

**Do we want
Happiness in the
world?**

or

**Holiness with
God?**

Do we want Happiness or Holiness?

The big question is, what do we want from the world? The natural man who is drawn to religion thinks God is supposed to keep us from harm and allow us to live in happiness and peace. So what does the Bible say?

We begin by loving God as God more than life in the world

“The teaching of the Bible is that God is Himself the end for which man was created. *“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”* cried the psalmist, *“and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”* (Psalm 73:25) The first and greatest commandment is to love God with every power of our entire being. Where love like that exists, there can be no place for a second object. If we love God as much as we should, surely we cannot dream of a loved object beyond Him which He might help us to obtain. “Popular Christianity has the idea that God exists to help people get ahead in the world.” A.W. Tozer Man, the dwelling place of God.

God is holiness, and holiness requires judgment to maintain His glory. In holiness God loves those He calls to Himself, and in justice His anger is on those who deny Him to be God over all there is. It is not possible to be in relationship with God in a state of unholiness and live. God is light and in Him there is no darkness.

Man is naturally sinful living in rebellion to the holiness of God. Man lives in darkness and willfully denies the true knowledge of God's holiness and glory. God is not going to give spiritual sustenance to the rebellious. *“My Spirit will not remain with man forever, because he is also flesh.”* (Gen 6:3) *‘if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die.’* Rom 8:13

So, as a consequence of disobedience, man is separated from the comfort of God's intimate presence and eternal security. Therefore, the whole world is in darkness and fallen from compatibility with God's holiness. Corruption is now the basis for life in the world. Nature has also been corrupted along with man. But wait, there is more. When man rebelled against God, his inheritance of eternal dominion over the world was transferred to satan. So that the kingdom of God on earth became the kingdom of man under the control of the evil one.

The honest question we ought to be asking is, why doesn't God just judge us now and put us to death as we deserve and be done with it?

But rather than destroy everyone for their rebellion, God handed man over to the consequences of sin. *"But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk by their own plans."* Psalm 81:11-12

'Therefore God gave them up to vile impurity in the lusts of their hearts, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.... For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged natural relations for that which is contrary to nature.... And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a depraved mind, to do those things that are not proper.' Rom 1:24, 26, 28

God is not surprised by sin; He has a plan to use it for His and our good. God in His mercy has a plan conceived before the creation of all things, to restore the kingdom of God to the world under the sovereign rule and authority of Christ, so that we have the opportunity to repent and surrender to His will.

This is the Salvation that comes through Christ to fulfill all the promises of God to the people who have faith in Christ. God, by offering His only Son as a living sacrifice through the Christ's substitutionary death on the cross in our place, has provided the power that is necessary to overcome personal sin. This is so that God's chosen children of faith in Christ can be holy and restored to an intimate relationship with God. John 17:3

The attitude of His earthly mother should be the same as ours. *"My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant; For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. And His mercy is to generation after generation Toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, And sent the rich away empty-handed. He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, Just as He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."* Luke 1:47-55

Christ is the salvation of God

The first requirement to be saved from the power of sin and death, is by having unshakable faith in Christ. We cannot generate faith from our sinful souls, faith come from God to the repentant heart that is going to obey Christ in all things. And this faith must be accompanied with the knowledge of our personal sin and our disregard for the holiness of God, which is our rejection of God's right to be our God in all things.

But there is a wrong message

“Evangelical Christians commonly offer Christ to mankind as a nostrum to cure their ills, a way out of their troubles, a quick and easy means to the achievement of personal ends. They use the right words, but their emphasis is awry. The message is so presented as to leave the hearer with the impression that he is being asked to give up much to gain more.” A.W. Tozer *Man, the dwelling place of God.*

Today many people only want to be Christians to escape the consequences of sin and the suffering that it brings, without accepting responsibility for their rebellion against God. They want the benefits without a broken heart of contrition. They want the kingdom while retaining their attachment to the world. The idea of separating ourselves from the world is a foreign language.

