His kingdom is something spiritual that takes place in our hearts. He is the King (Rev 19:16) who has dominion over everything created. *'For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.'*

Col 1:16-17

'Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Matt 28:18

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

John 18:36-37

In the kingdom of God, life is all about God, we live to fulfil His kingdom plan, and we do all things according to His will. As members of the kingdom of God we acknowledge His rule and dominion in every aspect of life. *'He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.'*

2 Cor 5:15

The Spirit of God is given to us so that we recognise Jesus is Lord and that God lives in us for our greatest good. So we can relax and give thanks in all things, because we know God is at work in us to achieve a life of holiness for us in the image of Christ, so we obey the teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *'You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'*

Acts 2:28

Knowing God is in us to prepare us for heaven means we can rejoice always, because we know He will work both the good and the bad that

comes into our lives to see us moulded into the image of Christ so we can rule with Him.

Matt 6:31-33

We begin with the knowledge of God in us or we don't really begin

Before we start trying to learn from God's word we must begin by understanding that God now lives in us from the time of our repentance and our new birth by the Spirit. With this in mind it is easier for the Spirit to teach us as we abide in Him because He abides in us. As the Spirit of God, He equips each of us to serve our Lord Jesus in His Church, His chosen people. *"you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 2:38

God in us includes us in His plan of salvation and the equipping His people for their work of service to Christ and one another. In this way God sanctifies us by coming to live in us so that we might live for Him as He perfects His image in us who love Him and are called by Him for this purpose. God in us is the only way we can live in peace while we are trained in holiness in a troubled world. *'For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.'*

Col 3:3

Every command from God is revealed to us by the Spirit to show how we are to live with Him. On the one hand, every instruction to be holy, every incentive to grow in the image of Christ, is ours to have, if we are committed to living up to what God has done for us, and is doing in us by God the Spirit. On the other hand, we are constantly tempted to live for the flesh of natural man who does not have the Spirit of God, so we are tested to see if we can overcome by walking by the Spirit. Every painful trial and disagreeable event is for our training and can be overcome by walking with God in the Spirit of power and truth.

The question is, are we willing to believe Him and walk with Him?

Regardless of the distressing events we face in the world as we live under God's governance, we have God living in us, and we can overcome the world with Him, and we can know the power of sin is defeated if we walk in His holiness, for then we are walking with God as His beloved children. There is nothing we can lose in the world that can take the love of God from us. No loss of health, property, or freedom can separate us from God and His love for us.

Rom 8:35-39

However, if we think we can breeze through life without battling against the flesh we are seriously deceived. *‘I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.’* Gal 5:16-17

Flesh still reigns in the world

Jesus has said: “In the world you will have tribulation” John 16:33

The early Christians lived in a society of great unfairness; they were very much aware of the suffering that is caused by poverty as a result of environment or persecution. They knew about the abuse of power first hand. Far from always being healthy, sickness was a constant threat, and devastating deadly plagues sometimes added to their suffering. Their suffering exposed the fragile nature of life for believer and nonbeliever alike.

In the light of the obvious facts about a life of suffering in a fallen world, any idea we may have that our journey thorough this life on earth was supposed to be pleasant and without too much trouble, is clearly seen by the facts to be fanciful, especially since the Lord Jesus said we will have tribulation.

However, because we still cling to our flesh to varying degrees as we undergo the process of sanctification, we all have a tendency to make life to be all about us and what we want. But life isn't about us, or our troubles; except that God uses our trials to strengthen our faith and build perseverance. This life is really all about God with us in our troubles. So what happens to us is not about us, it's all about God working for us so that we are transformed into the image of His Son.

To highlight how much we want to see things are about us, we should consider how many scriptures are often taken to be all about us, me and you; in order to make us the centre of all things. However, to make the Bible speak about our comfort and ease, we must take the word of God out of the context He intended, so that we put words in God's mouth He never uttered. Here are a few of the many verses that are regularly taken out of context to focus on our fleshly desires.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11

This is a word from God to Jeremiah who wrote exclusively to the Israelites as a promise to end their exile, but it is often quoted to individuals who are going through difficult times. Doing the wrong thing with good motives doesn't help people in tough times, because if we misquote God the desired result most probably won't happen.

If someone who has an incurable illness, this misquote is not helpful to hear when their illness or distress continues. God does not promise health and happiness to all His followers in this life. There is a lot of suffering in the world that we have to face, but we must do it with God who is our strength in times of trouble. The promise delivered by Jeremiah is for the restoration of Israel following judgment, with the understanding His discipline will bring obedience. *Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.'*

Jer 29:12-13

This verse is an example of God's Holy character and not a general promise to all Christians.

“God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.”

