

CHRISTIAN
THINK ABOUT WHOM YOU
REPRESENT



Consider who you live for?

In the beginning

In the beginning God created man in the likeness of His holiness, because to live in the presence of God man needed to be made in the image of God. Because man was made holy he was able to have a relationship with God, and God anointed him to be His representative on earth, a representative who would follow His plan and purpose.

God made man in His image but just a little lower than Himself, so that man was in communion with God and under His authority to represent God's will on earth. As the representative of God man had dominion on earth but God had Dominion over the universe.

But this first man called Adam decided to go another way, and in doing so declared his independence and disobeyed God who must be obeyed; with the result that man was separated from the presence of God because his likeness to God was now corrupted by sin.

When man pleased himself and disobeyed God he declared his independence from God and separated himself from union with God, for he no longer lived under the authority of God and no longer reflected completely God's image because he had now represented himself and excluded himself from God's presence and purpose.

All was lost but for God

Just at the right time in God's history, Jesus Christ came from heaven to restore that which has been lost of our relationship with God and our ability to represent God on earth. He came so that we could live with God without reservation, and love our neighbours as ourselves as God's representatives in a fallen world.

Jesus Christ came to represent God, "*if you have seen Me you have seen the Father.*" He also came to show us how to live as the children of God. When Jesus called His disciples they were to put on His life by imitating Him having given up their way of life to live for Him and become like Him. The disciples were to represent Christ as His faithful witnesses. When we deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Christ the world should know we belong to Him because they should see His life

expressed in the way we love one another and our neighbours as ourselves.

The sinful way of man's first declaration of independence hasn't left us, because some think there are many alternative Christian ways for us to get to God. Instead of the cross of Christ being the standard, there are counterfeit crosses proposed as keys to heaven. One of the worst of these false teaching allows for a belief in Christ as Saviour, while the need to submit to Him as the Lord Who it to govern our lives is not really necessary. Therefore they propose that one can be a Christian while the commitment to live the Christian life as defined by Scripture is completely optional. But if Jesus isn't Lord of all He isn't Lord at all.

Therefore there are many who do not seek to live for Christ

Some churches are able to draw a large crowd of people, like the crowd that initially followed Jesus Christ because they wanted what He could do, a few churches are less popular because they don't hide the need for a personal cross, they are like the few who remained with Jesus because they wanted Him even when He made it clear that the cross, His and ours, was inescapable if there was to be any reconciliation of sinful men with God. The easy believing churches are ashamed of the true gospel of Christ crucified as the only way to gain a relationship with God. God is well pleased to save those who believe the cross of Christ as Christ crucified on their behalf. *'For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'*

1 Cor 1:18

Easy believing is offered as free grace which can be summed up in this: anyone can be a Christian while any commitment to live the Christian life, as defined by Scripture, is optional.

Easy believing churches may not say discipleship is optional, but they don't insist on taking up the cross either. In essence, it teaches that we can be saved while remaining our own god. This option to take it or leave it represents God's grace as though the forgiveness of sin is its primary objective, while deliverance from sin so we can be God's representatives is secondary and optional. Forgiveness for sin and deliverance from the power of sin cannot be separated.

The offer of free grace is a way of saying we can have our say as to how we live; we have our rights to self determination. But the only right we

have is God's judgement, for all have rebelled, all have disobeyed Him. We have all pleased ourselves in demanding our will be done in our own way. We have all been self centred, deceitful, demanding, dishonest, divisive, disloyal, angry, unloving, impatient, unforgiving, and ungrateful. Forgiveness doesn't break the cycle of sinning.

However if we are real Christians we now exist in Christ by the mercy of God. We are no longer to be like the people of this world who live for themselves, because we no longer live as we once did. We have died to the world and its human understanding and corrupted spiritual values. We now have Christ who lives His life in us and through us. We live our lives for the glory of God. Our home is in heaven. We live according to the values and requirements of God's kingdom, and under His supreme authority. To view regeneration as not effecting any real change in the person is a serious distortion of regeneration and the work of God. It offers a ticket to heaven when there is no bus coming from God for ticket holders.

