

CORAM DEO

“WITH GOD”

1. Christianity is true intimacy with God 1 May 2018
2. How Big is your God 11 April 2019
3. The Love of God is Light in His people 22 April 2022
4. Live the Christ life 36 July 2018
5. Spiritual Light is having God inside 50 Aug 2021
6. God of all comfort 65 June 2017
7. Christ is our life 74 July 2018
8. God’s proven cure for anxiety 86 June 2021
9. Fear not God gives us Himself 109 June 2021
10. Love is with God in us 131 April 2023

Christianity is true intimacy with the God of Love

Becoming a Christian is unrestrained intimacy with God through repentance and obedience to all He has commanded for those who would follow Jesus Christ. Becoming a Christian also means unrestricted engagement with people who belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ. In love God calls us to love Him. *'We love, because He first loved us.'*

1 John 4:19

Jesus didn't come to tell us to get people saved, He came to make disciples who would be intimate with Him and serve Him by taking part in His mission on earth. However, for some time the message in many churches has been, *'If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'* (Rom 10:9) But this is only part of the truth.

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples who will obey Him. *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Matt 28:18-20

Jesus makes it very clear that those who believe in Him were to become His disciples especially to follow His example. *"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him."*

John 12: 25-26

Getting saved from sin and being comfortable in the world as we were before wasn't what Jesus had in mind. What He is calling us to do is to put obedience to Him and His mission before everything we have in the world, including ourselves. If we want to love our life in the world and have priorities other than doing what He did, we cannot follow Him intimately and continue to eternal life. The word of God says, *'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.'*

1 John 2:15

Confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord can only have any meaning when we have denied our life in the world to truly follow His example of self sacrifice in order to receive eternal life in heaven. To believe in Jesus, means obeying Jesus. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* (John 3:36) *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."* John 14:15

According to Jesus we cannot just become Christians because we think it's a good idea. We cannot become Christian just because we grow up in a Christian family. We cannot become Christian because we pass some sort of religious examination. Jesus has told us that we become Christian only when we love Him enough to give up all we hold precious to follow Him through repentance, (Luke 5:32) by a rebirth by the Spirit (John 3:3, 7) and in following the example He set for us by the empowered of His Spirit. Rom 8:11-14

Those who want to claim their conversion as something they have achieved will be disappointed when Christ comes again, then they will find that they have nothing but their own idea of salvation; for in order to gain new life in Christ we must die to the old life we lived in the flesh to be born of the Spirit in order to please God. Rom 8:5-8

Becoming a Christian is not the goal to be achieved in this life; it is only the beginning of a completely new life in love with God. Conversion is the beginning of a process of spiritual transformation into the image of the Son of God. It is not the end of things as if we have arrived, but just the beginning of God working in us to transform us into the image of His Son. Many people see conversion as the goal to be achieved, so after an initial phase of adjustment, they happily coast along in their new life of faith. However coasters are not faithful to Christ because the goal for them was completed when they decided for themselves what was required.

Instead of understanding Christianity as disciplined discipleship that continues to develop over time, they believe that they have already arrived at the place where they are pleasing to God.

Telling people the only requirement for becoming a Christian to receive eternal life is calling Jesus Christ Lord is untrue, it cuts out the need for

repentance, it doesn't require leaving the world behind to follow Christ through the narrow gate, (Matt 7:13-14) and it fails to explain that the only way to have the life Jesus Christ offers is to deny ourselves and take out our cross to follow Him. Luke 9:23

As a result of giving the wrong message about what salvation requires, we have assisted the work of the prince of darkness by disobeying our Lord by including anyone into the church who will say Christ is Lord, but who have no real intention to bow down in obedience and follow His example of a sacrificial life. If we offer Christian life without the requirements Jesus demands, we have not understood what Jesus taught and we set people up to think they are saved because they can now join a church and coast along in life as long as they adjust some of their behaviour.

True salvation is intimacy with God

True salvation doesn't allow for passive passengers who sit down and wait for a bus to take them to heaven. Real salvation requires that we are born again by God to live with God in love. Being born again enquires we repent of our rebellion and disobedience and turn away from the life we once lived to receive God's forgiveness, and then we need to live by the Spirit of God who will take over absolute dominion in our lives to teach us and guide us into the fullness of intimate life with Jesus Christ. For this to be effective we must offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. *'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

True Christians are chosen by God

"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) "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt 22:14

'But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.' 2 Thess 2:13

The chosen are called by God

'Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.' 2 Tim 1:8-9

'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.' Eph 1:18

If we choose, we are doing our own work

Our salvation is not the result of our own efforts, or our choosing to be Christians because we want to go to heaven. Getting saved from sin and death is all God's work. *'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.'* Eph 2:8-9

When God calls and chooses His children, He does so by the conviction of our sin with the need for heartfelt repentance to be rid of self and the world in order to gain new life in Christ. (Rom 6:4-6) "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal." John 12:25

Those who have chosen Christ for themselves without repentance and willingly dying to self want to coast along as Christians, but they face serious danger. They are behaving like the truck driver who relies on gravity to get him down the hill. This is what we used to call being in angel gear. Angel gear is forbidden because it can have deadly consequences. Angel gear is driving with the vehicle in neutral without

due care and attention that will often result in death. Coasting along is costly, you can meet the angels on the way.

When we see a sign saying, "Steep decent, trucks use low gear," we have to understand that we need positive control, because there are dangerous turns ahead. The most dangerous roads on earth require our full attention. Walking in the world as a true Christian is a dangerous road.