So, there is no personal acceptance of being under God's judgement of eternal damnation. If we don't willingly accept that we are guilty, we don't have a right to salvation, because we don't see we need to be saved. Without repentance there is no salvation. Repentance comes before life. *“I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”* Luke 13:3

Jesus put it this way. *“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 his life for My sake, this is the one who will save it.”* Luke 9:23-24

This is necessary in order to live in obedience to God while remaining living amongst the consequences of the sinful world. Not everyone is willing to leave the desires of the world behind to live for the ruler of heaven and earth. Salvation isn't from the suffering of the world, but strength to suffer in obedience in a world of suffering for Christ's sake.

“The man who believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is not true faith present. To attempt the impossible, God must give faith or there will be none, and He gives faith to the obedient heart only. Where real repentance is, there is obedience; for repentance is not only sorrow for past failures and sins, it is a determination to begin now to do the will of God as He reveals it to us.” A.W. Tozer Man, the dwelling place of God.

Not everyone who claims Christ is called to be in Christ. Jesus makes it clear by saying the same thing twice, indicating that salvation is a few who will follow Him. *“for many be called, but few chosen.”* (Matt 20:16) *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* Matt22:14

‘We always give thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly keeping in mind your work of faith and labour of love and perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters, beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sakes. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word during great affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.’ 1 Thess 1:1-7

God’s chosen people are His workmanship. *‘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 brothers and sisters; 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 8:28-30

The chosen of God are those people who have repented from living for self, and now live for Christ. They are chosen by God to be remade in the image of Christ. This is the miracle of having received the divine nature in Christ, along with the indwelling Spirit of God, provided by the grace of God to enable all His children to be able to reflect His holiness through obedience and devotion to His will in a sinful world, all for His glory. God chose His beloved for the purpose of holiness not happiness in the world.

Do we want happiness in the world or holiness with God?

Christian life is the kingdom of God's life of holiness, which is not anything like the life of the world. In Christ, who is our King, we are called out of the world to live for the kingdom of God. In the salvation of Christ our desires are to be changed from the material to the spiritual. Our life and work in the world is to be modified by the spiritual desires that God places in us when He gives us His Spirit who governs our life according to kingdom values.

The kingdom of God means we live under a new covenant with God. The new covenant introduced by Christ is the spiritual fulfilment of the old covenant which is now obsolete. The emphasis of God's blessings in the old covenant were temporal and physical. The emphasis of the blessings of God in the New covenant are spiritual and eternal, for we are born again with the divine nature so we are fit for life in heaven.

If we are in Christ we do not identify with the world. *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."* John 18:36

Paul makes this clear in the book of Ephesians.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 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 and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things in accordance with the plan of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in the Christ would be to the praise of His glory.' Eph 1:3-12

Eternal happiness will come when Jesus will restore all things in heaven and on earth, but for now the world is not as it will be. For now, the world is under the curse of God's judgment. However, our time on this troubled earth is being used by our Father in preparing us for an eternal weight of glory, as we learn to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, as we put on the life of Christ who now lives in us.

The chosen have forsaken the world, but not everyone who claims to be a Christian is willing to die to the world. *'Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election,'* 2 Pet 1:10

"A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to "accept" Christ without forsaking the world. But what saith the Holy Ghost? *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4), and *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). This requires no comment, only obedience." A.W. Tozer Man, the dwelling place of God.

Because we are now committed to the eternal kingdom of God, we are not to look for what we want from the ways of men or the things of the world. If our desires are for the temporal and physical things of the world, we are not living as children of God in the kingdom of God.

'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 continues to live forever.' 1 John 2:15-17

'For whoever has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.' 1 John 5:4

We are citizens of heaven, and Jesus is our King. As His people we no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died on our behalf. *'He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf.'* 2 Cor 5:15

We no longer live for ourselves because we are not our own, we have been bought with the price of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. *'Or do you not*

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

Our whole allegiance and purpose now, is to be changed by doing the will of God, as He works all the things of the world, the good and the bad, to be used for our ultimate good in transforming us into the image of Christ.