Those who are really delivered recognise God has authority and sovereignty over everything, on earth and in heaven, and we bow down to His Majesty and Authority. The new life God gives to those who follow Jesus requires the death of our self centred life. We are a new creation. *'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!'*

1 Cor 5:17

On this the Bible is clear, if the Lord calls those who say they want to follow Him as His representatives, they must first offer themselves as a living sacrifice and be committed to following His example of self denial and devoted service. But the back door approach offered by many insists they can claim the prize without counting the cost and paying up. Would Jesus, the King of King's agree to swallow this watered down lukewarm substitute for His truth, or would He spew it out of His mouth? God's grace demands we are yoked to Christ, a yoke that requires two working as one.

If anyone claims the name of Christ and His holy reputation, and doesn't begin to reflect the life that He gives to His disciples, are we to take their word that they know Him. The Bible says we to have discernment and proceed with caution because the evidence of divine life is not available. If the fruit of Christ's life is not seen bursting through their devotion to Him, how can they say they have His life through a supernatural birth?

How can we tell the legitimate disciples from the pretenders if we can't and shouldn't require at least some proof of Christ's Life? What should we be looking for? If the claim is we follow Christ, shouldn't there be evidence of the obedience Christ Himself demonstrated by taking up His cross? Shouldn't it be possible to discern the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God's holiness in the person, simply because it is the Holy Spirit's desire to make His presence and influence known?

We should be cautious and aware that claims of belonging to Christ need to be validated by proof of His holiness or we are in danger of relegating His church to complete irrelevance in a world that desperately need it's light. But the weeds amongst the wheat still insist we take every claim of faith in Christ on face value, no questions asked, and many swallow this lie without question. But God doesn't.

'Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.'

2 Cor 6:15-18

If the Holy Spirit is in residence in us He is always working to lead us into all righteousness in overcoming the flesh of self so we can better represent God. And He will create a desire in us to discover what God wants us to know as is revealed in the Bible. *'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 5:17

God's word is of great value which says: *'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

If the profession of faith doesn't accept the necessary reproof, correction and training required, the life that is claimed isn't what Jesus gives. If people can have their own opinions, haven't they denied the authority of scripture to interpret itself? A major part of the problem is that many don't have an adequate understanding of the whole word of God to be

able to determine if something is taken out of context or being misinterpreted. This will be made clear when they are asked to give an account of why they believe what they do with explanation from many scriptural references; and often there is no answer, in this case silence is not golden.

The problem is many accept some idea without the ability to analyse why. A failure to be able to give an account reveals a stubborn heart not open to instruction from God's word, for the heart that is indwelt by the spirit will be able to answer adequately because the Spirit will supply enough of what is needed, regardless of the level of education. If someone's reason for living is not to be conformed to the image of Christ by obeying all He commanded in order to reflect the nature of God and represent God as faithful children, can they legitimately be called Christians, which means Christ in us?

Are we thinking about who we represent?

Because of our fleshy addiction the Lord has told us we need to deny ourselves daily and take up our cross and follow Him. (Luke 9:23-24) Denying the flesh of self interest needs to be our daily habit as we live no longer for ourselves according to the flesh, but for Him according to the Spirit. If we are children of God we have crucified the flesh we once prized, and now we have been made alive by the Spirit as spiritual children of God who treasure and represent Him.

'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. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.'

Rom 8:9-11

And since we are remade holy in the image of Christ we represent the holiness of God as lights in the darkness of the fallen world. And this walking according to the life of the Spirit requires effort, so: *'Let us take hold of the truth of God and not fall short of the glory of God, so that we are counted amongst others who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

2 Tim 3:7

Because God is love He gives us the command to love Him with all our being; and love those He has created in His image. And He commands we love everyone in the same way He loves us. We are to love our neighbour as we are loved ourselves, and we should love ourselves because God loves us. However we mostly know love as a word without real meaning, we don't really know what it is like to love like God so that His love turns the world upside down so that light shines over the darkness.

Our spiritual growth in Christ needs to deal with the fleshly thinking that still troubles us and finds its desires in the world. We often fall into worldly thinking while we are unaware we have lost our way so we represent ourselves and our supposed human rights. If we represent ourselves through selfish desires we cannot be in communion with God, regardless of what we claim we believe, because true faith means we represent God as we seek to conform our lives to His written word. We want our lives to be a mirror of His word revealed to us in Christ.

