

Free to be slaves and stewards of God



“I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

John 13:14-15

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We were once enslaved to sin and now we are enslaved to God. *“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”*
Rom 6:22

“knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;”
Rom 6:6

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
Rom 8:3-4

We must embrace the whole gospel of Christ

We want peace, but there is a problem, peace is only possible if we are intimate with God by living as His slaves in His service. From the beginning God has required that if we want peace we must live for Him in obedience and truth. But we have lived for ourselves. As a consequence mankind is now spiritually dead and now separated from the presence of God. Even so, God has provided one way for us to be reconciled to Him in love through His Son.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became a man like us, to die on a cross for us and the sinful disobedient independent heart of men and women, of which we ourselves are all guilty. He died so that those who believe in Him would turn from the darkness of independence and disobedience, and willingly join themselves to Him in obedience and love, to no longer live for themselves so they can have eternal life with the Father and the Son by the power and the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus is our Lord and our example in all things

The devil tempted Jesus with the possibility of glory without suffering on a cross. *The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"*

Matt 4:8-10

Satan now offers us the world and all we desire without a cross and the need for suffering, if we will just follow his leading and ignore the word of God.

Jesus draws people to Himself but only because He is lifted up on the cross.

John 12:32

We can only share in His glory if we suffer with Him. Rom 8:17

Before Jesus Christ took hold of us we were slaves of the dark side who used our will to satisfy the flesh and our sinful inclinations and desires. But now we are in Christ we are His slaves, to use our will to carry out the inclinations of the Spirit of God.

The will follows the nature of the heart, which was once set against the will of God, and as hard as stone to His touch, but now we are joined to God by faith in Jesus Christ by being born again by the Spirit to have a tender heart sensitive to God.

This freedom from the power of sin by being grafted into the family of God comes with our willing enslavement to God. Being slaves and children of God would seem at first to be an absurd contradiction, and many want to deny the idea we can be slaves and children at the same time. But all it means is, as God's slaves we are children who serve God and no one else, not even ourselves. As slaves of God we follow the example of Jesus our Lord and Master who was the great suffering servant and steward of all God wants to achieve in the world.

Our enslavement to Christ is actually our freedom

Our enslavement to God is something that happens to us as a result of what God has done in freeing us from the power of sin to enslave us to the Devil. It is not something we have initiated but something that we accept as part of our freedom in being made subject to the rule of God.

As we were once lost in the power of sin, and salve to sin, we are now bound in righteousness to our heavenly Father, and He knows only too well that unless we are enslaved to Him we will want to please ourselves and remain as slaves to sin.

Once we were enemies of God, now we rejoice in our servitude. We are either slaves of sin or slaves of God. Being slaves to God means that God owns us, we are in other words His bond slaves, we have been bought at a predetermined price, and that price is the blood of Jesus Christ. We are not our own so we can decide what we will do or where we will go, we are the possession of God who decides all things concerning how we shall live our lives now we are in His possession.

1 Pet 2:9

However, when we chose to become Christian on our own terms we don't give up our rights, we don't want to be enslaved to God; we want to get even with those who hurt us, we don't sign up for service in the household of God to be pushed around. And this usually means we want God to make us happy in the world because we still live for the flesh and sinful desires. Or perhaps we decide we will join up but decide on how we be seen in doing our special work for God, so that we will be applauded by gullible people.

Coming to Christ on our own terms demonstrates that we are not willing to live as slaves of Christ who are dedicated to obedience in putting on Christ and living the same simple life of faith He lived in obedience and service to God.

While we may finally come to the point of repentance along the way, and end up denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily; if we are looking for happiness in the world, it generally means we are self absorbed and obsessed with worldly comfort as we live for ourselves. If this is the case we are totally blinded to the fact that the world is in darkness and separated from God.

But if we are children of God our hope is not in the world, our longing is fixed on Christ and the heavenly kingdom of God to come.

The more we look to the world and what it offers for self satisfaction, the less we perceive the truth, and the more we fail to hear the voice of God to be conformed to the life of Christ.

If we are looking to the world we will be deaf to the truth of God in Christ to serve Him with honour. *"In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.'"*

Matt 13:14-15

On the contrary, slaves and stewards live for Christ. *"For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 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."*

Rom 14:7-8

"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

Jesus Christ our example as Servant

"Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted...He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from

whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”
Isaiah 52:13–53:3

The suffering of the Servant is not controlled by the hands of sinful men who want to bring down the Son of God. The life of the servant’s suffering is in the hands of God, for the Glory of God and His only Son; and ultimately for all who put their trust and allegiance in the hands of the one and only saviour of the world.