Rom 8:28-29

Whatever we do now, we do for the glory of Christ. *'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God.'*

1 Cor 10:31

We are slaves of Christ so we don't please ourselves. *'For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave, is the Lord's freed person; likewise the one who was called as free, is Christ's slave.'*

1 Cor 7:22

Living for self is a betrayal of our calling. *'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'*

Gal 2:20

Growth in holiness requires the death of self's interest in the world.

Real faith suffers with Christ

Jesus said: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied."* *"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* *"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."*

Matt 5:3-4, 6, 10-11

God's chosen children are no strangers to suffering. *"It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God."*

Acts 14:22

'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 anyone wants to live a holy life he will suffer. 'Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.'

2 Tim 3:12

God uses afflictions for our spiritual good in helping us kill off worldly desires

God's chief tool for salvation and our sanctification according to His preordained plan for His children, is that we be made holy through affliction. Because of the stubbornness of our hearts, He uses afflictions to get our attention for the purpose of repentance and faith and training in righteousness.

“IN WHATEVER TROUBLE comes to us, we should always set our eyes on God's purpose to train us to think little of this present life and inspire us to think more about the future life. For God knows well that we are greatly inclined to love this world by natural instinct. Thus, He uses the best means to draw us back and shake us from our slumber, so that we don't become entirely stuck in the mire of our love for this world.” John Calvin. 1536

This unfaithfulness is the testimony of the history of God's people. Israel's exodus, David's life, Israel's captivity, and on throughout the time of our calling. There is no good news until we see the bad news. History shows us Prosperity amongst the people of God has invariably led to coldness of heart and salvation by works. It's hard to be holy when we have all we want in the world. Prosperity has the danger that it can isolated us from the spiritual separation that sets us apart for the exclusive use of God.

“In sum, our entire soul, entangled in the enticements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on earth. In order to resist this wickedness, the Lord teaches His people about the emptiness of this present life through constant lessons in suffering. Thus, so that His people don't promise themselves lofty and untroubled peace in this life, He often permits them to be troubled and harassed by wars, uprisings, robberies, and other injuries. So that they don't gawk with too much greediness at frail and tottering riches, or rest on those they already possess, He reduces them to poverty, or at least restricts them to very little wealth, through exile, barrenness of land, fire, or other means. So that they aren't enticed too much by the advantages of married life, He lets them be frustrated by the offenses of their spouse, humbles them by the wickedness of their children, or afflicts them with the loss of a child. However, there are times when God deals more gently with His people. Yet even when

He does, so that they don't become puffed up with pride or inflated with self-confidence, He sets before their eyes disease and danger to teach them how unstable and fleeting are those good things that come to men, who are subject to death. *'It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.'*
Psalm 119:71 John Calvin

'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 own salvation with fear and trembling.'
Phil 2:12

'Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.'
1 Cor 10:12

We find it hard to get the idea that God uses suffering for our good

We cannot love the world and have God as Father.

“THERE'S NO MIDDLE ground between these two things: either earth must become worthless to us, or we must remain bound by the chains of extravagant love for it. If, then, we care for eternity, we must make every effort to free ourselves from those chains. Of course, this present life has many attractions that entice us, many displays of comfort, charm, and sweetness. So that we are not enchanted, we must be continually pulled away from such temptations. What would become of us if we enjoyed perpetual good fortune and delight, since even regular stings of misfortune fail to awaken us to proper reflection on our misery? Man's life is like a vapour or shadow.” John Calvin

Our Father also uses suffering to conform the faithful children to Christlikeness. They have received spiritual life from God to be transformed into the image of Christ. In this they are encouraged as they learn not to live according to the flesh of Adam, but to live spiritually, submitted in obedience to the leading of the Spirit.