Living obediently as the representatives of Christ guarantees His presence in our hearts. His presence means He will represent us and give us peace as we abide in Him and His love abides in us. *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."*

John 14:15, 21

Love for Christ makes service a joy. *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Matt 11:28-30

His yoke is easy because it means being coupled to His love, that means we are tied together with Him; we are in constant relationship with God in Christ. Being yoked to Him who is the light of the world means we will be light in the world.

Here is another way He described His call to find rest for our souls in the love of God. *'Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 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 16:24-27

We serve God as His divine representatives as a holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) and serving as Christ's ambassadors we represent God. (2 Cor 5:20) It is as His priests and ambassadors that Jesus said *"You will be My witnesses"* This call to divine service is given with Divine power. *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

These words commanding absolute devotion and obedience weren't spoken by a man of the world, the Lord God has spoken. *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Rev 1:8

The Lord God Almighty was speaking to His disciples saying in effect: You will have My power to prosecute My cause. In yourself you are weak but by My Spirit you will be able to live and love as God always intended mankind to live for Him.

You will no longer witness to yourself and represent yourself, but you will represent Me and the purpose for which I died. You will not be preoccupied with your cause, for you now work entirely for My cause. You will seek for the kingdom of God. You will no longer be looking out for your own interest, because you will passionately promote My cause. *'Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.'*

Col 3:23-24

Your life as My disciples is not about you, what you desire, what you think, what you want from your journey on earth; you work entirely for Me because I am the Lord your God who reigns. I have purchased you with My blood so that you can have the only life that is pleasing to God for whom you live forever and ever.

Friends of God are made new in the image of Christ to exclusively bear witness to His life of holiness and obedience to God; and to tell others about His death as a sacrifice in our place for our independent hearts;

and to declare His resurrection with all authority over the heaven and earth.

He died so that we are no longer independent but return to absolute dependence on God so we live for Him alone. The really good news is that repentance means we are in Christ Jesus and He is in us so we can represent God to the world.

In Christ alone we know that grace is God's cherishing love

God's particular grace for His chosen children is His underserved love freely given to those with whom He desires to have a relationship. As His children we are commanded to love Him, but we don't really know what that is because we have divorced the passion from the concept. We are more familiar with God's general grace that gives the pleasures of the natural world to all men, but that doesn't include His intimate cherishing.

We are also told to love others but it has no real meaning to us anymore than being kind. However if we are commanded to Cherish Christ, yourselves and others we begin to understand something not previously seen.

Personal grace is God's cherishment freely given to the ones He chooses even though they are undeserving. As God's representatives we are to be instruments of His grace towards our neighbours just as God has graciously treated us. Only the true believer can cherish Christ and men because grace has landed in their hearts by the power of the Spirit.

To cherish someone means to treat them with affection, to hold them dear and close to our hearts. To cherish someone implies gentleness and tenderness. It means we respect others as image bearers of God. Cherishment is loyal fidelity in friendship; with purity of genuine emotion. We want love for others that we desire for ourselves, and we feel cherished when we feel we are precious to someone. Therefore to cherish is to love, protect, and care for someone that is important to us. When we cherish we seek the highest good for the beloved. When we cherish someone we lay down our life for their benefit as those who are made in the image of God, even though they may not realise His truth. Cherishing love does not seek to be served but to serve without reward.

The highest good we desire for God is that He is honoured as God who we worship with all our heart mind and will. When we cherish our neighbour we can do nothing less than show the way to the source of all love and cherishment is in Christ. We can conclude that people who say they believe but don't cherish Him or other believers don't know Him.

Here is Paul's brief explanation of cherishing love. *"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*
1 Cor 13:4-7

Cherishing love is above all practical. Because of love God sent His Son to save us from ourselves, He didn't just think about it. And the story of the Good Samaritan is a good practical example of loving your neighbour, even one who might well have despised you. We are to do something about loving others other than just wringing our hands and crying about the suffering of the vulnerable. Apart from desiring to see them embrace the cherishing love of God in Christ, we need to provide practical support with compassion and wisdom. *'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?'*
1 John 3:17

The way we love others is the same way we love and honour God. *"Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'* The King will answer and say to them, *'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*
Matt 25:37-40

As we go about our every day, we need to ask the Spirit how can we love everyone in a way that honours God and then actually do it. *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."*
Rom 8:29

Love moves beyond itself. The first sign of the life of God is outward movement, but the church often seems cold because its people have isolated themselves as the frozen chosen instead of giving warm embrace and taking a family interest in the entire household representing

God. So there doesn't seem to be signs of life or a vital pulse indicating a beating living heart. You can still be in loan stranger to most people after five years attending their church.