Being distracted from the path of Christ is very dangerous. Saving effort in driving in angel gear could mean not arriving. Occasional attractions are deadly distractions. Successful driving requires the vehicle to be encouraged in a positive gear for better control, limiting the possibility of *catastrophe*. The proper use of defensive driving skills, mean anticipating dangerous unexpected events.

The same truth is applicable for the Christian walk. Complacency kills. Faith follows where our focus is fixed, being distracted by the scenery of the world could mean running off the road. Behaving as unbelievers would live will certainly place us in grave danger.

Human existence is not a walk in the park with God in the Garden of Eden. When sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam, the power of darkness entered the world and changed all the sign posts. Jesus came into the world as the true way to God to do battle with the powers of darkness. All those who are called by God to follow Jesus continue in His work of love for all.

Christianity is spiritual conscription into God's army for spiritual warfare with the power of darkness. A soldier on active duty doesn't get involved with worldly things, he continues to practice combat drills for engaging and confronting the enemy in battle. A good soldier doesn't get caught up in the affairs of the world. 2 Tim 2:4

The soldier on active duty has all his senses alerted for signs of the enemy. Even when he is eating, his weapon is at hand. The soldier on active duty is always alert, even when not on search and destroy operations he is on guard duty to prevent surprise attacks.

A lack of contact with the enemy today doesn't mean he has gone home to leave us in peace. The battle continues tomorrow. The enemy prowls around looking for people to devour. 1 Pet 5:8

Life in Christ means there are no days off. The nature of the spiritual war means if we are not vigilant we will be unable to walk as Jesus walked and fall back on living according to the world and the flesh.

We sometimes go into neutral gear as Christians and find ourselves living like the unsaved. However being changed into His image is ongoing and requires us to be vigilant all the time. We must always be careful, watchful, and ready to deny fleshly attitudes in us. If we are coasting along we can run off the road far too easily.

Real spiritual life requires real effort

The process of growing in holiness begins with the surface dirt; then we continue to get to the ingrained hidden decay of the heart and mind to root it out. Many are comfortable with surface cleaning and then sit down and take it easy as if the whole work of God in them is complete.

Christian life requires determined effort in resisting the urge of the flesh to stay the same as worldly sinners. Real spiritual life means the Spirit of God will work at preventing God's children compromising their faith, so He will disturb the disciple so much we will have to seek our true calling in God. *'No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'* (1 John 3:9) This does not mean we will not stumble sometimes, but it does mean we will not go on doing what is not pleasing to God.

A life of coasting along may be a comfort to some who are fleshly, but it denies our calling to grow up into Christ. (Eph 4:15) The flesh life only wants to coast along by resisting the call of the Spirit to draw nearer to God. The flesh is happy with remaining immature and avoids true intimacy with God and shuns any actual involvement in the spiritual battle.

Spiritual maturity requires intimacy

We who are saved by the gracious love of God should naturally desire intimacy with God, but the closer we get to Him the more we see what shouldn't be in His presence. However, even as we struggle with our short comings, we can still experience the fullness of His love encouraging us to continue to put away the flesh life.

Real intimacy with God requires absolute transparency that can only happen when we are willing to surrender all so the Spirit of God can reveal what we need to deal with that does not represent Christ. Under the Spirit's leading we are able to deal with one hidden defect at a time. God loves His children and calls all His people to become mature in their faith by confronting everything in their lives which is inconsistent with the life of Christ.

The pursuit of holy intimacy is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and we cannot please ourselves. *'For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.'* Gal 5:17

Many want to take "*you may not do the things you please*" to mean we cannot overcome the flesh in this spiritual war, that we have no power to please God. But the verse 16 says we can defeat the flesh. *'But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.'* (Gal 5:16) But walking in the Spirit cannot be achieved by coasting along. Walking in the Spirit requires discipline and determination. Walking in the Spirit will mean we will have to confront our inner ugliness we want to hide from the world, and sometimes try to hide from God.

The secret to intimacy's success is walking in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit means we work hard at putting to death that which is earthly in us. Col 3:5

Intimacy with God means trusting Him

Christian intimacy depends on looking to God for what we need. When we look to the world, to the difficulty we have and the people who have let us down, and we feel hard done by, we show we haven't understood that when people are not as good as we would like it is because they are not looking to God and we are not looking to God either.

If we look to God He will keep us in perfect peace. (Isa 26:3) The failing of people requires understand and mercy, for they cannot be more than the level of their intimacy with God allows. If we want more intimacy with God He wants more of us committed to Him.

If we are to walk with God, more of God's life in us is required to be revealed to the world from our intimacy. But if we are complaining,

angry, worldly, greedy, disrespectful, demanding and unforgiving we are living in a way we should expect from those who have little or no intimacy with God. Those who know God's mercy should have His heart for the sinner. *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."*

Matt 5:7

As Christ suffered for sins without complaining, so His disciples should suffer and not complain because we follow His example. *'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.'*

Phil 2:5-6

'And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Luke 9:23-24

Disciples who have died to self have no reason to complain; in love they now look to God for all their needs.

God loves them with an everlasting love; He has shared the glory of Christ Jesus with them by exalting them with His life and His mission. (John 17:22) He will give them a crown if they overcome the world and sins temptation. The cross they carry in self denial for the benefit of others on earth is not a burden but an honour for their exaltation in heaven. God's love is sufficient for all our needs. Eternal life above requires our death to self below.

