

*Living for Christ
Means dying to self*



Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:24

Living for Christ while dying to self

It begins with the Sovereignty of God

Sovereignty is His supreme power or authority. God's Sovereignty is His absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure. God reigns over all that is by the free exercise of His right to rule.

Sovereignty means God is in control of all that comes to pass in human history, past present and future. Therefore He applies sovereign order over all affliction and blessings. He has sovereign rule over all afflictions. And in His sovereignty He will sanctify all our afflictions.

Scripture declares the sovereignty of God

"The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all." Psalm 103:19

"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty". Psalm 93:1-2

"The Lord reigns;.. He will judge the peoples with equity." Psalm 96:10

"The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice;..Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." Psalm 97:1-2

"The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble;...He is exalted above all the peoples." Psalm 99:1-2

Some people behave as if Satan reigns over all things, but Satan is but a created being under the sovereignty of God. He can only go as far as God allows. Some people behave as if our circumstances control our lives, but they don't reign with any power over us. The Lord of glory reigns. Even now Jesus reigns having been given all authority over the heavens and earth. He has established His kingdom and He will come again to consummate His New heaven and earth.

The Lord reigns over all the earth. He reigns over every event, over all nations, over all people, good and bad. He even reigns over human will. *'Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and on earth, in the seas and in all the ocean depths.'* Psalm 135:6

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes." Proverbs 21:1

The Lord reigns from before anything was that is. *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'*

Genesis 1:1

'just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,'

Eph 1:4-5

God is sovereign over nature.

'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.'

Psalms 33:6

'The Lord sat as King at the flood; Yes, the Lord sits as King forever.'

Psalms 29:10

He is sovereign over history and the work of men.

His hidden hand directs the action of all people so they carry out His purpose, be it for judgement or blessings. *"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."*

Proverbs 21:1

He is sovereign over salvation.

According to His sovereign will, God chose us in Christ. It is not about us choosing God. He determined our adoption as sons through Jesus to Himself. All because of the kind intention of His sovereign will. Salvation is a gift from God not a work of man.

Those He calls to join Him in Christ come under the power of the Holy Spirit. When called they are unable to do anything worthwhile but surrender into faith and repentance to live a life of obedience and devotion to Christ.

'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love.'

Eph 1:4

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

John 15:16

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:44

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies

of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;'

1 Peter 2:9

'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.'

Romans 8:28

Whenever God acts, He acts in a way that pleases Him

God's sovereignty means He is absolute in His authority, and completely unrestricted in His supremacy over all things. Therefore everything that happens is, at the very least, the result of God's permissive will. God's sovereignty is His right and power to do all that He desires. *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."*

Job 42:2

The sovereignty of God is the unobstructed exercise of His supreme authority in His eternal purposes in all things. God must be sovereign if He is to be truly God. If He is not sovereign He is not God. His Sovereignty means no one can resist Him and the execution of His will. What He says, He will do, and this will stand forever.

God's sovereignty and His hand working in Providence

Providence is the sovereignty of God in the service of His holy purposes. In His absolutely rule, everything that needs to be done to bring about His purposes, God sees to it that it happens through providence. *"I declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"*

Isa 46:10

Providence ensures that all things are in conformity to His plan after the council of His will. (Eph. 1:11) Providence is unavoidable. *"But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, And many such decrees are with Him."*

Job 23:13-14

When we understand the sovereign providence of the Lord we will be confident that God really is always working for our good and can accomplish the good He has determined for us. Then we can affirm the doctrine that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass and governs everything that happens, large and small, good and evil; so we have a consistent reason to believe God is for us and live in peace on earth.

Rom 8:28-29

God determines our providential training in righteousness

Scriptures give guidance: *'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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.'* Rom 8:28-29

'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; 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 2:12-15

Providentially, God's hand in the events of our life means He is working out His purpose in every situation we have to deal with in order to transform us who were once born into sin and corruption, can now be renewed into the image of His One and Only perfect Son.

In order to understand God's sovereignty correctly, we must know His word and testament. God's word is meant to challenge our prejudice, which are our fleshly preconceived ideas about life; and open us up for the honest reassessment of our motives and thoughts.

He is doing this lifelong work in us by using every situation He allows to come into our lives, be they good or most disagreeable, so that our fleshly ways born in the past are exercised from us as we learn to respond according to the divine nature of Christ He has made alive in us by His indwelling Spirit.