Wisdom is needed in giving practical help because many will hold out their hands for what they can get who are not devoted to representing Christ but themselves and their own comfort. A brother in need hasn't the world goods, he isn't comfortable and so we share the abundance that God has given us so we can represent His love in Christ.

Jesus represented God as the light and the life of mankind

God's love gives us the light of the knowledge of Christ so we can comprehend the meaning of life in God. Jesus is the light and the life of the world. *"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."* (John 1:4) Light gives meaning and colour to all things. Before we knew Jesus we were in the darkness of the world without spiritual light. You could say we had form but without spiritual meaning in reference to God. *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*

John 1:5

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

John 3:19-21

Without light there is only darkness. We see in a rainbow all the wonderful colours of creation. The droplet of water in the rainbow have no colour in them, water is colourless. Without light passing through the water droplets there is no colour and rainbow to tell of God's love.

When there is an absence of light, all we can see is black; we call this absence of light darkness. Nothing that has been created by God has colour by itself unless it is a source of light. All objects are made in such a way that they need light to give us the meaning of what it is.

In the dark I look at you and all I can see is a form of a person. But turn on the light and all is revealed, the form has received meaning, I see you. In the dark you can hold an orange which seems to be black, but turn on the light and I understand what it is.

When we repent and Jesus gives us life and we are made new, we are a new creation, our substance has been changed. Now we are made to reflect the light and the life of the Son of God. Our substance has been changed because Jesus is now living in us by His Spirit. So even in the darkness of the world where there is no spiritual light, we are able to show the light of God.

We are to be light in the world. Jesus said: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12

In communion with the cherishment of God's love in Christ we are light. *"You are the light of the world."* (Matt 5:14) Our purpose is to represent Him as we point to Him as the only way to know God who is all in all.

As Jesus represented God we represent Jesus

Jesus Christ came to be our measure of how we are to live with God. *'Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.'* 1 John 3:2

This highlights the way to live as God intended we live for Christ. This is supported by another verse Paul wrote. *"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

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Phil 1:21

The Christian life is about living for Christ. We live to represent Christ; everything else is of secondary importance. There is nothing that should get in the way of living the Christ life as we wait for His return. *"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."* Col 3:4

To live Christ means we have taken ourselves out of the picture to serve Christ. *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* Gal 2:20

Christ is our life; our entire life is about representing Christ. When we live for Him, on His return we will be revealed with Him in glory. Our hope is to be with Christ when we die, our future is with Christ, and our

home is with Christ. Death is the only way we can join Him at the end of this life. And while we live here on earth death to self is the only way He can live in us now. We deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him.

Matt 16:24-25

If we do not value the cross of Christ as the most important means of us coming into fellowship with God, then we will not be willing to die to self and take up our cross to follow Jesus as the representative of God. "*So that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus.*"

Phil 1:26

"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. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

Rom 14:7-9

The greatest message we should hear is that Jesus Christ is life, and if we believe in Him we surrender to His authority as the King of Kings who gives life. So if we are to become what God intends for His children, we need to live on earth for our eternal benefit. And "*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness*"

Matt 6:33

Therefore "*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

As representatives of Christ we are never alone

The word of God repeatedly confirms that as we represent Him we are not alone in the world; God is with us to cherish us daily. "*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.... In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*"

John 14:18, 20

'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 3:3-4

The Spirit of God walks with us to show us how to live as representatives of God. "*So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit... For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear*

again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 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.'

Rom 8:4, 14-17

The Spirit of God tells us we are God's children, and because we have God we are never alone. (Rom 8:14-15) But as much as the scriptures make it abundantly clear, we still struggle to grasp the fact of the presence of God in us. For if we really believed and appreciated the enormous blessings we have received through the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, we would be able to stand firm without fear when our Father shakes the world as He works out His divine purpose in the world of darkness.

'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 5:3-5

"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 8:38-39

If we remember we have God in us we would be able to rest in the peace Christ has gained for us. *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."*

John 14:27

The reason we are troubled and anxious is that we are far too focused on ourselves and the world we live in, and we forget about the presence of God in us to strengthen us in the days of our sanctification as He works for our holiness according to His purpose and design.