When we suffer as we follow the example of Christ, it is not only to honour the Father but it is meant for our glory, for we will see Him as He is and know we are like Him.

In Christ we see the character of a Servant of God: *‘Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!’*
Phil 2:6-8

Jesus is our example of how we live for God. *‘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

Jesus Christ our example as Steward

“Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” (John 4:34) “He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” (John 8:29) “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do
John 17:4

The truth of this is clear: Jesus was both steward and servant. He is the one who exists entirely to please His Master. *“I do nothing on my own initiative.”*
John 8:28

The servant of Christ will suffer with Christ

Unlike the church of the first century, much of the church in the developed world doesn't suffer as they did, because suffering is unexpected in a world that promotes self discovery and material success. But when we follow Jesus we don't behave as the world sees fit. *'He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.'*
Isaiah 53:7

This same Jesus said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you."* Matt 5:38-42

'For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.'
Heb 12:3

The road we travel with Christ is the road of suffering, the Via Dolorosa; this is the road Jesus walked on His painful journey to the cross of His crucifixion. It is definitely not the way the people of the world would choose that desire comfort and self satisfaction.

For this reason Jesus call His disciples out of the world. *'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

If someone offers you a way of salvation without a cross, it is not the salvation that is purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ; it has nothing to do with Christ, it is actually an invitation to enjoy the

world and deny Christ. *"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."* Matt 12:30

Like the Lord Jesus, the more determined we are to walk the way of the cross with Him, the fewer are the people who will walk with us. This is also part of the suffering of the cross for a faithful servant of God.

Not everyone loses their physical life, but everyone who is a slave to Christ will suffer as a stranger and alien, because this world is not our home, or what we live for. Therefore resisting temptation and putting to death that which is still earthly in us is also part of our suffering because we serve another Master.

As servants we are called on to suffer for Christ' sake. *'For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.'* (Phil 1:29) *'Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.'* 2 Tim 3:12

'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

Paul wrote to the Christians who were being persecuted in Rome, encouraging them to suffer as Christ did and not react against those who persecuted them. *"Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them."* *"Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions."* *"Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good"* Rom 12:14, 17, 21

Believing in Jesus Christ is about surrendering self and following His example as a slave to God to live in His righteousness. For when we believe we are also anointed by the Spirit as belonging to God. And the Spirit of God witnesses to us that we are also children of God. Believers are children who don't live for themselves but for Him who died in their place. *'The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and*

if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'

Rom 8:16-18

The church is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in fellowship with the Father. The priestly ministry of Christ is passed on in some measure to every believer who serves God as a slave of Christ.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and 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 5:1-5

Our hope in this life is not found in the world but in the glory of God to be fully revealed to us when we see Jesus Christ face to face. We are enabled to have this hope because the grace of God has been poured out into us by the Spirit of God.

This grace from God upholds us in a sinful world that is under the judgment of God. And suffering is the normal existence where God works for our glory. Suffering is the natural result of rebellion and independence from God in the world. Therefore suffering goes hand in hand with the natural life we experience in the world.

Suffering is used by God to train us in holiness of character, so God uses suffering for our greatest good. We are not to grow weary in this holiness training. We get up on our feet and persevere. We will suffer at the hands of others who don't obey

God, and we will suffer as a result of our own self centred sinfulness because we don't always obey God.

Jesus said *“In the world you will have tribulations.”* (John 16:33) It is unavoidable. But He also said *“I have overcome the world.”*

In the world He was tempted in every way as we are but without sin, that the requirements of the law can be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but now walk according to the Spirit.

Rom 8:4

We persevere because we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And standing before God is the proper posture for anyone, especially those who God has blessed and called to be His servant children.

‘Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.’

2 Thess 1:4-5

‘For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.’

2 Cor 4:11

‘You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

Heb 12:4-6

As Jesus did we are to do

As God’s stewards we are to do His will, His good and perfect will. And when we do we follow Jesus’ example of serving the Father. *“Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your*

slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matt 20:27-28

‘Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.’ John 13:3-5

Jesus is the perfect steward, He gave up all He had and died to make us holy as He fulfilled the will of God. He is our leader who served us as He served God. He shunned earthly power and the applause of men, and offers us a clear example to follow as His disciples.

