

Fear Not

God gives us Himself

Fear Not - God gives us Himself

“God Himself is with us.”

2 Chron 13:12

Let it be known from the very beginning, the reason God gives us Himself in Christ is that without Him living in us by His Spirit, and us abiding faithfully in Him, we will not survive spiritually.

In choosing us to be His children, God has invested the life of His Son to redeem us and give us a life like His Son. In a real way He has invested Himself in the redemption of a world lost in darkness so that the dead He has chosen in Christ may live to the glory of God. And because He is God, He will not fail to see His plan come to fruition.

Phil 1:6

Those who are born of the Spirit have spiritual birth by God, *“who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God.”*

John 1:13

This life in Christ is Holy Spirit empowered. *‘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 to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.’*

Rom 8:11

The Spirit of God provides the qualities of the divine life required for those born again by God. *‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.’*

Gal 5:22-23

The life of the Spirit is to produce divine fruitfulness in the life of those born again by God. *“The one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit.”*

John 15:5

They are born to reflect the life of God in Christ as they go into the world. The chosen children of God are given great assistance, because they are to walk by the Spirit. *‘But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.’*

Gal 5:16

The only way God's children can reflect God's life is by daily walking according to the new life we have in God by the powerful working of His Spirit. Walking in the spirit according to the life and light of God is

a process achieved by the renewing of the mind (Rom 12:1-2) so that we have the thoughts of God.

1 Cor 2:16

God chose us to be joined to Himself in Christ before the world was made. *'Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.'*

Eph 1:4-5

Considering then that God has chosen us in love to be His precious people, it follows that He has provided for our ultimate transformation into the image of Christ. To this end, this work of God on our behalf includes the guardianship and intimacy of the indwelling Holy Spirit who wants to show us how Christ life is our life.

Col 3:4

God in the Son reveals God the Father

The Christ of God as Son has revealed the Father. *'Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

John 14:9

God the Father has become visible and knowable in Jesus Christ. We can know God only through Christ. *'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.'*

Col 1:15-17

'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' (John 1:18) The Glory of God is revealed in the Son. The glory of God is the beauty of His Spirit made evident in the Son. It is the beauty of holiness that shines from His character. The glory of God is revealed in all His majestic qualities as they work together as the expression of His eternal life. This is the glory of the Son of God. *"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

John 1:14

Jesus came to bring us into fellowship with the Father. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

John 17:3

In Jesus Christ, the unapproachable is now approachable, the hidden is now seen, the unknowable is now knowable, the invisible is now visible to the eyes of faith, the all powerful is now available to those who believe in the Son.

The Lord Jesus Christ alone has made it possible for us to know God and stand in His presence so we can live with Him and enjoy Him forever. He made it possible for people to have faith so they could be known as the children of light who knew God as their eternal Father.

Eph 5:8

Jesus made it possible that those who remain faithful to Him could look upon the face of God and live, because when He comes again to take them home to heaven they would see that they had been made completely holy to reflect the image of their Creator, because they will see Him in all His glory.

Jesus wants us to be renewed so we know and enjoy the fellowship He has with the Father. *"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

John 17:22-23, 25-26

The unity and intimacy of the Father and the Son is to be enjoyed by all those who are born again. Just as Jesus walked with the Father, we are born of God to walk as He walked. And this intimate walk is to result in glorifying God in all we do just as Jesus glorified the Father. *"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."*

John 17:4

God the Spirit now lives in us

The Lord Jesus speaks of the Spirit living in the very heart of the believer. *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"* John 7:38

Our Father has not left us unaided as if we are orphans. Jesus promised we would receive another comforter in His place. *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."* John 14:16-17

Therefore aren't we supposed to be aware of His close presence? He is always here, but we often live as if we are orphans. Many excluded from the family struggle to know the reality of the oneness of the Father and Son within them where Jesus prayed: *"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 17:21

We live out this new spiritual intimate reality in Christ even as we need to confront the clear evidence of our broken world that exists in chaos. Because we live in this fallen world of darkness, our Christian joy and security are not about the absence of pain and sorrow in this present darkness, but about the inner presence of the Spirit of light in Christ.

Our hope is not based on what we see in the world, but on what is not yet visible to the eyes of man concerning the kingdom of God. (Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:1) Even while the circumstances of our lives may call us to sometimes wonder about God's provision in the world, His gracious gift of His Spirit's abiding in us enables our spiritual vision to include so we can be confident of our heavenly future which is the reality of Christ. And by the care of the indwelling Spirit His grace is all we need.