Christ is our life and He will never leave us to live alone. *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Matt 28:20

We are never alone when we have God. We always have the Father and the Son and the Spirit of God. We always have Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour representing us before the Father. We always have the King of

Kings ruling for us. We always have their deepest love. We always have the knowledge that God is working for our greatest good, even in the fallen world that war against His chosen children.

We always have someone to talk to about life in the world. We always have God's written word. So we are never to be blinded by the darkness. We always have hope for our eternal future in heaven. We always have strength to endure tribulations and persecution on earth. We always have the comfort of the presence of God. We always have access to wisdom to understand how to live.

We always have guidance from the Spirit in how best we can witness to Christ. We always have encouragement while experiencing daily struggle. We always have a useful purpose in serving God. We are never without a useful purpose in serving God. We are never without belonging to the family of God. We are never without the promise of God to be like His Son and share in His glory. We are never without victory over the power of sin and death. *'For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.'* Phil 1:6

We can always know we belong to the family of God. We always have the promise of God to be like His Son and share in His glory. We always have the victory over the power of sin and death.

God's representative children share in His kingdom life

'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.'

Rom 8:16-17

Christians don't live for the life of the world but for life in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is only realised by obedience to God. Jesus shows us that obedience is everything. *'Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.'* Heb 5:8

Jesus made it clear where His loyalty belonged. *"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."*

John 18:36

So why do we expect the kingdom of the world that is in conflict with God to be heaven on earth and satisfy our every desire? *“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

John 16:33

Doesn't God's word say: *'Do not love the world nor 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 lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.'*

1 John 2:15-17

Doesn't the Son of God say: *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

Matt 6:33-34

We can't have the joy of God by being self serving, but only by believing in and serving the Lord our King. *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”*

John 17:14-16

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt 28:18-20

His joy comes with His presence in us who faithfully represent Him.

Grace and peace is for God's representatives

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Phil 1:2

Grace is in the nature of God. Grace is actually the undeserved love of God that He bestows on His chosen children. We experience His grace by the fullness of the Spirit of God's cherishing. We need to know His grace in the depth of our innermost being. Peace is the personal experience of His grace as we believe God lives in us.

“These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

John 14:25-27

It is knowledge of the inner presence of God that calms our fears in the storms of life.

Since we have God with us we have the God who controls every situation we must deal with, and we believe His word that He uses all things for our greatest good.

Rom 8:28-30

There is nothing we can face that is outside of God's sovereign control. The grace of God with us guarantees the peace of God in us if we truly believe. When we know His grace we can know His peace.

‘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.’

Rom 8:35-37

Our greatest enemy is representing our self

Satan may be our enemy who tempts us to sin, but we are the ones who must go along with him if we choose to disobey God. Satan can't make us do anything, but he can tempt us to harden our hearts towards God so that we become enemies of God.

The tempter is often seen in how we want our rights. In the world today people do things according to their personal understanding. Some want the right to self indulgence, so personal extravagances is pursued. Some want the right over their body, so abortion is excusable. Some think they have the right to control others, so politicians rule the world with crafty manipulation. Some want the right to dominate others, so domestic violence is tolerated. Some want the right to express anger, so murder and war is only human. Some want the right to follow their career and realise their potential, so divorce is inevitable. Some want the right to fulfil all sexual desire, so immorality is rampant.

Everyone doesn't always choose the full extent of these examples, however the degree of our involvement, be little or much is not what condemns, but just beginning to pursue these things is what condemns; for a war begins with words of pride and anger. Immorality begins with sinful lust that is uncontrolled. Ambition for worldly gain can cause us to love things and use people.

Many follow the teaching of a counterfeit cross that promises worldly success without any cost in following Jesus Christ's example of humility and obedience in living a simple life.

In this battle with evil the greatest obstacle we face is our self, our life according to the flesh. The solution to overcoming the flesh is to walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:16) Therefore we have to deny the natural reactions of our flesh by doing what is pleasing to the Spirit of God who commands us to love others. If we think we can just rely on God to make us behave as His children we will fall victim to the flesh that we haven't yet put to death. *"So then, my beloved, 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."*

Phil 2:12-13

'Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.'

Col 3:5

Do we represent God or ourselves?