Jesus calls us to serve Him as servant stewards. *“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”* John 13:14-15

As a result, each of us is called by Jesus Christ to serve our Creator, our friends, our family, our community, and even our sworn enemies in the world.

Jesus calls us to take up the life of discipleship in learning to become like Him with His grace working in our restoration for the life for which we are originally made in the beginning with God. *‘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

The call of God is to enter into a life beyond ourselves in His service for the good of all, and especially for the benefit of His chosen children as we honour God our Father. This call to self denial will be antagonist to those who only have an interest in life of the flesh according to fallen man's expectations and limitations

in the world. The resistance of the unrepentant person is following the natural instincts that have a limited focus around self gratification, and therefore interpret all things along the lines of personal satisfaction, not of personal sanctification.

However, the original purposes of God was for His children to serve Him and honour Him in all things, and this has never been changed or put aside, so any hope of real satisfaction and peaceful harmony in the world will be frustrated by self centred attitudes, and result in dissatisfaction and disharmony, so that the result of denying service to God proves to be frustrating and unable to produce real satisfaction in this life.

This experience of futile struggle is the result of the judgment of God on the world which fails to honour God in all things. In a real way God hands us over to reap the frustration of our own dishonour. God's plan includes evil that He may use it for the good of all by carrying out His judgment that has the potential to bring us to humble repentance.

God's judgment is designed to either bring us to a sincere repentance of heart so we abandon self interest to worship Him, if not it will harden our hearts and cause us to increase our efforts to gain personal satisfaction and domination in the world, even at the expense of others, so that we end up abusing others and worshipping things.

The measure to which we delight in serving God is seen in the degree we will go in self denial to fulfil the requirements of God's commandments. The degree to which we are self absorbed will be seen in how the ten commandments disturbs our conscience and robs us of peace, so that we try even harder to find satisfaction by the exertion of our own will to get what we want, and thereby increase our violation of the law of God which He designed to bring us to the end of self so we seek His mercy in Jesus Christ which is life as God intended it to be lived for the blessings of all His creation.

Our Father equips us for His service

Our Father has entrusted His work and enabling gifts to us and we are responsible to Him to use them properly.

Every believer is both servant and steward who are equipped by God for our work of service. *'As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.'*

1 Pet 4:10

'But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.'

1 Cor 12:7, 12, 18

We need to be able to identify our gifting, and it is wise that we ask trusted friends to advise us about what we are really good at because we may desire some gift because of our earthly desires.

This is serious business; because we must exercise our stewardship in the light of Christ coming in Judgment of the world. *'So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.'*

Rom 14:12

Faithfulness in our stewardship qualifies us for greater responsibilities in service in the life to come. *'Master, your mina (money) has made ten minas more.'* And he said to him, *'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'*

Luke 19:16-17

All our service here is a preparation for our service in the new heaven and earth. *'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.'*

Rev 22:3

The Lord's stewards serve Him in different ways. This is spelt out in Romans 12:3-8 (v3) *God has allotted to each a measure of*

faith. (v4) all the members do not have the same function, (v6) we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: Rom 12:3-8

Not everyone who claims to serve God will serve the interest of God and be welcomed into His kingdom. *"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."* Matt 24:12-13

Each of us will give account for how we use our talents as the stewards of God. Let us not be like the steward who failed to use what he had been given for an increase in his master house. *'You wicked, lazy slave. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* Matt 25:26, 30

We are to be bond servants like Christ

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men. So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Phil 2:5-7, 12-14

Our salvation is Christ, our goal is Christ, our hope is Christ, and our life is Christ. We work out our salvation from where we are placed in the world by the will of God. We don't choose where we are born, or into whose family we are joined. God decides our place in the world according to His predetermined will for us. He decides our gifting and where we should serve Him.

Therefore our hope is not in the world or with the things of the world or people in the world. God has determined that our only home is in heaven with Christ who has all authority in heaven and

on earth. *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."* Rom 11:36

Jesus our Christ has called us out of the world to serve with Him. By the working of God we are released from slavery to sin and enslaved to Christ. Therefore we are to put off the life we once had in the world and put on the life we now have in Christ by the powerful assistance of the Spirit. We are to look for our heavenly home while we serve God on earth. Col 3:1-4

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Matt 6:19-21, 24-25

The "these things" mentioned in verse 33 are obviously not the things of the world, since the focus in the Sermon on the Mount is about life in the kingdom of God, so our priority must be the heavenly rewards that come from obediently serving God. *"You cannot serve God and wealth."* So *"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"* for this is our destiny in Christ Jesus.