True intimacy is not dead religion

The difference between life and death is between those who are being changed into Christ likeness, or those having a religious imitation of their own making.

The Father's greatest desire is to transform all who are His into the image of Christ. We can know He is working when we feel shame and a sense of betrayal when we behave in a way that is not consistent with the life of Christ.

If we are not quickly moved to confess our failure to people we have wronged in word or deed, then God is not working in us and we have been mistaken for thinking we have His Spirit working in us, for this is the Spirit's undertaking.

When we are driven to our knees in confession for our sinful behaviour we can know He forgives us, but we can also give thanks that our Father loves us so much He will not want us to remain immature and fleshly. If we are not looking to imitate the love of Christ in all we say and do then we are either unsaved or we are coasting along thinking we have arrived.

If we don't hate what we see of the world and the flesh life in us, we are happy to be in the world and have not died to self to live in Christ.

If anger, resentment, pride and self interest are not shaming us, they are not being put off in our hearts in order to put on Christ. If we are the first thought in our lives, then there is no cross of self denial and we are not following Christ. For if Christ is in us, He is all we need and the one we desire to please more than life itself. If we think we have made good progress in putting on Christ, we will be very much aware every time we think, speak or act in a way that is not like Him. Intimacy with God brings brilliant clarity of mind to the presence of the knowledge of His love, and also to our failure to love as He loves.

It is only as we see our imperfections as He does that we can repent and move closer to Him. No pain, no gain. The Christian life that is only marked by outward appearance and claims of devotion is far from the power of God, for God works from the inside out. Religious devotion on the outside may only reveal a pile of dead men's bones on the inside. Cruisers are snoozers.

Because our Father doesn't want His children to remain immature or for anyone in the world to be lost; if the spiritual well-being of others doesn't move us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice for their support, then the Spirit of God is not working His love in us.

Everyone who is truly in Christ works together with Him for the benefit of all, in the body of Christ, the church, and also for the salvation of the world. No one is called by God to just drift along according to their own desires. We are either in Christ Jesus to do His work or we are in the

world to please ourselves. God calls us to be His spiritual children following the example of Christ.

The devil offers us the easy way. So even in our Christian service, he promotes the easy way of not taking up our cross. Instead of imitating Christ, we have the easier message of the world, that all are welcomed in the church, because our God is a God of love who accepts all who will come, no stipulations required. The lie is that there is no need to suffer with Christ, He has done it all for us.

We must guard against taking the easy comfortable way of the world. God calls on us to resist the devil and the temptation to compromise His truth in our daily lives by remaining intimate with Him by obeying His word and trusting in Him for all we need.

If we are faithful we will overcome the world by the power of His Spirit and Jesus will reward us. Jesus prayed to the Father. "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

Abiding in Christ is to remain in His intimate love by keeping His commandments.

How big is your God?

When we are little children we feel very comfortable in the hands of our fathers when fear and uncertainty come upon us. Many children know the calming security of being held in the strong presence of our earthly fathers who appear to us to be sometimes larger than life. The level of peace and assurance of safety we can have with our earthly father depends on the qualities we can see displayed in him and how he secures us in his love.

Good earthly fathers will do whatever is necessary to protect and provide for their sons and daughters. If that is true of our earthly fathers, how much more true is it of the Lord our God? Our eternal Father who cares for us is all powerful; nothing can stand in the way of His providence and eternal protection.

If we are going to be secure in the hands of our God and Saviour, it would be helpful for us to know something of His glory and majesty, what He is like, for we live in His presence, even if we don't know Him the way we need to in order to know the security of His presence.

The level of our peace in any situation God allows in our lives is determined by the quality of the vision we have about the true nature of God and what He is doing to keep us separated for Himself as His precious possession. If our vision of God is inadequate, our peace will be inadequate, and unable to keep us from giving in to anxiety and fear when the tribulations of life come our way.

A faithful father is a giant amongst men, but he is not big enough to replace God.

To know real peace we need the real God

From the first days when man walked with God in the Garden of Eden, until he was removed from the presence of the Almighty by the corruption of his sin in disobedience to God, God has not changed. Man was removed because God is so extraordinarily Holy and perfect in His purity and power that it is impossible for sinful man to see God's face and live.

Exod 33:20

In His majestic splendour as creator of all things, He was far removed from the ordinary things of the world that had been defiled by sin. In His perfect Holy brilliance He was unapproachable light, (1 Tim 6:16) for in Him there was no darkness that comes from sin. 1 John 1:5

'For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared a great King over all the earth.' Psalm 47:2

The Almighty God of all creation may be far removed from the gaze of man, but He is intimately involved in the lives of men.

"It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him." Dan 2:21-22

In His uniqueness He is entirely different in nature as the Creator of all things; He is unknowable by man because He is so unlike anything He created. In His uniqueness nothing that is created could represent Him or contain His fullness or be His dwelling place. *'But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him?'* 2 Chron 2:6

As Creator of all that is made, He has the power to overcome the normal rules He has established for His creation, so that what was not in existence could be established according to His will, and what was made can be undone as if it never existed.

As the Creator of the unending Universe, He stands above all as the only judge of what is acceptable and perfect in His sight. He alone can decide what should remain or be destroyed. He alone is the measure of holiness and truth that is needed to come close to Him.