This is not the message of many who treat God as some sort of father Christmas, who only wants people to be happy in the world. The real God has judged the world as sinful, and is looking to save some in holiness and truth as they are called to forsake the world and themselves, to be born again by God to live spiritual lives dedicated to live only for Jesus who died on their behalf.

If everyone was comfortable in the world according to the flesh of Adam, no one would see the need to repent and obey God, and no one who was saved by the Spirit would see the need to continue to put the memories of the flesh life of Adam to death and grow in the reality of the righteousness of Christ. A comfortable heart is the enemy of the cross that we need to take up in order to enter heaven. The more we look to heaven the less we are comfortable in the world. Suffering is God's tool to loosen people's grip on the world and the thinking of sinful mankind.

The Holy Spirit gives understanding to the chosen children of God, so they can see the world the way God sees. And as a result, they will witness to Jesus Christ and make disciples, teaching them to obey His commands.

Have we got eyes to see, or are we still comfortable in the world?

Why was the Father pleased to put His Son to death? Because both Father and Son could see the benefits for the chosen from eternity past, and the Father would be glorified in the Son. The Father leads us to our cross so we can be glorified in His Son.

If life is going along just fine, and we are comfortable, and some seriously disagreeable situation comes upon us; and we cry out because we want God to fix it, it is very likely we don't know the Lord well enough, and we are strangers to the idea of needing to live by the cross that separates us from the world and temporal things. As with Christ, the Father is all we need.

If we have no cross of suffering, we haven't seriously begun the work of our sanctification, for it is by many tribulations that we are able to put to death that which is earthly in us so we can put on the holiness of God in Christ. All the suffering that has been prepared for God's children is designed for their holiness in Christ. The closer we identify with His cross, the more we will suffer as one who is no stranger to sorrow and mourning.

As we identify with Christ and long for heaven, we will be broken by the knowledge of our own sin, and we will be broken hearted with the sinfulness of the world that continually wounds those whom we love, and also those who are strangers to the Spirit of Christ. On a personal level, we can expect to be closely introduced to all manner of suffering as we abide in the love of Christ. The Lord God is using the world as a refining fire for the good of those He has

chosen and given to Christ Jesus. This is the plan for our spiritual transformation, it is known as the Providence of God.

'Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or trouble, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Just as it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We were regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Rom 8:35-39

If we desire holiness before comfort and peace, we have obeyed Jesus Christ who told us to take up our cross in order to follow Him into eternal life. *'And 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 his life for My sake, this is the one who will save it.'*

Luke 9:23-24

The life that Jesus offers those who will follow Him to glory is self-sacrificing, holy and eternal. Anything we experience in the world that is contrary to His life will cause us to suffer, often with many tears. Because eternal life is down the narrow road to the cross. *"For the gate is narrow and the way is constricted that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

Matt 7:14

Providence is God's will

Providence presupposes God exerts Sovereign rule over all creation. Providence means we give thanks in all things we encounter in life, because the Father knows what is best for our growth in holiness with Christ. Providence is God's training we need in our self-denial so we live by faith in Him and for the benefit of others. Providence is the ruling and supreme governor of world events. There are three things in providence: God's absolute foreknowing, God's absolute determining, and God's absolute directing all things to their proper outcomes according to His will. Whatever things are working their way out in the world, God sets them working. What some call chance is nothing else but the result of God's divine providence working in His creation.

We need to learn to adore providence for it is the hand of God for blessing and judgment. It is either His hand working for the good of those who love Him in every situation, or it is bringing conviction and judgement on those who fail to honour Him as God over all things. Providence has an inescapable influence upon all events on earth, be they natural occurrences, or the result of human activity. God's providence weaves the daily strands of every person's experience and makes up the whole tapestry of our personal story. Providence is God's plan, and He has planned His work perfectly and continues to fulfil His plan for us in Christ.