In the world we will very often groan loudly with the pain of our suffering, even while we continue to groan inwardly in anticipation of our heavenly future with Christ our King. But in the mean time, we have the Spirit of Christ who rules all things, and who enables us to pray and rejoice in the midst of all trouble and mournful grieving.

Salvation is about walking with God

Salvation is not just about getting saved to avoid hell; and it's not just about our legal justification before a righteous God. Salvation is not only about going to heaven when we die. Although all these things are important, Salvation is about being chosen by God to be powerfully united in union with Christ so we can walk in fellowship with Father, Son and Spirit. *'You are A CHOSEN PEOPLE, 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 Pet 2:9

Being chosen as God's personal possession means living with God who has placed immense value on our lives by the death of His Son. And this life with God begins at the moment of conversion and comes to completion when Christ comes again at the end of the world. *'For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.'*

2 Tim 2:10

To be chosen of God means to be born again into a life of unity and fellowship with God by the work of His Son and the power of the Spirit. *"He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*

Rev 17:14

Salvation is about our intimate relationship with God restored on earth where the chosen will be faithful to Christ. *"I in them and You in Me"* (John 17:23) *'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?'*

Rom 8:32

The all things freely given will mean nothing to us without us being close to our God who works all things for our good through the sacrifice of the Son. He does this so that we can have a vital relationship in eternal fellowship with God, Father, Son and Spirit. *'Indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.'*

1 John 1:3

Wanting the benefits of this relationship without a life committed to walking with God as Jesus has set us an example is impossible. Valued relationships require an effort to please the one loved. Having faithful relationship with God is His love will be controlling us as we are enlarged when we trust in Him.

Walking with God is the practical reality of our loving God calling His chosen children to live with Him personally. We are His people, chosen in Christ who is the most special person. Jesus makes this relationship clear: *“I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and You loved them, just as You loved Me.”* John 17:23

God’s purpose is for all believers to always walk with Him

‘The one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.’ 1 John 2:6

Christians are recreated holy in Christ to overcome the weakness of the old life in order to be able to walk obediently with God. By God’s grace we have received the image and likeness of God so we can live holy and blameless lives before God. *‘He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.’* 2 Pet 1:4

Our Father wants us to live as His children who desire His presence more than anything else. He gave His Son to die for us so that we can be like Him in character, and in all our daily lives.

Salvation means we walk with Christ living in us. *‘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

Salvation means Christ is our life. *‘When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.’* Col 3:4

Salvation means we live for Christ as we walk with Him. *‘Those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.’* 2 Cor 5:15

Salvation means we walk in the darkness of the world knowing our home is in heaven with Christ. *‘For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.’* Phil 3:20

We are saved to live with God

We are saved to walk hand in hand with God by being led daily by God Spirit. In humble submission we walk hand in hand with the Spirit as we grow daily in the knowledge of God. The Spirit is given to those who obey Him, so if we are not seeking to obey, we will not know of His leading in power and righteousness.

In humble submission we walk hand in hand with the Spirit as we live as confident witnessing to the work of God. In humble submission we walk hand in hand with the Spirit as we live fearlessly in the face of all adversity.

God gives Himself to us as the cure for fear

God gives us His life as security against anxiety. Seeking the kingdom that Jesus commands means we don't need to be in control of the world fallenness. But we do need to surrender in trust to God who created the world so we live in the knowledge He is in control. If we are submissive to His power to manage our life, we will know His love will keep us safe from worry as we live for Him.

'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and 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 5:14-15

The reality of this world under the curse of sin is that Christians will suffer just as the unbelievers, but there will be a vast difference in the way the believer and the unbeliever. The believers will obediently live by faith in the midst of darkness, simply because they have the Lord God who is the light of the world abiding in them, so they will not be moved. *"So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."*
Matt 10:31

God in Christ is King over every area of our life. Jesus is King. Jesus' Kingship is not something that remains only in the future. Christ is King right now as He lives in us even while He lives in heaven. He is seated at the throne of the highest cosmic authority. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to God's anointed Son. Matt 28:18

While the world falls apart, and corruption destroys what blessings are left, we can be secure in the knowledge that God has our lives secured in His hands so we can take our place with Him in Glory. The answer

to our anxiety is God, who manages all things on our behalf. *'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 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; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.'*

Rom 8:28-31

Trusting in God for our life is the essence of the faith. When God gives us faith He comes with that faith. His gift of faith is what we need as we are prepared by our Father for heaven through our heavenly training in the midst of this sinful world. His faith is not anxious because He is not anxious, so we are not to be anxious because we belong to God, who has undertaken to complete what He has begun on our behalf. *'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

What God is completing for us is not found in the world, His work is for our glory in heaven. We need to look up to where Christ sits at His right hand because there is a tendency for us to look down; we need a heavenly perspective because we live with the earthly remnants of our mind as we grow in Christ.