In order to keep our goal securely set before us we need to be absolutely committed to following Christ. *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."* Rom 12:1

Because of the lack of commitment to put on Christ we are often blind to the fact that God works all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose? (Rom 8:28) And the purpose of God is that we should be conformed into the image of Christ. Rom 8:29

The popular movement today is towards a seeker friendly church which ends up offering a church to people on their own terms.

But the real church is inhabited by those God has called through repentance and faith to love and obey Jesus as Lord. The Bible tells us: *“There is none who seeks for God.”* Rom 3:11

What people are seeking is not leading to obedience and sacrificial service to God, they want a good life. While these truths are the greatest encouragement to the chosen people of God, they are at the same time the greatest warning of judgment for those who are not willing to respond to the call to repent and do not love God.

Jesus Christ didn't die to make anyone comfortable on earth; He died that we should be holy as He is Holy. He died so we can serve God so we will live with Him in heaven. The happiness of Christ is not the same as what the world calls happiness.

Christ's happiness is only secured in doing the will of God. We can't share in the happiness of God unless we share in the holiness of God by living like Christ in all obedience and truth. To share in Christ's peace we must share in His cross of self denial and sacrificial service.

To share holy fellowship with Christ we are not to be self absorbed, but absorbed in loving Christ who is our life. And we do this by fully engaging our attention and interest on a daily basis in personally knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and saviour. The person we invest the majority of our interest in will determine the level of our grace and peace.

If we are self absorbed we can never have the peace of God, because life is not in us or the world but in Jesus Christ. Only the mind that is fixed on the Spirit can have life and peace, regardless of our situation. Jesus calls us to be absorbed in Him as the true Vine so we can produce His fruit.

The slaves of God need to undergo training in righteousness

God oversees the training of our lives so we can be presented to Him complete in Christ. (Col 1:28) In the book of Hebrews training is spelt out in the words of discipline. The word Paul uses for discipline is about the training and education of children. Therefore it relates to instruction; chastisement, and correction. It is the disciplined training we need to run to win the glorious goal of gaining Christ. *"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* Heb 12:1

The goal we strive for is Christ; *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith."* (Heb 12:2) The life of Christ in us is not going to be seen without us diligently and strenuously enduring God's personal training to live for Him.

God trains us in the discipline of holiness in the darkness and suffering of the world, by having us live through disagreeable things that He allows in our lives so we learn to put off all that entangles us from the way we once lived in the world. *"My son, do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He **disciplines**, And He scourges every son whom He receives."* It is for **discipline** that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not **discipline**? All **discipline** for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Heb 12:5-7, 11

As servants of God our whole life is committed to leaving behind our old life in the world and going on to what lies ahead. *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."* Phil 3:7-8

As faithful servants we need to live by the conviction that God is always sovereign over all the details of our life. He is our maker. He's faithful. We can trust our soul to Him and get on with the tough, hard business of doing what Jesus desires, even to those who don't treat us well.

1 Peter 4:19

In living for God we can have confidence that God is working on our behalf. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

Rom 8:28

Since God works all things in our lives, He must be intimately involved in the details, because 'all' includes everything, even the little things that happen in our homes.

Because God is sovereign over us with all authority, whatever comes our way He must have allowed for our greatest good; which is that we become like Christ who suffered all things for our greatest good.

It is for this purpose that we work out what God is working in us of the life of Christ. *"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world."*

Phil 2:13-15

When God's training takes root in us it produces the fruit of righteousness. When we no longer yield ourselves to be instruments of unrighteousness we are converted from our own evil and selfish desires as God possesses us more completely, resulting in usefulness, peace leading to immortality.

Our fruitfulness only comes from abiding in Christ

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more

fruit. 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. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” John 15:1-2, 4-6

Jesus Christ came to heal the people of God as the true Vine of God, so that the chosen children could produce the good fruit of faithful service.