'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 brothers and sisters; 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 8:28-30

The image of His Son we follow we need to see begins on a bloody cross. *'But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'* Phil 3:7-11

The problem is, we have substituted this faithful life of a true disciple for a Christianity without a cross, we want a comfortable arm chair and peace instead of mourning over our sin, we want pleasure before considering the pain of identifying with Christ.

The church has often followed false prophets who have declared we can have heaven and earth, don't worry, be happy. Christianity today is often offered as a panacea, a solution or remedy for all difficulties or diseases.

We have to be aware of false repentance

There is a false repentance promoted by misusing the word of God so that we are free to please ourselves. For instance: *'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires, take the water of life without cost.'*

Rev 22:17

Taking this verse out of context means the repentance becomes redundant and obedience is optional. But Rev 22:17 doesn't annul Luke 13:3 *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."* Or Luke 9:23 *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."* And *"the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

Acts 5:32

Those who offer eternal life without the cross and the need for obedience are like clouds without water, they have the promising appearance of being able to satisfy those who thirst after God, but they can't deliver that which supports the holiness required for anyone to stand in the presence of God. Anyone offering hope, without the cross of Christ, and the obedience that demands self-denial is working for your death, not life in Christ.

When Jesus was tempted by satan the second time, He was tempted to forget the cross that awaited Him, and was offered all the gratification of the world if He would change His mind about His divine Destiny. *'And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."' Jesus replied to him, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"*

Luke 4:5-8

We are regularly given the opportunity to swallow the second temptation. Happiness in the world as a way of life is separation from God. For Jesus to redeem the world from the penalty of sin, He had to die to all hope in the world and die on a cross. And we also. The only way to get to heaven is by our cross. Our cross is our key to heaven.

The only way we can enjoy the sacrifice Christ has endured for us to be redeemed, is to obey Him and take up our cross and follow His example. If we

will suffer with Him, He will come to live in us, so that we can tolerate our own crucifixion as we are joined to Him by the power of the Spirit of God. *"I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you."* John 14:18

By His eternal presence we are comforted by His love for the loss of anything that distressed us in the world which is perishing. *'For this reason I bend 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 self, 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 width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.'*

Eph 3:14-19

With all this in mind, we have holiness work to do

'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 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. Do all things without complaining or arguments; 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, holding firmly the word of life, so that on the day of Christ I can take pride because I did not run in vain nor labour in vain.'

Phil 2:12-16

There is no way of avoiding our work of sanctification if we are indeed in Christ and God is in us. So we *'Do all things without grumbling or disputing.'*

Phil 2:14 ESV

Who has the right to argue with God? The flesh will be seen in muttering, murmuring, grudging, grumbling, and complaining. The flesh will endeavor to reason with God to correct Him to avoid suffering.

God's work is always effective

He is not without the power to fulfil His promises. So, if the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:25-27 sees no fruit in someone's life, then they probably weren't chosen by the Father to be given to the Son.

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 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. And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:25-27

And if there is no abiding fruit, there is a real problem with our connection.

"I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15:5-6

If we have not died with Christ, we cannot live with 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 those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognise no one by the flesh; even though we have known Christ by the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.' 2 Cor 5:14-17

The end is near

In the meantime, while the world is fallen, it is still subject to the inescapable sovereign rule of God. His rule is administered through His irrefutable and perfect process of Providence, by which He orders the details of all things, so that He works all things in the universe to ultimately reflect His glory and majesty. This means what man may intend for evil, God uses for His own good and glory. In this ordering of all things through His rightful process, He applies His judgement on evil, and at the same time, works all things for the good of His chosen people. And His judgement is sure

"The Lord will receive His faithful people into the peace of His kingdom, wipe every tear from their eyes, clothe them in garments of glory and gladness, feed with the indescribable sweetness of His own pleasures, raise them to fellowship in His own lofty heights, and at last grant them participation in His own happiness. (Isa. 25:8; Rev 7:17) But He will cast the wicked, who have

flourished on earth, into utter disgrace. He will turn their pleasures into suffering, their laughter and delight into tears and hissing. He will disturb their tranquility with pains of conscience. He will punish their self-indulgence with unquenchable fire.” John Calvin

When God decides the time is right, for the final redemption of the world, the eradication of all suffering will come with the return of Christ in final judgement of holiness. Will we be ready with our cross of identification with Him.