Therefore as we are in Christ Jesus we are to be committed to the task of putting to death our old fleshly thinking and desire that resists faithful obedience so that we can successfully put on Christ who is now our life. *When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

Col 3:4

We need to develop a new spiritual way of thinking. *'Do not be conformed to 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

God gives Himself so we can have His peace

The Lord Himself is our peace; and because of His endless love we are comforted all the days of our life. He is our life of peace and contentment. The Lord Himself gives us His word to keep in our heart so that we always have His testimony of His loving assurance, knowing

that He abides in us by His powerful Spirit, so that we can understand all that the Father has prepared for us from before the foundation of the world was laid.

‘For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.’

Eph 3:14-19

It doesn't matter how badly the world attacks us or denies us respect, the world cannot take away our eternal value to God and the comfort He brings as He lives in us by His Spirit.

‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.’

2 Cor 1:3-5

Therefore: *‘Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’*

Phil 4:6-7

Fear, worry and anxiety are the fruit of the old corrupted self. We who are in Christ are to understand that the old self is dead, even as we are getting used to the idea. If we do not live for Christ today we have no other option but to be anxious, because the world is given over to tribulation. The cure for fear, worry and anxiety is our God with us. He Himself is the answer to all that robs the heart of the peace that goes beyond understand, if we would just trust in Him.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord

and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones."

Proverbs 3:5-8

Without Christ we take possession of what is not ours, but with Christ we give freely because we have Him and He has us and things are not important.

Living with Christ changes everything

'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

If we walk as if Christ has abandoned us, then we will appear to be no different from those who have no knowledge of Him. We will not appreciate the fact that God works everything in our lives for our greatest good. If we are not living with Christ daily we will not be able to honestly say that His presence in the heart of the repentant believer makes up for everything that is lacking in the world.

If we don't know the reality of the presence of Christ in devoted relationship with Him now, we will not be able to share the truth that Christ is the only one with authority who can give us eternal life in fellowship with God. *"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son determines to reveal Him."*

Matt 11:27-27

The groaning of the believer is normal as we wait for the redemption of the whole creation on the return of Jesus Christ. *'For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only that, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body.'*

Rom 8:22-23

We groan because we suffer in a fallen world that is not our home. *'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'*

Rom 8:18

If there was no darkness to be overcome there would be no need for faith and no groaning, and there would be no need for light. But our groaning will continue even as we walk in His light until the Lord comes again to purify all things and bless us with a new heaven and earth. For now we groan in the light of the knowledge of God with hope eternal, unlike the unbelievers who groan in the darkness without any hope whatsoever.

Our future hope requires change today. Our relationship with God as His children means we begin walking with Him now on earth, not just in heaven when we die, or in our resurrection bodies when Christ returns. Our walk is to be unbroken and continuous because God's salvation is forever.

Today we continue to live with God when we remain attached to Christ, (John 15:4) because we are denying ourselves daily. (Luke 9:23-24) And this is shown as we remain committed in obedience to His word, proving to be His children who are becoming like the Master. (John 8:31) It is then as we change from one degree of glory to another that we will remain in the His love. (John 15:10) If there is no fruit of Christ's love it means there isn't any attachment to Christ's life.

Self denial is the new way of life in Christ as we walk with God

Jesus denied Himself to walk with God. *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”*

Matt 26:39

If we want eternal life with Christ we must first deny ourselves by following His example. *“If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

Matt 16:24

Repentance begins with self denial, which means we can then live in Him who gives life. *“Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.”*

John 15:4

Therefore we walk a new life of self denial in Christ. The flesh that remains in our thinking anchors us to the world and limits our ability to understand His word and how we walk with God, so we must show all diligence in living as spiritual children of God according to His word.