And since it is ultimately for His glory and His good pleasure to act according to His will, then we are required to decline to complain or grumble about His methods because we love Him, since we have being called out of the darkness of the world to be molded into the life of His Son in order to be lights in the perverse and crooked world.

When we were called by God to be joined to Christ He didn't offer us a free ticket to comfort and peace in the world. He calls us to die with Christ to the world as we live for Him. It is by the strenuous trials He

appoints for our good that we are confronted with the need to live by the obedience that comes from faith, always trusting Him regardless.

Natural disasters, sickness and death are the lot of everyone, some more than others, so no one escapes the consequences of sins effect in the world until the Lord comes again to Herald in the new heaven and earth. God did not promise peace on earth this side of His return, He instead He allows a sword for our judgement and testing, even in our own homes if He determined it is needed. Matt 10:34

In whatever manner God puts our faith to the test through trials and tribulations, in good times or bad, in moments or for seasons, He does it for our purification because He loves us, in order that the dross of our past life in Adam is expunged from our minds, leaving in its place the mind of Christ as pure glistening Gold, born of faithful endurance and patience because we love Him more than life.

Consequently our worthless rubbish accumulated from the past is made for destruction, but it is our liking for the ways of the flesh and therefore our resistance to holiness and our dislike for sharing our time on our cross with Christ that must be overcome. God's trials are meant to make us dissatisfied with the world and desperate enough that we surrender willingly to His will. God introduces the cross to us in our tribulations, a cross He has determined will not be avoided.

God's will means all He is doing is for our good. On the one hand: We may have poor finances, difficult husbands and wives, intolerable in-laws, poor health, unfaithful friends, unjust persecution, ungodly passions and desires, and heavy unrewarding labour.

On the other hand: We are faced with our self exaltation or praise by men, overflowing wealth, profitable circumstances, abundant opportunity for advancement, many days of comfort and relaxation, and the time and resources to pursue whatever captures our mind, all of which things are equally deadly for the life of faith.

All that God had created for man's good in relationships can now be abused and dissipated by corrupted use because God is no longer the centre of life. And all the created order of beauty and stability in nature for the enjoyment of men has now been distorted through the entrance of sin so that nothing is always reliable and can be counted on as good.

In all this chaos and confusion of darkness, God works all these things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. This means everything that comes our way is used by God for our training in holiness, so that we should learn to live always according to the Spirit of Christ who now lives in us who have died with Christ and taken up our cross to follow Him. Every situation we face is a call to live and walk as Jesus lived and walked before the Father in all His suffering.

So brethren, we have much of the stamp of corruption on us to take to the cross we share with Christ daily, because *One died, all died*. In His death to sin He shows us the way of holiness and faithful endurance through our death to sin and all things that fall short of the glory of God. Is our life committed to following the leading of the Spirit who lives in us, or is our mind still hovering too often on the flesh?

Are we in the habit of focusing too much on the darkness so that we fail to remember we are children of the light? Are we overcome with grief when wounded by serious trials so that we feel we are beyond the comfort of the Lord of all comfort? Do we grumble as if God doesn't know what He is doing? All our suffering is intolerable if we live with our minds set on the flesh.

'For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.'

Rom 8:5-8

Those who love God He will not abandon, for what He has begun He will accomplish. *'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

In Christ we can rejoice in all things.

Phil 4:4

In every situation God places us He also dwells with us so that we can see His hand at work and rejoice in His loving wisdom. *'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

While He purifies our hearts and confronts us with our He does it so we will be glorified with Christ. *'But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.'*

1 Cor 11:32

'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? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 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 12:7-11

All grumbling and complaining is seen by the unwise to be about the situation or the people at hand. But in reality, our complaint is with our Sovereign God who is over all things according to His will. How can the creation confront the Creator so as to put Him and His motives into question? If we continue to complain and grumble we need to consider if we really do love Him and have surrender to His will become we are here for His purposes.

"It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God."

Acts 14:22

God's Sovereignty means the Christian does not practice sin

The normal Christian life means *'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

In making assertions that: *'the Law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold into bondage to sin.'* To mean that Rom 7:14-25 is supposed to be an example of the normal Christian life is to deny God's grace and power.

To accept this understanding of a powerless child of God is contrary to the truth *'that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us,'* and

is only possible when God's word is mutilated in order to suit human understanding without Spiritual power. And such a view denies God's power to deliver us from the curse of personal sin. A little knowledge and a lot of self confidence are dangerous companions.