The more we cling to the flesh, the more we represent ourselves and the world through unbelief; and the more we walk by the Spirit, the more we represent God. The way we use our time and resources reveals what is important to us. If the majority of our efforts are not pleasing God and cherishing our neighbour, it may well be because of our self-indulgent preoccupation.

This life of Christ that now lives in the repentant heart has received the cherishing love of God so that we can cherish others as more worthy of service than ourselves in the same manner we have been cherished by God who sent His Son to die the death we deserved. Just as the Son of God didn't live for the world or the things of the world, nothing in the world can take priority over cherishing people because they are made in the image of God; and because God has commanded it must be done.

Those who have been cherished by God know His love has found its home in them and are able to love God completely and without reservation, and therefore they are able to love their neighbours as they themselves have been cherished by God. No earthly want or need or desire or demand can justify a failure to comply with the law of God's cherishing love, because love for God and our neighbour is the fulfilment of all the law of God. For this single reason of absolute devotion to God, it is impossible at any time to be able to justify having a spirit of independence that immediately separates us from intimacy with God and all members of His household. Cherishing God means cherishing everything He cherishes, and includes His holiness and righteousness that determines how we should live in His presence. Anything other than absolute devotion to follow His desires for us is to invite death and suffering into our lives to reign in His place.

To desire an abundance of worldly possessions and physical comfort is to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to give us the only authentic example of how we should live simply and dependently as the cherished children of God. For all who would claim the benefits of Christ's love and death are to be diligent in represent God in following the same manner as Christ revealed His devotion to the heavenly Father. *'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. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'*

Phil 2:5-8

No one on earth owes us anything of real value because all we value is to live in the presence of God. So then it follows that we owe others our life as the representatives of God following the same manner of personal sacrifice as Christ.

The way we live reveals who we represent. Have you responded to the call of Christ to follow His example of devotion to God?

Heaven is only for God's representatives

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matt 3:2

"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Matt 18:3

Jesus said unless we repent we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus died for the sin of man; and repentance is the indicator of His death accredited to our account for our justification. A stiff neck that demands the right to personal independence won't repent. Repentance begins when we acknowledging our sinfulness and our degrading ungodliness in all its gory details.

Jesus explained the repentance He was looking for when He said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."* Luke 9:23

Jesus' death for our sins is only effective for those who hate their sin and repent by denying themselves so that they no longer live for themselves but for Him who died on their behalf. Repentance is a lifelong commitment to represent Christ by denying our self.

Our greatest problem in gaining heaven is our self and its demand for independence and the right to decide for ourselves what we believe and how we live. Heaven is reserved for those who have surrendered their rights, because they know they only deserve death for their disobedience and rebellion against God. Heaven is where God rules, and it begins in the heart of those who have denied themselves to live for Him now, because they love Him who died the death they deserve.

Jesus died so we can receive eternal life, and eternal life means personally knowing the Father and the Son intimately in representing them on earth. This way of knowing God is true knowledge that only comes from the Spirit of God to the repentant heart. A lack of humility in bowing down in obedience to all Jesus commands is a sure sign we don't know God and want to please ourselves and refuse His offer of eternal life. A refusal to be a contributing part the church which is His body on earth is a refusal of Christ Himself and the best way to forfeit any hope of heaven. If Jesus is our Lord He directs all of our lives, where we go and what we say and do, because we live for Him. The greatest miracle happens when someone sees the true worth of Christ and hands their life over to Him to use as He pleases.

Is heaven for you?

Heaven is for those who have overcome the world by the grace of God in Christ. *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the*

churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

Rev 2:7

'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?'

1 John 5:4-5

'But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.'

1 Cor 15:57-58

Overcomers have victory over the world through obedience. *"Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

Rev 2:25-29

Overcoming requires obedience to the way of Jesus Christ as the representatives of God.

Contentment is with the representatives of God

Our contentment is ultimately determined by being satisfied with God's dealing with us and how He is working out our life in the world. Contentment comes when we acknowledge and accept that God is above everything that happens in the world, and nothing happens without His knowledge and permission. Every trial He allows is our opportunity to grow in holiness.

When we love God we know that He loves us and He is working for our greatest good in the world of sinful darkness. *"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

Contentment is with our loving obedience to God. We must act as we have been instructed by God, for we need to live out what God has worked in us of His Son's 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."
Col 3:1-4

"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. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Rom 12:1-2

We must represent God at all times

A spirit of independence separates us from God, but when we have Christ He has us because we have crucified ourselves with Christ. (Rom 6:6) What we crucified was our flesh, which is our self, our life of independence because we now walk by and under the dominion of the Spirit of God.