We have a need for diligence

The truth is, we often prefer happiness to holiness. We would rather seek comfort to confronting our fleshliness. Our prayers are more concerned with God fixing the tribulations He has allowed in our lives, rather than being willing to use them for the urgent task of putting to death the flesh that remains in us. We need to get our minds fixed on the Spirit so that we can maximise our transformation into the image of Christ.

But sometimes people are attached to the church on their own account, so that the love of Christ, and love for Christ is not the most important component of their existence on earth. If we are not devoted to following His example of self-sacrifice, and willing to observe all He has commanded, we are in danger of being self-deceived.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter”

Matt 7:21

There is only one way to be sure our path is to heaven

‘Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”

John 14:6

Jesus shows us salvation is only possible through taking up our cross, and by our submission in obedience to Him, we are to trust in God alone, not the world. This means living a life of being crucified daily so that the natural life we desire in the world would be put to death and the divine life would be more fully expressed.

Nowhere does God promise us a rose garden. In fact, the New Testament reveals that we will have to be committed to overcoming adversity in the same way as the Lord Jesus. *"The one who endures to the end will be saved."*

Matt 24:13

We need to willingly face the providence of God that brings the trials of life with great anticipation, because they have the potential to make us more like Christ in character and behaviour. 'we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'

Rom 5:3-5

'For I 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

As our determined obedience and trust increase, so too does our ability to perceive the difference between happiness and God's Holiness, and this brings with it increased suffering and longing for heaven while living in the world.

"In the end, we rightly profit from the discipline of the cross when we learn that this life, considered in itself, is troubled, turbulent, attended by many miseries, and never entirely happy, and that whatever things we consider good in this life are uncertain, passing, vain, and spoiled because they're mixed with many evils. And from this we likewise conclude that we should expect and hope for nothing other than trouble in this life, and that we should set our eyes on heaven where we expect our crown. So, indeed, we ought to realise that our souls will never seriously rise to the desire and contemplation of the future life until they've been soaked in scorn for this life." John Calvin

Holiness trusts in God regardless of what the world may be doing in our area of life. Jesus Christ is the life of those God has given Him. Obey the Lord Jesus and abide in Him.

"HOWEVER, THE CONTEMPT for this present life that believers should cultivate, shouldn't produce hatred of this life or ingratitude toward God. This life, though bursting at the seams with every kind of misery, should still be considered one of God's blessings that shouldn't be dismissed. We're guilty of ingratitude to God if we fail to recognise something of divine in this life.

Indeed, believers in particular see evidence of divine kindness in this life, since everything in it has been designed to further their own salvation. Before He openly presents to us our inheritance of eternal glory, God desires to declare Himself our Father through smaller proofs. Such proofs are the good gifts He daily bestows on us. If then this life helps us understand God's goodness, should we turn up our noses at it as if it didn't contain even a crumb of advantage to us? Therefore, it's right that we clothe ourselves in this attitude and affection that we place this life among those gifts of divine kindness that shouldn't be disdained." John Calvin

Why would we need the God of all comfort if we expect Him to fix all our troubles?

'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

The next time we pray for God to fix something in our lives, we need to understand what His fix really is. His fix is that He loves us with His fullness, and with His mighty and glorious abiding presence, so that can we love Him and trust that He knows what He is doing. Thank God for all things and rejoice that your name is in His book of life.

Our life in the kingdom of God begins and ends with the God of holiness. *"Just 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

Abide in Him

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Our life in the kingdom of God begins and ends with God.

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.’

1 Pet 1:16-20

Salvation isn’t out of our earthly troubles, but into the heart of God in our troubles. He is using our troubles to drive us back into intimate fellowship with Him.

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

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cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

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