Don't be deceived by the worldly appearance of so called Christians who continue to live for themselves and under the condemnation of the Law, thinking they represent those who are led by the Spirit. God tells us that many are called but few are chosen. Many hear the external call and chose in their own strength to become Christians according to their own image. But few hear the internal call of the Spirit as God draws them to Christ to offer themselves as a living sacrifices to die with Christ in order to be born again according to the divine nature.

Those who only hear the external call remain fleshly and still dead in their sins, they cannot please God. They may call themselves Christians but the flesh still reigns, so for them the following condition is still very real. *'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. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.'*

Romans 7:15-16

However those who are chosen by God are made alive by the Spirit so they can produce the obedience that comes from faith which is a gift from God along with the gift of repentance. But those who chose their own way to God are unrepentant and without God's power to be Overcomers in Christ.

This distinction is important if those who are living by the Spirit are to be encouraged not to live the mediocre low quality life of those who avoid the cross of our death and continue to live as clouds without water. All show and no go.

In Romans 8 Christians are more than conquerors, *'But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.'* (Rom 8:37) "We are" more than conquerors, this is in the present tense, now.

These in Romans 7:14-25 are we still slaves to sin. Those who are in Christ have become slaves to God. For *'sin is not to reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.'* (Rom 6:12) *'and after being freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness.'*

Rom 6:18

Christians who have died with Christ are free from the power of sin. *'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

Our Sanctification is the process of our holiness once established by God. We are becoming more holy, more earnestly set apart from the world and the ways of men, more consecrated. The believer is no longer just flesh under the law as in Romans 7:14-25 but made holy in Christ.

'Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. (See Rom 6:4-6) For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.' Rom 7:4-6

In order to contrast the life in the flesh with life in the Spirit, Paul is speaking in Rom 7:14-25 as a man of flesh who is still under the condemnation of the law. Paul could write about the man of the flesh under the condemnation of the law in the first person because that was his life before meeting Christ.

Afterwards Paul could also speak in the first person as one who had died so Christ now lives in him. (Gal 2:20) He could confidentially say that if we walk by the Spirit we will not carry out the deeds of the flesh.
Gal 5:16

Therefore there is no possibility that Rom 7:14-25 and Gal 2:20 and Gal 5:16 could be working concurrently in someone being led by the Spirit of God. Christians are not under the law as to be condemned, (Rom 8:1) but have been made spiritual by the Spirit of Life.

'Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 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 requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in

US, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'
As he goes on to say: *'However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.'* Rom 8:2-4, 9

'Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.' 2 Cor 5:17

The Spirit enables us to obey the law written in our hearts as it is written: *'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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.'* Gal 5:16-18

The promise to the people of faith is for a spiritual heart of obedience from God under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We don't obey as if it is our works that win God's favour like the Jews; we have the obedience that comes from faith as a gift from God because He now dwells in us by the Spirit of Christ. The New life in the Spirit was promised hundreds of years before Christ came.

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:26-27

The spiritual person is not perfect and has work to do but not like the person referred to in 7:14-25. *'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.'* Romans 8:13

'You must die' refers to denying self and taking up our cross daily along the lines of dying with Christ in Rom 6:4-6. The Spirit of God compels us to put to death what is earthly in us. We have the responsibility to act: *'Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.'* Col 3:5 ESV

We put to death when we cling to Christ who is our life. *'Therefore, treat the parts of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.'* Col 3:5 NASB

'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 2:12-14

According to His sovereign providence God is working in all aspects of our lives, including what we consider to be good, and also what is often detestable. *'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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;'*

Rom 8:28-29

God takes our cross and our suffering and tribulations and transforms us into the image of Christ. No cross, no Christ. As Christ was transformed by the cross of His suffering, so are we who follow His example. *'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 Peter 2:21

While there are many who claim to be Christians who have not denied themselves still live for themselves as natural man in Adam. We can't be in Adam and in Christ at the same time. We cannot have two natures, a house divided will fall. *'And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand."*

Matt 12:25

What we have left from the natural are the habits and memories of the old man that must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We cannot have the nature of Christ and the nature of Adam, our nature in Adam went to the cross and died when we were crucified with Christ as we put on the Nature of Christ.

Rom 6:4-6

The nature of Adam is not the problem for we have died in Christ; our ingrained thinking like the old man is our task to put off. *'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 12:2

It is the father's will that we gain the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 2:16

We are not fully perfected in Christ yet. Paul says *‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.’* Phil 2:12-13

As we work out God’s will we may stumble but we don’t practice sin. *‘No one who has been born of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin continually, because he has been born of God.’* 1 John 3:9

‘If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.’ 1 John 1:8-10

‘We know that no one who has been born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.’ 1 John 5:18

‘He who was born of God keeps’ Jesus keeps us, *because it is written: “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”* 1 Pet 1:16

The process of perfecting is through perseverance

The Bible teaches us that the goal of Jesus’ redemption is that we shall be fully conformed to His image by a process of continual transformation until we go to meet with Him in Glory. Our life at the cross is a long term project that requires constant attention.