As the only true and perfect God, He is unrivalled in His heavenly power. It is therefore a fearful thing to even consider standing in His consuming Holy presence.

As the Lord of all and the Creator of all He can do whatever He likes whenever He likes. He can see the beginning and the end at the same time, even from before we were and after we have gone. He knows all

things, nothing escapes His knowledge. *'The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.'* (Prov 16:9) He directs the activities of men without their knowledge. He establishes kingdoms and replaces them with another. Dan 2:21

The best man can do is to see something of His majestic glory and power in the world He has created. *'For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.'* Rom 1:20

Since God is at work in His creation and involved in the activity of men for His glory, man can see the hand of God in the way He upholds His purpose through divine providence. *'Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.'* Psalm 135:6-7

'Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep O LORD, You preserve man and beast.' Psalm 36:6

God in the Son reveals God the Father

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

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

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

Now, today, God reveals Himself to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ came to live amongst us as the Son of the Most High God, He revealed the heavenly Father to the world as the God who could be known personally through faith in the Son.

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

Jesus the Christ of God came as the Saviour of mankind to make it possible for all who believed in Him to have a relationship with the unapproachable holiness that is the heart of God. In order to make it possible for us to know God personally, the Lord Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice for our sins so we don't have to die. In giving up His life for us on a cross, He bore the judgement we deserve and died in our place, showing us the mercy and undeserving love that came from His divine nature.

The Christ of God has given us access to the presence of the Almighty Father through His sacrifice and washing with His blood. *'And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.'*
Col 1:20

Jesus came to deliver those who believe in Him out of the darkness of ignorance about God into the intimacy and light of His own glory. (John 8:12) In this way He would set His followers apart from the world and give them the indwelling Spirit of God as their sanctifying power and comforter while they live on earth.
Acts 2:38

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

He 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.

The Lord Jesus Christ has called all who would know God personally to follow Him and follow His example as they walk together with God as His church. This fellowship of Communion is maintained by looking to obey Jesus Christ who is the Lord of the church.

"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

Those in Christ have fellowship with God and each other. *"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete."*

1 John 1:3-4

The presence of the Son is the desire of the heart of every true believer. *"Christ dwelling in the heart by faith."* (Eph 3:17) This is the promise of the Lord for those who keeps His Word. *"We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."*

John 14:23

This presence of God in our heart is the secret of all peace and hope, joy, and comfort. The faithful have within them the only One who is *able to save to the uttermost*, and will not allow His work to be overthrown. The broken heart, in which Christ dwells, though it may be weak, is one which the devil shall not own.

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

God is the Spirit

In the exact same way we bow down to the Father we must also bow down before the Spirit of God who lives in us so that we can be transformed into the image of Christ. (Rom 8:28) There is no division in the One God of all who is known as the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit of God has revealed the Father and the Son. The will of God is the will of the Father, Son and Spirit. The Spirit is also the unapproachable holiness and fearful burning power those at Mt Sinai were warned not to approach at the time of the giving of the Law.

By the work of the Spirit, the unapproachable God of glory has now become approachable; the unknowable truth of God is now knowable by the same Spirit. The invisible magnitude of God is now made visible in Christ through the Spirit. The power of the God of creation is found to reside eternally in the Spirit.

The eternal Son promised He would place the same Spirit of God in those who obeyed Him. (John 15:26, Acts 5:32) The Holy Spirit will dwell in the believer making them temples of God. (1 Cor 6:19) The children who are *led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* Rom 8:14

The peace of God is dependent on submission to the Spirit's leading and teaching. *"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."* John 14:26

The Holy Spirit would make it possible for those who follow Jesus to overcome sin and temptation by His indwelling power because the children will walk by the Spirit, (Gal 5:16) so that they can be called the holy children of God. The Spirit is the very God who is also Father and the Son and works to fulfil the plans of God and therefore He must be accorded the same spiritual worship of obedience in reverence and awe.

If we are willing to be more sincere in putting to death the flesh that hinders the maturity of our spirit, the Spirit of God will give us a greater vision of God so we can enjoy His blessings the way He has prepared for us. *"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* 1 Thess 5:23

True Knowledge of God has real value.

Abiding in His presence turns us from sin

"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" Gen. 39:9

If we remain humble before the Lord our God, remembering He is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings, we can rejoice in all things because we know He will fulfil all His precious promises in our lives. Our reverence in His presence will help keep us from giving into temptation. Being in God's presence motivates us to pursue holiness with a spiritual mindset. For the Lord our God has said: *"you shall be holy for I am holy."* (Lev 20:26; 1 Pet 1:16) *'Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.'* Heb 12:14

If we are unable to stop from sinning and repeatedly do what we don't want to do, then we haven't died to sin, and our God isn't big enough to give us a way out. *'Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.'* 1 Cor10:12-13

The mind set on the flesh instead of the Spirit wants a little god who has no power to stop us from doing what we want to do, but will still let us into heaven when we die.