1 Cor10:13

We often hear this misquoted as “God will never give you more than you can handle.” But the reality is there will always be challenges that are overwhelming to us, which is why we rely on God in us and His holy community. This verse is specifically referring to temptation, and goes on to say that God will provide a way out, this means we can choose His way over temptation as we walk with Him. *I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.'*

Gal 5:16

“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Phil 4:13

Many people want to take this to say whatever I want to do, I can do. I can accomplish anything if I just believe enough. But if we read the surrounding verses, we discover Paul is talking about contentment in what are often difficult times, it's not about achievements. He's actually

saying that God gives him the strength to be content despite the difficult circumstances God allowed to challenge him.

“Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalm 37:4

This doesn't mean God is Santa Claus; He doesn't give us what we want if we are good enough or love Him enough. The promise is we will receive the desires of our heart as we grow closer to God, who is our heart, and our desires will conform more to the desires of His heart.

“The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

James 5:15

Sickness is part of this fallen world and, though miracles can happen, God doesn't make everyone better. We have prayed for many people to receive physical healing and not see them get well. *“Raise him up”* can mean a lot of things, not just restored health. James is pointing to the power and impact of prayer here, though God doesn't always answer prayers the way we expect or demand.

When this verse is used to promise healing, it mostly ignores the next verse. *‘Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.’* Often, in His infinite wisdom, God will use physical suffering to develop our character and produce spiritual growth in us. It is not possible to develop a full picture of teaching on healing on one verse, and we shouldn't begin here.

“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Matt 18:19-20

The idea that is often promoted is that if there are two or more people gathered together who agree on something, and they ask God for it in prayer, then Jesus will be present and God will give them their request. The motive may be to see someone healed, but using God's word in a way He never intended is to disregard His authority.

These verses from Matthew come in a section that deals with church discipline. Jesus said that if you have a brother who sins against you, then you need to go to him and try to work it out. If he refuses to

acknowledge his fault, then you bring one or two more witnesses to help work things out. God requires that there are two or three witnesses if discipline is to be carried out.

This is consistent with what we find the Old Testament dealing with breaking the commandments. *“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.”* (Deut 19:15) Legal cases needed to have two or three witnesses to establish a matter. The Bible interprets the Bible. Verse 18 gives the right context. *“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”*

It is with this in mind that Jesus said that the Father would grant the request of two or more who gather together in Christ’s name and are in agreement concerning binding (declare unlawful), or to loose, (declare lawful) concerning conduct in Church discipline. That’s what this passage is about, and yet so many Christians use it as though Jesus promised to answer their prayers when offered according to their own desires.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matt 6:33

Forgetting entirely the teaching of Matthew 5 and 6, we often prefer the idea of getting “all these things,” and fail to see what “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” really means. The Sermon on the Mount is about living according to the kingdom of God, in seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, which carefully defines how Christ’s followers are expected to behave.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Luke 11:9

Like Matthew 6:33, Luke, chapter eleven and verse nine has little to do with guaranteeing our personal fulfilment.

In Luke 11:1, Jesus' disciples ask Him, *“Lord, teach us to pray.”* In response, Jesus teaches them the Lord’s Prayer, which gives us principles of how we are to pray. But nowhere in the Lord’s Prayer do we see Jesus claiming material goods. It is a humble request asking God

to help us live the way He wishes us to live, and to provide for us as we need in order to do this. This is God's promise. This is what God guarantees us.

After giving the disciples the examples of what to ask for, like the forgiveness of sin, the coming of God's kingdom, and the basic sustenance for life, like our daily bread we need to allow us to serve Him. Jesus told His disciples, "*Ask and it will be given to you*" Ask for these things, and they shall be given to you.

It is only in the right context that we find the truth God intended

The fleshly thinking of the old life without God still influences believers. The reality is, collectively, we don't live like people who know they are born in the image of God to reflect His life, and that we also have God living in us to give us everything in the way of teaching and comfort that we need for training to live as His spiritual children.

We even make our church activities about us. Our preferred form of worship, our spiritual gifts, our ministry, and our opinions about what the Bible says. We forget it is all about God.

Further evidence we have no real understanding of God living in us is our constant complaining and grumbling when He allows some uncomfortable event or disagreeable person into our lives for our training in righteousness, which is exactly what we need if we are to follow the example of Christ and to ultimately rule with Him.

When we live as if God is not in us we will forget we have history to inform us about the grumbling of God's people. The people who God delivered from slavery in Egypt, grumbled when their faith was put to the test in the wilderness, and they lived as if God was not in their midst, and they paid a heavy price for grumbling. When we live as if God is not in us we repeat the history of grumbling, over even smaller things.