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

The Lord Jesus wants us to grow up to be like Him, this is the life of a disciple. Effective spiritual change comes by the Spirit’s leading when we work out our new life in Christ which God has worked in us. The only way we can do that is by living by God’s Spirit according to the word of God. *‘If we walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.’* Gal 5:16

Consequently we are no longer to live according to the flesh of our former life; we are to live according to the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us, who is now our life. *'You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.'* Rom 8:9

Those who are born again of God's Spirit have His personal power (Eph 3:20) to obey so we can live our new life without sin controlling us. Rom 6:6-7, 14

The disciplined life of perseverance under the hand of God is a life of walking in the spirit in humble obedience to the Spirit's leading, choosing to always put off the desires of natural man which the Bible calls the flesh, in order to be faithful to Christ who died for us so we can have His eternal life in the Spirit in order to walk with God. Walking in the Spirit means we deal with the darkness of a life according to natural man in the flesh in ourselves before we attempt to solve the problems in others. Reacting negatively to the darkness out there in others means joining ourselves with the darkness and ensuring its dominance in the world. Matt 5:39 Matt 7:4-5 1 Pet 3:9 Rom 12:17-21

Passing God's Examination

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

Just as refining gold nuggets from the ground in a fiery furnace does not to destroy the gold but remove all imperfections; our testing is not to see if we will fail; it is for the continual maturing of the Christ life in us because God is seeking our highest good. Testing is the process of purification to make us perfect; it is needed if we are to make progress in our spiritual transformation in our walk with God.

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

which is inconsistent with the Christ life. Consequently all things are working for our good in assisting us to be transformed into the image of God's Son.

Rom 8:28-29

'Therefore give thanks in all your circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.'

1 Thess 5:18

'For you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.'

James 1:2-4, 12

'In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.'

1 Peter 1:6-9

We are personally responsible for persevering in God's testing

As new creatures in Christ, we live by the Spirit so we have victory over sin. Therefore, because we have received His divine nature in Christ, (2 Pet 1:3-4) and His divine power, our spiritual life must have priority over our fleshly human nature by the powerful working of God in us. Jesus came to restore the divine nature of God in us so we can have fellowship with Him and share in His life; for this is the meaning of eternal life.

John 17:3

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

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

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

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

God provides all we need to help for this task

God gives us a new life in the Spirit, His life implanted in us, and we need to live according to His will if we are to walk with Him and be blessed with His eternal life. And since we did not actually die to our physical bodies, we need to put the Kingdom of God before all things on earth. We need to seek first the Kingdom of God so we can do the will of God.

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

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

The power to overcome is by the Spirit.

Our renewal requires that we be led by the Spirit and those He provides for our support. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to give us understanding of all Jesus taught. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all righteousness as we fix our minds on His teaching in the word of God.

Now how can I obey if I don't know what He wants me to do? How can I become like Him if I don't know Him through a personal

experience of taking up my cross? How can I be transformed if I will not be led by the Spirit?

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

This is why we should read the Bible often, and *‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom’* so it soaks into our minds and hearts. This is why Jesus gives us teachers who will, *‘Proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.’* Col 1:28

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

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

Dying to self isn't easy

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” Luke 9:23

If the Christ life was easy to live then there would be no sin in the world. God wouldn’t have to persevere with us because we would never stumble. So die we must in order to walk with Christ.

As Jesus emptied Himself to be exalted to the right hand of God, we too must empty ourselves to be exalted with Christ. As Jesus denied Himself in taking up His cross to die, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross and die to live for Him. Christians have died with Christ to self sin and the world. So we don't react to the ways of the world; instead we are to love with the love of Christ who now lives in us.

Following Jesus means responding as He would. Feelings of being pushed aside, of being not wanted, of been forgotten, or disrespected,

can still cause us much pain and anguish. And as a result we want them to be addressed and corrected by the wrong doer. However while these intense painful feelings seem so relevant and justified, we are terribly mistaken by fleshly thinking if we think the problem is with others, because these things belong to the flesh of our life before Christ called us. And this flesh of our old life has been crucified with Christ; the old self has died with Christ so that we can be born again by the Spirit as a new creation in the image of Christ.