Does the injunction for us to keep from sin have no possibility of success? Does God's word have no power? *'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.'* Rom 8:13

The Spirit gives us power to put sinful deeds to death. *'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 8:6-8

If our minds are fixed on God then we won't be preoccupied with the flesh, so we can be led by the Spirit as children of God. If we are led by the Spirit, we will know what it is to have the peace of God. *'So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'* Rom 8:12-14

It is obvious that if our minds are set on the flesh, we cannot please God; so therefore it follows that the mind set on the Spirit is able to please God, because of the power of the Spirit we can keep His commandments by the Spirit of God who works in us. Phil 2:13

Trusting in God gives endurance in times of trouble

Trusting in His authority over our lives will mean we can endure whatever He allows to come to us because we know He intends it for our greatest spiritual good. (Rom 8:28) Living in the presence of God means we can know His comfort in times of calamity. *"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You."* Isa 26:3

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

Peter thought he had faith to walk with God on the water, until he took his eyes off Christ and looked at the waves. Thank God that refocus means rescue. Matt 14:22-23

'God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.' Psalm 46:1-3

This is the only way to have peace in a troubled world. 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

We should not take God for granted

God is never to be taken for granted as if we are somehow worthy of His service because we are entitled by birth or some earthly privilege. We should not make the same mistake the Jews of Jesus' day made.

While the Lord Jesus may call us friends as He reveals the loving heart of God to us, and affords us the privileges of His affection, He is never our friend, He always remains our saviour God, and we continue to obediently work out our salvation in awe and reverence because it is God who is at work in us to transform us into the image of Christ. Our God always remains our Judge who will repay all for the way they live in His creation.

Jesus has made the fearful God of the Old Testament known to us, and He has made it possible for us to be reconciled to God, but we should never forget He is the same God now as the unapproachable God He was at the Mountain of Sinai.

Don't be deceived by worldly presumptions that somehow God is our servant. God is always the sovereign God of all creation who decides what is best for everyone. His will is that everyone become like Christ who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28) While the flesh that remains in our understanding is looking for heaven on earth, the Spirit of God is preparing us for heaven where God dwells in glory. As our God He should never be treated as if He is required to do our bidding. He never becomes someone who makes us happy in the world.

While He makes it possible for us to walk with God by giving us His Holy Spirit, He remains unlike us in His majestic glory and holiness, so we have to remain in an attitude of repentance, always showing

reverence and honour to the God of all glory in all we say and do. 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.

How big is your God?

Is your God big enough to keep you in peace regardless of the world and the darkness? If your God is as big as you could ever imagine, your God is still only a little bit of the size that He actually is. God is always enough because He is beyond the expanse of all things, including our minds.

Our peace depends on the size of our God. We are told that *the mind that is fixed on Him He will keep in perfect peace.* (Isa 26:3) But our peace is determined by having a correct understanding of who God is. Having our minds fixed on anything less than the truth about our God and Saviour will mean anxiety and stress will follow us all the days of our lives. The better our vision of His glory, the more peace and joy we can have as we rest in the love of our heavenly Father, regardless of the tribulations on earth.

Each of us has just enough of God as we want, how big is your God? If you don't have growing freedom from sin and the fullness of joy and peace, don't blame God, He is always enough when we die to self and live for Him. Gal 2:20; 5:16

Can it be we have ordained for ourselves a little god so we can indulge the flesh while thinking somehow He can't see what's going on so we can escape His judgement? If we lack the peace of Christ, our God is not big enough. If we live in anxiousness we are not being led into the truth by the Spirit; or we may not have repented from doing our own thing so we can be born of the Spirit and be filled with His understanding and enabling power. If our God is big enough for us, we will know,

"The peace of God which transcends all understanding." Phil 4:7

If we are not prepared to call Jesus a liar, and claim that God is out to deceive us by offering us impossible peace in this life, then there is something terribly wrong with our understanding if we lack the peace He has made available for all His disciples.

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

If our God is big enough to cope with our lives, and He definitely is, 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

Abide in Him; He is well and truly big enough to be able to get us home to live with the Lord of all creation so we can share in His glory.

The love of God is light in His people in the world

'In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 1 John 4:10

The word Propitiation is a reminder that God is opposed to everything that is evil because of His holiness, and that His opposition to sin may be described as His 'wrath' or 'anger.' Propitiation is concerned about appeasing His wrath in order to satisfy His righteousness, thus enabling Him to justify those that turn to Him in faith. This wrath is put away from us only by the atoning work of Christ in taking God's wrath on Himself as our punishment of death, so that in Him we can have life in repentance before God. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* John 17:3

Christ's Propitiation isn't for everyone without distinction, the removal of the wrath of God onto Jesus is only effectual for the truly repentant soul. And the repentant must not consider His salvation as something easy to gain.

Jesus tells us that in order to follow Him we need to be aware of the cost and be willing to surrender all our life to Him in order to follow Him. His example of this surrender is *"And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."* Luke 9:23-24

The cross we share with Christ is the instrument of our suffering in the world as we are separated unto God in holiness and truth for His glory.

'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

Jesus goes on to clarify what is needed to follow Him.

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.” Luke 14:26-33

This willingness to count the cost as necessary to be reconciled to God is a life of repentance, it is not just done once, but it is a life of learning to identify what is not of God and put it away so we can live for Him in a life of trust and obedience so He can live in us as Lord God Almighty.

We are not left to manage this life by ourselves, God provides all we need as He works His plan according to His will. Where does the commitment to live for Christ come from? It comes from the indwelling Spirit of Christ who is now our life as He compels true believers to obey because of the effectual work of God that produces the Fruit of Christ in all who abide in Him as the only giver of life.

“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. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” Ezek 35:25-27

The life God gives to the repentant soul is the indwelling Spirit who always works in order to demonstrate compliance to His will through

obedience. The Holy Spirit's life in the believer is effective and produces the fruit of righteousness. For us to live in growing holiness and truth, God gives us His own Spirit to enable us to live as His holy children.