Because we are not fully transformed into the image of Christ, we have a tendency to live as if God is not at home in us. We make the fatal error of interpreting the word of God from the point of view of the flesh, so we take God's word out of context in order to justify our attachment to the world and the wisdom of mere men.

We must take care to avoid forcing scripture to fit our own lives and circumstances. It not only sets us up for disappointment, but discourages new Christians as they come to know the character of God. When we make scripture about us and our material good, we set ourselves up for spiritual failure. Paying attention to the context of a verse, and the context of the Bible as a whole, overcomes this common problem, and allows us to know God more fully and truthfully.

God loves us, and He does take care of us, but that care doesn't always come in the ways we think we want. He has our ultimate good in mind, and that good is that we become like Christ in the midst of suffering in the world. As Jesus was perfected in suffering, so we follow Him.

Heb 2:10

When we put words into God's mouth, and they don't come to pass, we can easily become a stumbling block to the ignorant or the faint hearted. Be warned! *"Woe to him who causes one of these to stumble. "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"*

Matt 18:7

Why is there such a difference between what is written and what we want?

We distort God's word to make us feel comfortable in the fallen world, because we don't live consciously with God in us who alone gives us the truth we need. And we do this because we still indulge the flesh of our old nature in Adam. We want to live as if we have a foot in the world and a foot in heaven. But we must learn we can't be double minded and stay true to God. *'For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.'* (James 1:7-8) God wants all of us or He has nothing at all of us.

Using God's word to suit our fleshly attitudes means we don't believe God is with us

If we did believe Him we wouldn't bear false witness by misquoting Him in His presence and break another commandment. If we believed God we wouldn't grumble about the disagreeable things that He allows in our lives. If we believed God is in us He would always be big enough for every situation we have to face, be it good or bad.

We have to remember, our previous life as unrepentant children descend from Adam is grounded in the world and the things of the world. Our life of faith in Jesus Christ is centred on the kingdom of God with heaven as our home. Now as born again children of God we have to learn we no longer live for ourselves in the flesh, to please ourselves in the world, we now live for Him who died so that we can live with God.

2 Cor 5:15

Our life in Christ is about living according to the Spirit of God. (Rom 8:9) Our life is now about what God is doing in us and in the world to save as many as possible. For this purpose God has left us in the world, just as Jesus walked in the world, so that we can be His light in the darkness. As a result of our reliance on God we suffer the same conditions of the world in exactly the same way as the unbelievers; except we have God with us as our constant companion and Lord.

Because we still live in the world, suffering is the way holiness is developed

‘For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.’ 1 Pet 2:21

On top of the general suffering that exists as a result of the fallen world, the world promotes suffering for all of us who follow Jesus Christ: *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* (2 Tim. 3:12) And this persecution happens even in churches, because our churches have become a haven for the unrepentant that still live for themselves. However God doesn’t waste our trials, He uses them for our good.

Rom 8:28-29

Jesus predicted suffering for His followers

All the gospels reveal Jesus’ predicted persecution for His disciples.

“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Matt 10:35-37

“And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.”

Mark 13:12

“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”

Mark 13:9-13

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.” And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

Luke 9:22-24

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.”

John 15:20-21

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

The letters to the Churches say a lot about suffering

Without giving all the text in full, here are 33 references to show there is no doubt that suffering is central to walking with God. It would appear that a lack of suffering was the exception rather than the rule.

Acts 8:1; Acts 22:4; Rom 5:3–5; Rom 12:12; 2 Cor 4:7-11; 2 Cor 6:4-10; 2 Cor 11:23-28; Phil 2:17; Col 1:24; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 2:3; 2 Tim 4:5; Heb 12: 11; Heb 13:12-14; Heb 11:36-38; Heb 10:32; Heb 12:2; Heb 10:32-36; Heb 12:1;

Heb 12:7; Heb 12:6; 1 Pet 1:6; 1 Pet 2:19-20; 1 Pet 4:12-19; Rev 1:9; Rev 2:10; Rev 2:13; Rev 6:9-10; Rev 7:14; Rev 17:6; Rev 18:24; Rev 19:2

These people suffered because they lived for God, but their suffering didn't define them, the God of love in them defined them with an eternal nature.

Our sovereign God allows earthly adversity to hold us down so we can use the opportunity to step up to glory. And finally we consider all who have died with Christ as Lord at the time John wrote the Revelation of Jesus Christ. *'Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.'* Rev 20:4

Only God knows what we really need as we prepare for heaven.

How does God provide for us in a world of suffering?

God gives us Himself. He comes to live in us as the Spirit of Christ. *'However, 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

God is with us. The God of Abraham is our God. God is our very present help in the time of trouble. (Psalm 46:1) The God of all comfort lives in us so that we are never without His comfort and ability to overcome the world. 2 Cor 1:3-5

And this is how we manage our suffering. *“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”* Matt 22:37

If we love Him with all we are, He will have first place in all things, for He is all we need. If we lack wisdom we ask God and He will enlighten us, (James 1:5) because He lives in us and will be quick to give us the understanding we need.