So the problem of our painful feelings is God working with us who are intended to live according to the Spirit in fellowship with God. Pain at the cross gives us the motivation to represent God in the world not our old life in the flesh. And when we live with Christ in God, we find He is all we need in a fallen world of pain.

These distressing feeling we experience from our past life in the flesh are dug up by God so we can cast them off by clinging to Christ. So far from having any claim on us they still need to be addressed, for they are indicators of what needs to be cut away and pruned from our thinking by our heavenly Father. The Father allows the painful past and the failings of others to be used for our assistance in our need to lay it all aside in order to grow spiritually. Therefore the things that bother us are the very things God uses so that we put them to death ourselves by faith since we have died so that we can enjoy the fullness of the love of God and love others as we are loved.

Eph 3:16-19

If we react according to the flesh it is because we have more dying to self to attend to until we look to Christ and realise we are one with God and will never be forgotten or neglected. Reacting to the flesh means we will not be able to love others as we are loved by God. Reacting to the flesh means forgiveness and understanding are out the window.

According to God's will, Christians are troubled in all things like the rest of humanity. We too suffer disease and natural disaster, along with illness, accidents, and the results of war. Then there is the suffering caused by racial prejudice, violent assaults, domestic violence, armed robberies, fraud, embezzlement, poverty, and religious persecution. But the thing that hurts most is the pain we experience at the hands of others who are supposed to be the closest to us. God in His sovereign wisdom uses suffering for our good.

The new man is created in the image of God, is connected to God, is supported and maintained by God, and is always dependent on God. Everything we observe in the circumstances of our new life has to be compared to what is revealed to us in God's Word by the Son of God. The Word of God and Christ are to be the only measure of how we live our new life.

Living the new life in Christ requires spiritual understanding. Living the new life in the present while at the same time looking forward to the not yet of eternity is too difficult if we are unaware of the process of spiritual development. Because the flesh in our thinking is not all dead yet, there is always the possibility we can fall back on our own understanding and get caught in the snare of the evil one.

We need to remember that the transformation of our mind and heart is a necessary act of our loving obedience which we undertake by the power of the Holy Spirit; so that we can live the life of Christ here on earth and do the work of God. In this we are not left to our own devices to achieve God's work, for God is at work in us. As we hold to our faith in obedience and humility we will be pleasing to Him having victory over the world.

Phil 2:12-13

Christ in us is our motivation to will and to do for His pleasure. *'For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.'*

2 Cor 5:14-15

We need to compare our life to His desire to have His life living in us more than anything else. Remember He lives in you by the power of the Holy Spirit who will enable you to live His life.

Eph 3:17-21

This is the battle for the death of self to walk in the light

We don't get to die to self because getting rid of the darkness and its control is easy to do. The spiritual war rages even if we are asleep on duty. How do we sleep? We often recognise the darkness in others long before we see it in ourselves. The log in our own eye is often unseen. This is often because we make excuses for our own failings, seeing them as just a natural way of things. We get caught up in the darkness because we react to the darkness we see in other and don't realise we have joined them in their blindness. When we excuse our own darkness

and stumble as the blind, those around us living in the darkness will refuse to follow us because they have no confidence that we possess the power to overcome the darkness or have anything more than they have. Therefore they won't believe we have anything that can help them in their struggles. But we are called to be light and to walk in the light.

Eph 5:8

See the darkness fighting for control of our soul when we feel mistreated. See the darkness in us when we want to complain about not being treated appropriately. And then remember we are not of the world and its darkness, we have no rights in the world for we have been removed from the world and placed in the Kingdom of God. We are now the light for the world. See the darkness in us when pride wants recognition. See the darkness when we feel we have not received due respect. See the darkness that wants to justify indignation at being hard done by. The prince of darkness comes to us with plausible arguments to justify ourselves and to defend our self, but all these ways lead to death in his darkness. The power of our death in Christ overcomes the evil one.

See the darkness in self and put it off by bowing down in humility and surrender to the Spirit of Light so that we can overcome self and sin and live in His marvellous and victorious light. But remember, we can't put off what we can't see and we won't see if we're not surrendered into absolute obedience. See the darkness in our pride, arrogance, impatience, anger resentment, self sufficiency, separation, intolerance, injustice, unkindness, self seeking, self pity, depression, hate, unfaithfulness, worldliness, self importance, unbelief, greed, laziness, immaturity, and disobedience.