'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.'

Rom 8:3-4

BUT, not everyone who claims Christ will receive eternal life. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

John 3:36

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."

Matt 7:21

John MacArthur gives some understanding of this situation in his book -- 'The Gospel according to Jesus'

"Saving faith, repentance, commitment, and obedience are all divine works, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart of everyone who is saved. I have never taught that some presalvation works of righteousness are necessary to or part of salvation. But I do believe without apology that real salvation cannot, and will not, fail to produce works of righteousness in the life of a true believer. There are no human works in the saving act, but God's work of salvation includes a change of intent, will, desire, and attitude that inevitably produces the fruit of the Spirit. The very essence of God's saving work is the transformation of the will, resulting in a love for God. Salvation thus establishes the root that will surely produce the fruit."

Again:

"True salvation produces a heart that voluntarily responds to the ever-awakening reality of Christ's Lordship."

Again:

"This is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian: *"For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."*

Rom 14:7-9

Steven Lawson gives his understanding. 'It will cost you everything'

"Salvation is entirely free. But receiving it will cost you everything. It is not offered as cheap grace. Nor is it received by easy believism. It does not take a particularly special person to be a Christian. Just all there is of him."

We can conclude therefore, that everyone who has Jesus Christ as Lord obeys all His commands.

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

Therefore, it is by the grace of God alone and not ourselves that we are in Christ. This is because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life for all who will deny themselves and take up their cross to follow Him.

'So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.'

1 John 4:16

Abiding in God is to have the love of God in us as God is in us. And we live in God by abiding in Christ.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:4-5

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

John 15:9-11

John Piper speaks of love for Christ. 'What is saving faith.'

'To become a Christian, to be justified and finally saved, is to "embrace Christ." Embrace! Not take between the fingers as one gets a boarding pass, shows it twice, and then, after the flight, throws it away. Faith does not "embrace" Christ briefly with mere fingers. To believe savingly is to embrace Christ with the soul as the "supreme good offered, and the inestimable treasure." Believing is receiving, receiving Christ not as a guardian of my most treasured possessions, but as the most precious possession Himself, for which I am "prepared to lose anything." This is what it means to be a Christian.'

Again:

“In other words, we agree that the only faith that justifies is the kind of faith that works by love, the love that Paul says is summed up in "*Love your neighbour as yourself*" (Gal. 5:14; see also 5:6)." This is what both MacArthur and Grudem stress: faith is not saving faith if it is not the sort that "works by love." That is, Christ is not a sin covering Saviour where He is not embraced as a love-creating Lord.”

It is reasonable to say that having Christ as the supreme treasure means we experience genuine devotional love and not just some theological truth.

Christ Jesus is the Love of God revealed in the world

'He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind.'

John 1:2-4

'For this is the way God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.'
John 3:16 NET

Those who believe in Him have His love. God's Love is Light in the world in His people.

Those who have received His love are His light in the world.

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."
John 8:12

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;... Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
Matt 5:14,16

"By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."
John 13:35

"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. 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 17:23-26

"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

'You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.'
1 Pet 2:9

If love for God and therefore the love of God in fulfilling His passion for holiness is not revealed in the church as the light of God, then God seemingly isn't there. What is God's passion for His children? "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."
1 Pet 1:6

Light comes from the glory of the God of Love as His Life in action. Those who have the love of God have Christ living inside, so they should never be afraid of the dark. *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
Matt 28:20

There is much to be fearful of in the world, for no one is perfect, but in Christ we are not to fear, because we are strengthened by the love of God who is always in control.

"That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these." Isa 45:6-7

'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.'
1 John 4:18

Instead, faithful followers are to be a light to the world of the glory of God in Christ. The test of true faith in God is whether His sacrificial love is evident in us when we are under are pressure to be like the world.

'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you— unless indeed you fail the test?'
2 Cor 13:5

The love of Christ on the cross is the place that controls the true believer because it is the power of God unto salvation.

'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.'
2 Cor 5:14-15

'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever follows His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.' 1 John 2:3-5

The Holy Spirit dwells in the repentant heart as a temple of God

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Ezek 35:27

'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

1 Cor 6:19

The Spirit discloses to all those who are born of God all we need to know in order to live with Christ.

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."

John 16:14

'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 perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, 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 Pet 1:6-9

'Since you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brothers and sisters, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.'

1 Peter 1:22-23

'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

The love of God is not restricted to those who love us

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” Matt 5:43-47

‘And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:28-31

The love of Christ is especially displayed for His chosen children

‘Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.’ Rom 12:10

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

John 15:12

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:13

‘By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.’

1 John 3:16

‘Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.’

1 Pet 4:8

'Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.'

Col 3:12-17

'Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'

1 John 4:11

'Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.'

Rom 13:8

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:35

'Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another'

1 Thess 4:9

'Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,'

1 Pet 1:22

'No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.'

1 John 4:12

'So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.'

Phil 2:1-4

'With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,'

Eph 4:2

'Let all that you do be done in love.'

1 Cor 16:14

'Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may also rejoice and be overjoyed.'

1 Pet 4:8,12-13

'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but 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 5:1-5

Love trusts God for all things

We claim to have faith, however, when we complain about what is disagreeable, we have lost sight of the presence of Christ, and are unable to walk in the light of His love. We complain when we suffer because we fail to trust that God loves us and lives in us to enable us to live for Him. We often give up too quickly.