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

Col 3:1-4, 10

A new lifestyle requires a new way of thinking according to the mind of Christ. *'Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.'*

1 Cor 2:12-16

If we are going to be successful in living this new life we must know what God tells us about life in Christ. *"to follow all that I commanded you."*

Matt 28:20

The eternal life we have in Christ is life in all its fullness is real fellowship with God. It is a relationship that lacks nothing concerning the kingdom of God. *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* (John 17:3) This means knowing God personally as we grow into the same intimate knowing as the Father knows the Son.

Our future has a beginning in the resurrection of Christ. The kingdom of God is a present reality on earth while we look forward to its consummation in Christ's return. We live in the presence of God now in Christ by the Spirit, with the fullness of the glory of God to come.

For the time we have left on earth, Christ's life in us is to be a foretaste of the glory of our future life united with Him when He comes again. *"The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that*

they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and You loved them, just as You loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

John 17:22-24

God with us is the way of the cross of suffering

We mistakenly think our greatest needs are found in the creation because we still live from the desires of the flesh. But our great need is to be in constant fellowship with the God who created all things. Because He alone can keep us as His children so we can inherit the kingdom of God.

When our desire for earthly things replaces our desire for communion with God we are living according to the flesh and we have made the things of the world our idols. This is made abundantly clear to us: "*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

Because we don't trust God enough to do what is best for us, we take things into our own hands. This lack of faith to walk with God who sets our path His way, means we endeavour to exert our personal control over our circumstances and the people God has given us to love. And while we feel justified because of our earthly situation, we conveniently forget that what is not of faith is sin. And we openly rebel against our Holy Father.

The Discipline of trials is God's Design for our good

No afflictions in the Christian life are accidental. No trials in the Christian life are the product of coincidence. None. "Though He put forth His hand, and seem to threaten our dearest comforts, yet when we remember that it is His hand, when we consider that it is His design, His love, His wisdom, and His power, we cannot refuse to trust Him."

“Christ’s suffering was punitive; Christian suffering is restorative. The cup Christ drank was filled with wrath; the cup of suffering God calls His children to drink during the Christian life is only medicinal to promote their chief good.”

God uses disease and sickness and poverty and all the large and small pains of life for our good. “God will suffer nothing to grieve us, but what He intends to employ as means for our greater advantage.”

He weaves trials into the storyline of our lives for a twin benefit: His glory and our good. All these light and momentary afflictions on the open sea of the Christian life are working together by God in our lives to prepare for us “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

2 Cor 4:17

The pain we experience now cannot compare with the glorious end in store for us (Rom 8:18) “God in Christ is our Father and our Shepherd. Heaven is our home; and all things we meet by the way are appointed and overruled in a subserviency to our sanctification and happiness.”

John Newton. 1725-1807

God is Sovereign over all things, including our suffering

God is sovereign over all things, including the fallen world which is under His judgement. So we must live the life He has chosen for us in His image. As His servants we drink the cup of suffering He has prepared for us, and we do all things according to the values of the kingdom of God. By faith, love, grace, humility, and obedience, and in all service and perseverance we are always drawing near to God as we live the life of Christ.

Our Father gives us a cup of tribulation for our spiritual development. That cup isn't meant to be easy, pampered children are spoilt, and it isn't meant to break us either. Our cup is to be consumed by faith overflowing with love so that we change as we grow up in the image of Christ. The faithful perseverance of God's children builds a holy character which is our light shining in the world of darkness. And our devotion in service to God in the midst of tribulation is our acceptable testimony of the treasure of salvation found in Christ alone.

Whatever we experience in our walk with God we are not alone and He strengthens us as we trust in Him. Jesus has given us an example to follow, and He intends we take it up in His name. *'For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps.'* 1 Pet 2:21

Faith in Christ will not disappoint even though the world may fall apart around our ears. Confidently we can proclaim: *'We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.'* 2 Cor 4:8-10

All suffering is the tough love of our heavenly Father. It is for us to see our need of His mercy and come to repentance, and for us to grow in faith and obedience as we refuse to be troubled by what we see because we are looking forward to what we cannot see, even while grievous things in the world happen to us.