The evidence that we have placed God first in our lives is to be seen when we live for God. *'He died for all, so that they who live might no*

longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.' 2 Cor 5:15

Knowing God is in us gives us confidence that nothing can take us out of His hand, the loss of things and the acceptance of men is nothing for us to be concerned with because we have God who is Lord over all things on the earth and in the heavens.

Jesus has called us out of the world to live for the kingdom of God. *'For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.'* Col 1:16-18

Jesus Christ has risen, He is our healer and our strength, He is all we need, and He is our comforter, so that whatever is missing from our lives in the world, He makes up for with His presence so we can still rejoice in all things, because His love in us makes up for what is lacking, for all things are His, and we are hidden with Him in God.

'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

Satan still runs opposition in the world

Satan conducts spiritual warfare in a way that wants us to look to get what we want, something, anything from the world, before relying on God in us, and obeying Him. God alone is to be before all things for us, He alone must have first place in everything. To claim to have God and still look to the world for what we want is to have divided loyalties, and God shares what is His with no one who does not recognise He is King

and Lord of all. We can't have one foot in the world and one in the kingdom of God.

Nothing in creation can be allowed to be put before Him. Whatever is before Him is but a worthless idol. When we feel we lack something in the world that we believe God hasn't supplied, our quest becomes something other than God. In effect, we become idol worshippers.

'Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.'

1 John 2:15-17

The world is fallen and Satan is cunning, but Christ is raised from the dead, He is all we need. We are not of this world and under Satan's control. The created world is fallen; it is unable to give us all we need. There will always be something Satan can use to tempt us to go after in the world, so we will desire the things of the world and forget God.

Christ your life

*'Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When **Christ, who is our life**, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.... put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.'*

Col 3:1-4, 10

*'You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.'*

Rom 8:9

In the real world of persecution, Paul experienced more suffering and opposition than any 50 of us put together; but He walked with God and he was aware of the power of the Spirit to keep him for the day of his glory. So he was quick to encourage his brethren to walk as he walked, as John challenged his friends to walk as Jesus walked.

1 John 2:6

'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

Phil 4:4-7

'Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.'

1 Peter 5:7

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.'

2 Cor 12:9

We wouldn't need His power if we are supposed to live in comfort and ease as we pursue the illusion of peace in the world. We wouldn't need His comfort either if life was supposed to be a walk in the park.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.'

2 Cor 1:3-7

Consider the two ways

On the one hand, we can live as if God is not in us, so we are likely to take matters into our own hands and indulge ourselves in the world and to things or people in the world, which is really idolatry, because we have placed something or someone before God. The flesh has a tendency to make the world and its things, and the people who have hurt us the content of our reflections and thoughts.

On the other hand, we walk by the Spirit so we walk with God in His presence. And as a result we are not controlled by ingrained fleshly

desires because we take control of our thinking. This is what the Spirit is telling us in Galatians 5:16-17. The flesh produces the characteristics of the sinful nature and the desire for the world; and the Spirit produces the characteristics and character consistent with our Holy God. These two are natural dispositions, one is earthly and one is heavenly, they are opposed to each other so we cannot please the flesh and walk with God.

In our early days of our walk with God, fleshly thinking and concerns for the world is often habitual, especially when we are not focused on God. As we grow spiritually we put off the fleshly way of thinking, so our minds go through the process of transformation so that we develop the practice of centring our minds on the things of the Spirit. It is then that we can more easily understand that He lives in us so we are never alone. God is all we need; He alone is able to give us what we need.

When we know God is in us we can be rest from anxiety. When we know God is in us He will satisfy our needs even when we live in poverty. He will do this by filling us with the comfort of His powerful presence, for life is more than food or drink. Matt 6:25

All the benefits of the Spirit of God abiding in us are weakened by failing to understand that God lives in us, simply because He will not be seen by us to be a very present help in the time of trouble. When we know God is in us, we make ourselves more available to the Father and the Son so they can fortify us with their love as we labour according to the will of God.

If we are unaware of this truth, we live like someone who shares a large house with someone, but with absence of mind thinks their guest is on a long overseas holiday. Their presence is not appreciated. The Spirit delights on our thoughts being with God who lives in us.

Jesus said: "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*" John 15:4

We can't abide, that is live, in a theology, we can't live in an idea, but we can abide, live, in a person, Jesus Christ. God lives in us and we live in God. The branch connection to the vine is organic, a life to a life.

"Apart from Me you can do nothing" John 15:5

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

Copyright © 2019

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com