'You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are punished by Him; For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He punishes every son whom He accepts." 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? For the moment, all discipline seems not to be pleasant, but painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.'

Heb 12:4-7, 11

In God's economy, whatever bothers us is for our testing in holiness to see if we are going to trust God to hold us secure in His love as He trains us in righteousness, regardless of the circumstances. Without our training in faithfulness to God we won't grow. We need His training so that we will overcome our inertia according to the flesh of the unregenerate life and put on the life of Christ by accepting His cross of self denial as we follow His example of humble obedience and trust in God our Father.

Complaining about others reveals a lack of trust in God. Complaining, even when wronged, is the quickest way to lose our peace. Grumbling about our circumstances is not trusting God. God's children trust Him in all things. Our dissatisfaction that denies faith includes in-laws, spouses, employers and even our children.

We must live in the awareness that the God of all love lives in us by His Spirit. A refusal to love with Him is to refuse Him, in the same way we deny Christ who has bought us with the price of His blood.

'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.'
Prov 3:5-6

Trusting in God means that when things are a problem for us, we are quick to bring our cares to Him, and then, we rest on His grace, accepting whatever He decides is best according to His will because we know He loves us and we love Him and trust Him.

'Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.'
1 Pet 5:6-7

We cast all our cares on Him and trust Him to do what is in our best interest as He works to transform us into the image of Christ.

'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

We can only love God and our neighbour while we rejoice in Christ by standing in the light while observing the darkness of the world.

Abiding in the love of Christ isn't possible when we are not trusting but complaining. We complain even while we are assured by God that He is always doing what is best for us.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

Gen 18:25

How do we know this problem of complaining is a failure of trust? By bitter experience, because it results in the feeling of abandonment. And we who are taught by the Spirit should know better.

Our failure to trust God feels like abandonment, but the abandoning is all ours. God has not failed to keep His promises, we have failed to stand firm in His word. And failing to trust God, we devise our own folly, which He hands us over to until we have suffered enough, and become desperate enough, to once again take up our cross so we can live with our Christ whom we love and follow as the light of the world. And it is God who stirs up our discontent with our own plans so that we will return to our cross and be acquainted with the love of Christ once again.

It doesn't take much to deny God, just a little complaint about doing some housework. Or griping about the government. Let alone voicing our displeasure about someone's short comings. In our complaining we refuse to accept that God is the Sovereign Lord over all things in heaven and on earth. We live as if things happen by accident, when in reality God is behind everything that happens in the world.

A failure to take up our cross is to deny God's salvation and cuts us off from the presence of His love. It means we have avoided the narrow gate and continue to please ourselves on the broad way to unending torment. Jesus said if we deny Him, He will deny us.

A commitment to love under adverse conditions, where there is no cooperation and even rejection, is evidence of the Spirit living in us as we submit to His authority. Even unbelievers are able to love when everything is going well. But to love while under adversity requires self

denial and a cross if we are to follow Christ. There will be times of failure, but there will be conviction and repentance if faith from God is real and not just a figment of our imagination.

True faith is from God as a commitment to keep us for Himself is the undeserved love of God we call grace.

'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, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.'

Eph 1:4-6

God has an eternal purpose to raise us up to be like His Son

'Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.'

1 John 3:2

'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

Pray:

'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 3:16-19

Live the Christ life

'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

Becoming a Christian for many means we are forgiven our sins, we are blessed with love from God, and we do our best to follow the teaching of the Church.

The vast majority who claim to be Christians believe that after they have chosen to join the church they do the best they can to be good believers so they can go to heaven. This means attending Church and getting involved in the ministries of the Church.

However there are many who see no need for Church attendance because they believe they are already saved by Christ. Those who are too focused on the world make a lot about things of the world we can see, when the life of the Spirit is interested in what we cannot see, for we live by faith in what we can't see as we walk by the Spirit. We walk by faith and not by sight.

2 Cor 5:7

But the real issues is that all of these who walk by sight only really understand themselves to be reconditioned human beings who will receive a life in heaven when they die.

Any idea that we are completely new people who have been reborn by God, who have abandoned our former life in the world to live the life of Christ by the power of the Spirit is completely missed.

Some would suggest that following such a path may be admirable but surely not necessary for all.

This mistaken way of identifying as being 'Christian' comes from many preconceived ideas about Christianity. It may have come from being born into a Christian family, it may be because of being baptised, and passing confirmation classes as a traditional process, it may have come from making a decision to accept Christ as saviour. For these, being a believer is what they have done for God.

Seldom is the name Christian understood to mean we reckon ourselves to have died by faith to our past life and are now made alive by God by faith to live the Christ life.

The general mindset of most is occupied with earthly concerns in which we seek help from God to get us what we want, and to deliver us from suffering and discomfort.

To suggest that we can now embrace suffering by following the example of Christ is not seen to be very logical, and just a little extreme.

There is no understanding that in our union with Christ we are always secure as we live in the presence of God's kingly reign, otherwise known as the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty means God always has the final say as to what occurs anywhere in the world.

Therefore, for those who lack saving faith, denying self is not a high priority, in fact, in seeking to satisfy our self, we fail to see the only way to God is by the work of Christ Jesus, and the cross He calls us to take up to follow Him is the only key we have to heavens.

If Christ lives in us as we take up our cross to follow His example, we should have the attitude that He has; which means we can say we live for Jesus Christ. Christ is our life. The life He gives is His life made alive in us.