We need to see the darkness is about 'me', it's all about 'me' my rights; my way; my world, my will. The darkness has a vested interest in us continuing to look to ourselves and achieves this by getting us to react to the world by demanding our way. Reacting to the darkness and thereby taking its words as truth grieves the Spirit of God and therefore grieves the light in us. The darkness speaks lies and unsettling words to create anxiousness and indignation so that we grieve the Spirit of Light and abandon our faith in unbelief, thus bringing us more strife under his influence and control.

Reacting to the darkness in others feeds the darkness and spreads its influence to others just like a ripple effect crosses many waters. Reacting to the darkness is to agree with the darkness and therefore to surrender to that darkness and then dwell and abide in the darkness. This means we give an open invitation for the darkness to dominate and rule our life as in the kingdom of darkness, with all the spiritual consequences of blindness, and fellowship with the prince of darkness in serving his purposes.

If we think we are saved but still live mainly in the darkness of the flesh the truth is not in us. *‘If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;’*

1 John 1:6

Death to self means we live in Christ who lives in us. *‘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

‘The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.’

1 John 2:6

‘The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.’

1 John 3:24

Living in Christ is to abide in Him

Abiding in Christ is not just practicing His presence; we can and should do that before the Father Himself. Abiding in Christ is living His life, for He lives in us to reveal the life of God to the world. Christ is our life. We are able to live His life because the Spirit of Christ lives in us so we live in Christ and Christ lives in us. *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

John 17:20-21

Abiding in Jesus means putting on the life of Jesus. *‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.’*

(Rom 13:14) And putting on Christ can only happen when we put off self first.

There cannot be two of us in control. We cannot serve two masters. We cannot please God and the flesh, and our self is of the flesh, no matter how good we have trained ourselves to be. We are the temple of God, there is no such thing as dual or shared occupancy. We are given the Spirit of Christ so that we do not carry out the deeds of the flesh. The Holy Spirit has poured out the Father's love into our heart, bringing us the joy and peace that accompanies that love when it finds obedience in the beloved. It is this love which becomes our motivation and encouragement to do the will of the Father. Just as God's love motivated Him to send His Son into the world.

God's love motivated Him to provide His Son with His Spirit to equip and empower Him for His ministry in the world. In the same way, He loves us and equips us and empowers us as the representative of the Son to live the life of Christ. God's love motivated Him to provide His son as a living sacrifice for sins. In the same way His love calls us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice so that we can be more like Christ.

The Christ life was not an easy life from a human point of view. It means suffering in a world that is separated from God. Jesus said that in the world you will have tribulation, but *"My peace I leave with you, and in you My joy will be made complete."* So while we live the Christ life we will suffer as He did, but we will know the love of God as He did, we will know the compelling joy of being with God, and we will know the power of God to do His will in all things.

Living the Christ life that dwells in us fulfills us, because we are one with the Father and the Son by the Spirit, inseparable and eternal. Our destiny and therefore our ultimate purpose in life is tied to what God set out to do in the beginning; and Christ came to complete. so our life is to be what God has ordained us to be, His children, created in the same image as Christ our Lord, to share in the salvation of the world.

Abiding in Christ is life with God

Living for Christ while dying to self is only possible when we are so personally attached to Jesus that we are filled up with His love that we delight in obeying His word, and desire to always be compelled by His love so we can live His Life that is now flowing in us like a river of

living water. Isn't the fruit of the life of the Spirit flowing in the veins of those who love God? No one can live as He lived by practising what is written. His life only comes after our death to self so that living for Christ is more of inner compulsion than outer determination.

Isn't it clear from the scriptures that the promise of the born again life is Christ in us who is now our life? So clinging to Him on His cross results in being raised up with Him into the newness of life. Therefore we cannot live for Him and bear witness to His life while we continue to live for ourselves. There will never be evidence of the divine life from God if we insist on having two natures or we resist the command by Jesus for us to take up our cross and follow Him.

According to those who offer a Christian life of health and wealth, there is no need for the training of God that will cause us to cling to the cross of suffering with Christ. To suggest that the sovereign providence of God in the administration of our death to self is unnecessary is to deny the call of Christ for us to take up our cross and follow Him.

The trials and tribulations God uses to apply the cross of Christ to our souls are precious in His sight, for without the cross we wouldn't be able to become more like Christ who is our life. We need to appreciate the sovereign providence of God's love working in us, for it may be painful, but it will result in our glory with Christ.

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

He was saying to them all, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses life for My sake, this is the one who will save it.” Luke 9:23-24



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