Any idea people may have that they can be a Christian without living the obedient and sacrificial life of Christ as a servant of God, faithfully following Christ's example, is living in total opposition to the words of Jesus Himself. Jesus' words about abiding in Him are at once an encouragement to the obedient who are committed to remaining in Christ by obeying His words, and then, at the same time, they are a warning to those who want to have a religious experience without the complete devotion of finding all they need in their attachment to the one who is the life of the world.

Christians are servants of the Lord from whom they have received eternal life, so they are people owned by the Saviour Himself, to live in and by the Saviour Himself. He is not only our Shepherd, but also the Living Vine from where we gain the life of God.

When we regard ourselves as His possession we know Jesus gives us immeasurable value in the sight of God, even if not recognised by the world. Even so, He does indeed own us as our Master, for He has bought us from the cruel masters of sin and death. *"You were bought with a price."* 1 Cor. 7:23

Jesus calls us to take up the life of discipleship as a restoration to the life for which we were all originally made in service to God. Because He is our new beloved Master, we owe Him our

wholehearted loyalty, and because He is our Lord, we owe Him our heartfelt obedience and loving devotion. Only Jesus can set the standard required for following Him into eternal life.

“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 9:24

The secret to peace is surrender to God

We can't share in the happiness of God unless we share in the holiness of God by living like Christ in all obedience and truth. God's training is for our sanctification, without which we cannot see God. Our sanctification is leading us to put off our old life and put on the life of Christ, therefore to share in Christ's peace we must share in His cross.

Peace and blessings is only possible when we live in trusting dependence on God as our Father. But this is only possible by being united with Jesus Christ who is the truth and the Light of God and our only way to God. We are saved from eternal death by trusting in the physical death of Christ for our sin because He died in our place and on our behalf and rose again.

When we are united to Christ through faith He becomes our life. Life and peace can only be had on God's terms.

Oh but we value our independence so much, and this is why we have to put it to death by joining ourselves to Jesus Christ. A failure to turn from the darkness of independence and disobedience by voluntarily enslaving ourselves to Jesus Christ in obedience and love, will result in the fearful judgment of God of being condemned to suffer eternal separation from God and all that is good whatsoever, having no hope of God's peace and deliverance for evermore.

God's question to all of us is: Have we denied ourselves and taken up our cross to follow Jesus Christ, including His teaching and example as how to live for God? If you haven't repented from

living for yourself, don't delay, for tomorrow you may die without eternal life and be condemned to eternal darkness.

Anyone who offers a way to God without a personal cross where our destiny is still in our hands, to please ourselves in this world, is from the Devil. We can't share in the happiness of God unless we share in the holiness of God by living like Christ in all obedience and truth. *'But 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

It is of great importance that the chosen children always remember that the Father is constantly overlooking our lives so that He can use every experience, the good, the bad and the ugly, to gain the greatest benefit for us as He teaches us how to live in obedient holiness through the discipline of faithful living, so that we can become mature children in the image of Christ Jesus our Lord and Master.

We must remember that there is never a time that Jesus Christ is not on His throne for our greatest good, and that He not only rules in heaven but He has also positioned Himself in our hearts by the Spirit of God, so that we should never despair that we struggle in this fallen world alone. Doubt, fear and anxiety experienced by God's children are but reminders that we have forgotten He lives with us, and that He has already gained the victory for us over the power of sin and the last enemy death.

Our part in learning the discipline of God is to put off all fleshly thinking and behaviour that is the habit of those who don't personally know God the Father and the Son by the indwelling Spirit of God. If we are looking up to Christ we will see the Father is lovingly looking at us without ceasing, for He never sleeps or forgets those who love Him.

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." Col 2:9-13

Faith without works is dead

Christ Jesus has made all who are in Him the priesthood that God always intended His people to be. *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light"* 1 Pet 2:5-9

The early Christians of the first century who were fed to the lions weren't worried about a comfortable life in the world; they went to their death believing God had reserved a place for them in heaven. They would rather die than give up their faith to live in the world

However when we read the Bible, today we only see the parts that we think give us what we want in the world; and we conveniently, for the sake of the flesh, miss the parts about not loving the world and things of the world. (1 John 2:15-17) So we don't see the words that Jesus taught about following His example as a servant; or about our need for self denial and taking up our cross to follow Him.