Even while we suffer here we are not without comfort from above. *'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.'* 2 Cor 1:3-4

'Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.' 1 Pet 4:12-13

But suffer we must if we are to be like Him. *'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.'* 1 Pet 4:1-2

We follow Christ by accepting the same attitude to life as He demonstrated. *'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

God calls on all His people to endure evil and to suffer for doing good in order to prove their faith and commitment. During these times it is important for us to remember the words of the apostle Peter, who said that *'even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed'*

1 Peter 3:14

We endure all things for the hope set before us, so we trust God regardless of the circumstances. *'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.'*

Rom 8:28-29

Jesus promises fellowship with Him even while we suffer in the world. Life in Christ was never promised to be a party. It was always going to be in fellowship with His suffering. (Phil 3:10) Jesus made this clear when He said: *"In this world you will have trouble."* (John 15:20) *"I will never leave you."*

Matt 28:20

If we are not at peace, are we looking at the world around us and forgetting there is a God at all who promises to abide with us? Is this forgetfulness just a lack of faith that leads to deciding what to do instead of trusting in God? Or does it mean we do nothing but fall apart in depression? Instead of worry we trust in God, *"casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you."*

1 Pet 5:7

In times of trouble we can be assured nothing can separate us from the love of God who is working to make us complete in Christ. *'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

When we live in the presence of God by the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit marks us as belonging to God which is seen in a change of life in

obedience and truth. When we live in the presence of God we must always remember He is still the Almighty, the Invisible, the Creator of the world, perfectly Holy and Righteous, the cause of all things in heaven and on earth and the Judge of the world who will bless those who have done His will in Christ, or condemn the disobedient to eternal judgement who have denied Jesus as saviour and Lord, separating them from all the goodness of God forever and ever. Since God is big enough we can give thanks and, *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful."*

Col 3:15

Our God is big enough to cope with our lives, so we can give continual thanks to Him who is larger than life. *'Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'*

1 Thess 5:16-18

Jesus promised His peace to those who followed Him. *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."* (John 14:1) *"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

Peace is in Christ, we can have His peace, but only when we live so closely joined to Him by faith that we live His life under the governance and compulsion of the Spirit of God.

When Jesus Christ offers us His peace, He offers us Himself so that we can live for Him beyond fear.

Our flesh sets a limit for enjoying God's presence

The flesh of our old life in the world limits our peace in times of troubles and our effectiveness as witness to the glory of Christ. But even if we are with Christ having received a life like His, we still have to deal with the old mindset we were originally born with. We still have to deny the devils temptation to live as we once did.

'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. So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation,

not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God.'

Rom 8:10-14

The flesh that remains after we have been born again sets the limit of our satisfaction with God. When we are happy with what we think we know about God, we have reached the limit of our spiritual growth that is set by our fleshly desires for the enjoyment of the world.

When we have reached our limit, we resist any further change to be more heavily minded because we cling to the world. Earthly desires set our spiritual limits, and they have an earthly flavour with unlimited complications according to the disposition of our mind and motivations.

We are to walk as Jesus walked in intimate communion with God and each other. But our memory of the flesh that remains hinders our satisfaction of communion and services to the one who gives us life. Our flesh doesn't want to glorify God but ourselves.

The issue to understand is that our goal is denying the flesh in order to stay close to God regardless of the the powers of darkness He introduces into our lives. Christ already has the victory. We can be assured God is always for us so we can be patient under His will and divine providence. Walking with God in this way will give us wings. *'Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'*

1 Thess 5:16-18

Our Father has determined that the life we live in the world which is under the curse of sin for a time decided by Him is the best place for us to learn humble obedience as we grow in trust and the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.

This is why when Jesus prayed to the Father for His disciples, He didn't pray that we would be free from all the struggles that are common to man, instead He prayed that we would be kept from the evil power of Satan while we battle with sin in our lives. His concern is for our kingdom life not a smooth passage in the world. *"I am not asking You*

to take them out of the world, but to keep them away from the evil one.”

John 17:15

Temptations and suffering in the world is God's training ground in the way of our testing, it is the practical teaching tool for perfecting holiness, but only those who overcome were promised heavenly rewards. If there was no real struggle against temptation there would be no growth in holiness.

God the Spirit gives us power to overcome the flesh

‘If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.’

Rom 8:13-14

‘Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.’

Gal 5:16

The Spirit of God has no limitations in wanting us to be holy as He is holy, except ourselves. He is eternal and seeks to lead us deeper into conformity with the heavenly kingdom of God. If we're not being conformed into His image by a daily battle with the flesh and the reproach of God's word, we are unaware we are resisting God because we are not dying daily to the flesh and the world.

The Holy Spirit won't lead us where we don't want to go. We have to work out the holiness God is attempting to create in us according to His purpose. God saved us by Himself, now we work out that salvation under the leading of the Spirit because He wants us to walk as Jesus walked in absolute dependence and obedience to Him by obeying all that Jesus taught and commanded we do.