"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."
Gal 5:24-25

"if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom 10:9) For Jesus to be Lord He must have control of our lives. There is no place for us to decide with God how we are to live. His Lordship requires our absolute surrender to obey Him in all things. There cannot be a dual rule or occupancy in our hearts so that we share dominion in our lives with God.

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."
1 Cor 6:19-20

We are His possession to do with as He pleases. We are slaves of Christ who are to serve Him only. *"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

Therefore we represent God in all things as we walk on earth. *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."*
Eph 5:1

His written word gives us complete instructions as to how we should live as His representatives. *"so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

Rom 8:4

Jesus Christ is our Master who we follow so that we always have a ready example in Him of how we should live. *"For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*

John 13:15-17

At no time are we to take the liberty to live for ourselves. When we are at home we represent God to our husbands or wives and our children. When we are at work we represent God. When we are going about our living in the world we represent God at all times, with no days off to please ourselves.

Jesus is our example of how we are to live and He never pleased Himself. We follow His example who said: *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*

John 5:30

"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak."

John 12:49

So Jesus said, *"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And 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 8:28-29

'Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.'

1 Pet 4:1-2, 11

Every time we stumble it is simply because we have either forgotten who we represent, or we have intentionally represented our self, which is our flesh, and by doing so we have re-declared our independence from the will of God.

We are disciples who are learning to put on the life of Christ. We are to *"walk as He walked."*

1 John 2:6

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master."

Matt 10:24

In all we say and do, we best represent the holiness of God as Jesus Christ has instructed us to live under His authority.

Many years ago in 1968, when I was a corporal in the Army, an Officer gave me instructions to get a crew of men I didn't know, who were a different trade to me, to complete a task of securing a new kitchen roof for the use of our Unit by the next day.

In the morning all started well, but the tropical sun bore down on us so that we were feeling like chickens in the oven. Then these cunning individuals appealed to my good nature, to cease the work because of the extreme heat. And like a dumb ox, I agreed.

The next day I was charged by the Officer with failing to obey a direct command. I said "Guilty as charged". I had no authority whatsoever to act on my own initiative. The only authority I had was to get the men to complete the task given to me. I learnt a great lesson that day.

'But the centurion said, " Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matt 8:8-9

When we live as if we can choose for ourselves, we are guilty of disobeying the Lord our God and acting like rebels and enemies of God.

When we go about our lives as if we have some sort of independence to do the best we can, we behave as if we have not being placed in Christ to live for Him under the authority of God.

On the whole we often live as if we are free agents, we might say we are under authority, we might say we live according to the word of God, but

we don't actually live like we have no other life apart from that of Christ. We live as if we are at arm's length from God and have to find the way ourselves.

This was certainly not the way Jesus Christ lived, and it isn't the way the apostle Paul lived. *"It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master."* Matt 10:25

Because of his devotion to Jesus Paul could ask the church to follow his example.

'However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.' Phil 3:16-17

'Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.' 1 Cor 11:1

'I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.' 1 Cor 4:14-16

'For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.' 2 Cor 4:5

Consider the question of who we are as Christ' representatives

The writings of Paul give us tremendous teaching about the miracle of the Christian life. And we delight in gaining this knowledge which is a great comfort in our walk with God. In a real way, we seem to think there is us and this knowledge of God, two separate realities. But for Paul, his life and this knowledge were the same reality. Not two unconnected realities that existed as two peas in a pod, but one reality, the knowledge explained the nature of the life he lived in the presence of Christ.

However, we attempt to live up to the truth of the theology as if we were learning a trade that is foreign to us, rather than seeing his teaching as explaining precisely the nature of our new reality as a new creation in Christ. It's not us and knowledge, but knowledge about us.

We behave as if we need to gain as much knowledge as we can so we can learn to integrate as much as we can of the knowledge of the way

our Lord wants us to live. What we have to see is that the teaching is actually about what God has already done for us in Christ, so that we can live out what God has already created because we are really in Christ.