This spiritual blindness will mean we keep what we have for ourselves. If we are not using our abilities and resources in serving God we are robbing God of a vital resource to establish His will on earth and in the Church. If we are not using our God given abilities for the building up of one another and bearing one

another's burdens, then we are robbing our brothers and sisters of the resources God has provided for their care. If we are not interested in going and making disciples as Jesus has commanded, then we are condemning people to darkness who we should be helping to see the light.

'But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?'
James 2:20

We are without excuse. Almost every Christian in the world has read the Bible at some time and what it says about God's gifting and service. And many have not responded in obedience to what has been made clear for us to do. Most like to ignore God's word is meant for them and look the other way.

Although not all churches have given the necessary teaching required for every believer to utilise their gifting for the benefit of the body of Christ; everyone who has actually been born again will be compelled by the Spirit of God to practice what has now been made clear. *'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'*
Rom 8:14

Every believer is under obligation to obey what God has revealed in His word for their compliance. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*
2 Tim 3:16-17

"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."
Col 3:1-4

Many professing Christians don't want the way of suffering and obedience with Christ; they want a genie in a lamp who will grant them their every earthly wish.

If our mindset has never turned away from seeking the gratification of our basic physical desires in the world, even as refined as we might like them to be, we will still want God to assist us in getting what we want in the world, and there would be no desire to ignore fleshly passions and deny ourselves, and offer ourselves in sacrificial service to God and man.

The question is; is our heart still in the world? Or have we had a heart transplant from God and changed our mindset so that we are now being transformed by the Spirit in a renewal of our minds, so we have the mind of Christ? Or are we still living for ourselves?

We can tell where our hopes are by the way we either increasingly live for Jesus Christ as slaves and stewards by the leading of the Spirit of God, or whether we live for ourselves and seek comfort in the world.

If our body is truly the temple of the Holy Spirit, we have new house rules, so we are delighted to declare all of our lives are to be lived for God and with God and with less of us. *"More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."*
Phil 3:8

Jesus has left us an example of service to follow. Jesus is our saviour, servant and steward. Jesus wants us to understand what He has done for us; and how it's about our humble relationship with Him who is the Lord of glory. Our Lord had humbled Himself for our benefit, He laid down His life for us, and He says we should follow His example of humble service.

Jesus did what He did out of love. We need to be slaves and stewards because it is the fulfilment of the law to love one another. If we are in Christ the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the indwelling Spirit. (Rom 5:5) So we are commanded to love others as we have been loved. *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved*

you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:12-13

Jesus calls us to follow Him. *'Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'*

(Phil 2:6-8) And because He gives us life we love Him and we set aside worldly expectations for the joy of the glory awaiting us when we go to be with Him.

Attitudes that exist in the Church

There are three possible attitudes revealed to us in the church; (1) that of the unrepentant non believers; (2) those who are immature Christians; (3) and the mature believers who follow the example of Jesus.

The unrepentant and immature are similar in disposition. They have a feeling of entitlement, "I deserve better". They have a consumer mentality, look at me, and serve me. They take no responsibility for the body of Christ or reaching out to unbelievers. They are disobedient and immature. The unrepentant non believers and the immature are hard to tell apart. *"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ."*

1 Cor 3:1

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant."

Heb 5:12-13

In contrast, the mature believers are thankful for God's mercy and grace. They always want to be serving God. They are looking to be contributing to the body of Christ. They are eager to take responsibility. They desire to be free from the limitations of the

flesh and be mature in Christ. *"Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."*

Heb 5:14

"We 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

God will judge what is acceptable

"Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

1 Cor 3:13-15

We are often blind to the warnings that God has given us so that we are without excuse.

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

John 15:6

"For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."

Heb 6:7-8

'Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.'

Rom 6:3-5

"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. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

Rom 8:9-10, 12-14

Let us follow the example of Jesus Christ to hear: *"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."*

Matt 25:23

For those who God has chosen who now sleep in their faith: *'Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.'*

Rom 13:11

The Bible shows us the importance Jesus' transfiguration for us we follow Him. *'He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.'*

Matt 17:2

The Shekinah Glory of God was made visible in Christ, and we are to be like Him. (1 John 3:2) The word used for the "transfiguration" of Jesus in Matthew is the same word used in Romans 12:2 concerning our transformation. *'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.'*

We have received a great calling to put on Christ so we can be exalted with Him on the day of His visitation.

'Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.'

2 Thess 2:16-17

Living Water Resources

Come to the River



“I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

John 13:14-15

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