But our flesh sets the limit of our satisfaction with God unless we are dying daily. We tend to think our Bible knowledge saves us from the flesh, but our knowledge can have fleshly undertones that reflect a desire for the things of the world that satisfy us in place of the God we claim to worship.

There is no religious activity that we can employ that can be substituted for dying to self in order to live for Christ. We can read the Bible daily, pray daily, do good deeds, and give of our possessions to the needy and still deny the need for our death to self and the world. Unfortunately,

the fleshly religious life deceives us into thinking we have done enough so we feel satisfied with ourselves, and deny God our life which He bought with the blood of Christ.

We owe Christ our life. He died so we can live with Him as He lives in us. So He calls us to die with Him and extract ourselves from the clutches of the world. *'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

Jesus is not our Lord unless He rules in us and His life alone becomes our greatest satisfaction. If we are living according to the flesh we are ignorant of the presence and purposes of God, and we are not able to rejoice in all things, even when we know God commands it to be so.

We only feel that God is far away from us because we look away to the world and start living for ourselves which is far away from Him. Our peace is not dependent on what our world is like, good or bad, but on us abiding in Christ abiding in us, for He is the only reality worth living for.

When Jesus Christ takes hold of us He joined us to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit. He gives us Himself so that in Him alone we are satisfied. His life in us is real life, and His life makes up for whatever is lacking in the world.

Living with Christ gives us an eternal perspective that removes any fear of missing out on the temporal things here in the world.

The most repeated command in the Bible is “Do not be afraid.”

“Do not be afraid” appears in the NIV 70 times. And this doesn’t include other similar commands such as “fear not,” “do not fear,” and the like.

God knows the dangers and fears we face in the fallen world as we learn to put off our dependence on the flesh to live for Him. Life in the world can get very scary. But however that doesn’t mean we need to be scared witless.

When God gives the command for us not to be afraid it is because He has undertaken to keep us for Himself, He is able to do what He says even though we don't understand. We have every reason to trust God because the Lord is with us and in us. And He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. In telling us not to be afraid He is giving an instruction on how to approach difficult circumstances. Our Father wants us to learn that fear is the opposite to faith, and since He has given us faith, we can trust Him to work all things together for our good.

All the promises of God are yes to us in Christ Jesus, so why do we behave as if we are forgotten? Could it be that we still cling to the flesh so we only want to see the manifestation of those promises in the world, and fail to understand that we are no longer of the world to pursue the things of the world as if our happiness depends on comfort and pleasure? If we are anxious and fearful it can only be because we have failed to believe God is able to fulfil all His promises in Christ, because God never fails.

In the Old testament God told His people to fear not because He was around about. *"Now behold, God is with us."* 2 Chron 13:12

In Jesus Christ things have changed, God is no longer out there, He is now in here. God has taken up residence in those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

John 14:16-18

"I am with you always"

Matt 28:20

Is our God out there or in our heart?

It makes a big difference to be encouraged from the sidelines, or to have the courage working God's will on the inside. But God is not a distant spectator; He has bought the team and now runs things in the field from within the hearts of His players. The encourager has taken over to instil courage in the heart of every true believer. The head of the world reigns in His subjects, so we should "Fear not," for God has

taken change. Whatever we may lose in the world, be it the loss of things, or relationships, or beloved family; God more than makes up for in His Majestic Holiness and Divine Worthiness as He includes us in His person.

God has given us Himself.

Fear is the call to remember God is in us. In the world we will have tribulation, but nothing can separate us from God who lives in us. We still need the command "fear not" because we are in a frightening world, but we have God in us. Instead of fear we can have faith because we can trust in our God to always do what is in our greatest spiritual interest. Knowing the peace of God depends on living in humble obedience to the life of the indwelling Christ.

Trusting in God means we are accepting He is right and in control, and if He is in control, we must do what He commands, which means there is no benefit in claiming to trust God without full obedience to God.

Those who live for Christ can be fearless because they live in Christ the love of Christ controls their fear as Christ lives in them. Those who do not live for Christ will fear more because they are excluded from the love and life of Christ in the world of darkness and death.

Can we do anything less than bow down before Him and give thanks?

Having God means we can always rejoice. *'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.'*

Phil 4:4

Fear Not God gives us Himself in Christ by the Spirit as our comforter as we walk with Him in a troubled world.

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Fear Not

God gives us Himself

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

Copyright © 2021

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com