Many Christians attempt to live in a duality halfway between heaven and hell, and believe that the struggle Paul wrote about in Romans 7:14-24 is about the nature of the normal Christian life. But they are blind to the reality that 7:14 begins with stating that this man is a man of flesh. *'For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.'*

Rom 7:14-15

Paul goes on to say in chapter 8 verse 9 that we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. *'so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'*

Rom 8:4

Make no mistake, even a little sin is still a very serious rebellion against God, but even if we stumbled we are not the flesh of a sinner who hasn't been reborn by God as His representatives on earth, we are more than conquerors.

Rom 8:37

The truth about being alive in the Spirit is not something that should be alien to us, it is us as new creatures in the Lord, we have been recreated in the image of God. When we are told to put on Christ, we often behave as if we have borrowed a coat that belongs to another, rather than seeing it as living out the life that is now birthed in us by the grace of God in Christ.

A borrowed coat is divorced from our life; it is something that we can only use to cover up what we really believe we are. But the reality is while we may take a lifetime to understand fully that the Christ life is already ours, we just have to believe what God has given us and deny the thinking that remains like a leech sucking the life out of the flesh of natural man who hasn't been transformed by the miracle of God in Christ.

Our sanctification isn't about working on becoming something we're not, but about learning to appropriate what we already are as children of God. We were, past tense, made holy to be holy and reserved for the use of God. We have to believe in the greatest miracle that can happen on earth.

We need to be longing for the day we can say with the Lord "tetelestai" it is finished, because we will see who we are because we will see the Lord our God. The Christ life is not something we create by hard work, but something God has already done by the power of His holiness which we have to accept by faith and obedience.

Being transformed by the renewing of our minds is the slow process of accepting the reality of what God has already achieved in us. This is because we stubbornly cling on to what we knew according to the flesh. We haven't fully realised that when we were taken hold off by God His grace has joined us to Himself in the presence of Christ by the Spirit. It's only when we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice and lay down our flesh in the world that we can truly be liberated to live according to the Spirit as actual children of the living God who represent Christ our Lord.

Do we represent God or ourselves?

The more we cling to the flesh and the world through unbelief, the more we represent ourselves, and the more we walk by the Spirit, the more we represent God. The true life of living as a representative of Christ gains all the benefits of Christ's power and His presence, simply because it means we will generally have a mindset fixed on the Spirit in order to walk by the Spirit.

We have been given the privilege of being made a holy priesthood to serve Christ as His ambassadors as we represent God in a needy world. This life of Christ that now lives in the repentant heart has received the cherishing love of God so that we can cherish others as more worthy of service than ourselves in the same manner we have been cherished by God who sent His Son to die the death we deserved. Just as the Son of God didn't live for the world we live for the Son as His devoted representatives.

'Think about such things.' (Phil 4:8) *'Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.'*

1 Cor 14:20

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

According to the Hebrew text of Psalm 8 we were created a little lower than mê-’ě-lō-hîm; מַאֲלָהִים **God**, to represent mê-’ě-lō-hîm; מַאֲלָהִים **God** on earth with glory and honour.

| Ps 8:5 | | | α | 🔍 | 🔄 | ⋮ |
|----------------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|
| Prep-m N-mp | Adj-ms | Cj-w V-Piel-Csl-2ms 3ms | | | | |
| than God | a little | For You have made him lower | | | | |
| מַאֲלָהִים | מֵעַט | וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ | | | | |
| mê-’ě-lō-hîm | mā-’at | wat-tə-has-sə-rê-hū | | | | |
| h430 | h4592 | h2637 | | | | |
| אֱלֹהִים | מֵעַט | חָסֵר | | | | |
| elohim | meat | chaser | | | | |
| V-Piel-H-2ms 3ms | | Cj-w N-ms | Cj-w N-ms | | | |
| You have crowned him | | and honor | and with glory | | | |
| :תַּעֲטִיבֵהוּ | | וְהָדָר | וְכָבוֹד | | | |
| tə-’at-tə-rê-hū | | wə-hā-dār | wə-kā-bō-wd | | | |
| h5849 | | h1926 | h3519 | | | |
| עֲטָר | | הָדָר | כְּבוֹד | | | |
| atar | | hadar | kabowd | | | |

According to Peter, Jesus came to restore that which was lost of our divine ability to represent God as His servant children on earth.

‘His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature,’

2 Peter 1:3-4

Jesus has restored us as God's representatives on earth.

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