The truth which is His truth is now our truth. The way He lived is our way. This is the abundant life promised by God.

This is the only way to real peace. This is the only way to find true security. Everything else in life is secondary to being faithful to Christ who lives in us.

This sad state of spiritual ignorance in many who claim to be Christian has developed because the Church has not followed the terms of admission that Jesus taught are necessary.

We have made it far too easy to be able to claim to be a Christian because we have not made it clear there is a cost to enter heaven. We can't take earthly way with us. And then there are some who want to be seen as leaders in the church who want people to fill their chairs so these so called converts can fill their bank accounts.

While many have made it too easy to be in the Church, Jesus has declared: *“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”* (Matt 7:13) The narrow gate is the way of the cross. Then *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”*

Luke 9:23-24

In a way of quickly adding people to the Church, the Church has been saying all people have to do is say they believe Jesus died for their sins. However the Bible says *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

John 3:36

Following the correct process is to believe what Jesus taught, and what is believed must be obeyed, or the belief is in vein and accounts for nothing.

Accordingly, the Church has failed to carry out Christ' command to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”*

Matt 28:19-20

If we had obeyed the Lord Jesus and done as He commanded, we wouldn't have people in the Church who know little or nothing about what He taught and how He has provided for us so we can live His life on earth.

What more does the Bible say?

From the beginning we can see what God intends in not what many have decided Christianity is about. And since the Bible does not contradict itself, the whole Bible will confirm what is written in one part.

Therefore let us examine these things from what is written mainly in the book of Galatians for a true picture of what God has planned for us who are saved by the Grace of God through the sacrifice of the Son of God.

While Paul's letter to the Galatians deals mainly with false teachers who insisted we need the gospel plus circumcision to make salvation

complete, there are many variations of stuff being added today. But a gospel plus salvation ends up being something added to the gospel to please the weakness of the flesh in sinful men.

Paul confronts the non biblical ideas by pointing out what God has already done through Jesus Christ. Nobody can add to or improve what is already perfect. What God has done stands alone, add to it and you lose, and take away from it by not teaching the whole truth means you have nothing.

God gives us a revelation of Christ

'But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.' Gal 1:15-16

In the first place Jesus came to reveal the Father to a world lost in darkness because it lacked a true understanding of God. Jesus revealed what the Father was like and preached about the good news of God's deliverance being available to all on earth who would believe and obey Christ.

As we consider the Letter to the Galatians, we can be sure it carries principles and truths which are not just for them, but include all those who follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Not only has the Son of God being revealed to Paul, the Son has been revealed to the whole world so that we are without excuse. The gospel of God is about the substitutionary death of Christ on a cross for all sinners, with His resurrection from the dead vindicating His claim to be God with all of God's authority. His death has made it possible for us to have eternal life if we die to our life in the world.

To be in Christ, we willingly died

'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

Believers need to be crucified with Christ for a new life in Christ. (Rom 6:4-6) Identifying with the death of Christ on His cross means by faith

we reckon ourselves to have died with Him so we can be raised up with a new life by the Spirit of God.

Identifying with Christ in this way means we are given all the aspects of His life to make them alive as our life, to be lived in the authority of His name and according to His character. This life of the Son that is now ours to live is lived by faith in the Son of God.

We live by faith. Faith is necessary to live the Christian life after we first believe, because we continue to live our lives in the physical bodies we were born into, and we live in a world that has physical reality.

Without faith in Christ to live His life, we would naturally fall back to a life without faith and only accept what we can see and feel with our hands.

I no longer live but Christ lives in me is no religious Cliché, it is supposed to be a reality. It is not simply a phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought. Jesus said "*whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.*" Luke 9:24

Christ is to be my life, with my personality, but it is still His life and all He stands for, it is all His life represents.

As sons we are heirs with Christ

'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.' Gal 3:26-27, 29

In order to be true to our new status in the Family of God, we are baptised into Christ to give up the lives we had before Christ as if dead, in order that we can put on Christ and be alive with God.

Being baptised into Christ is achieved by our spiritual crucifixion with Christ. As a result we receive a new life in Christ, so we are to grow up into Christ so that Christ now lives in us. Clothing ourselves with Christ is like putting on a new suit so that Christ covers all of our life by the working of the Spirit.

The only way God's purpose can become a reality is that the Spirit of God must have first place in us as far as we are concerned, as we believe He has indwelt us as our true life as far as Christ is concerned.

Our baptism by the Spirit is a sign we are really joined with Christ, therefore Christ is the Christian, and the Christian is Christ. In baptism we are baptised into the name of Jesus and in this way we are incorporated into Christ to live His Christ life. Acts 2:38

Being in Christ means we are adopted into the family of God, and the adopted children receive a full share in the family inheritance, with all the rights and privileges of being a child of God.

If we are in Christ, we are God's offspring, sons and daughters of Abraham. This sonship means we inherit all God has promised to give His children, forgiveness of sin, a new life in the Spirit, heaven and every blessing in heaven. *'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.'* Eph 1:3

As sons we have responsibilities

The Spirit of God reveals Christ to us and in us as He lives in us, so that we live His life and serve Christ to fulfil His purpose in the world He came to save from sin.

The sons and daughters of God are to reflect the character and the will of the Father. They are to participate in the work of the Father.

At no time is the son to do his own thing or act on his own initiative. The son is always to do the will of the Father. Jesus said, *"Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."(John 5:19) "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak."* John 12:49

The privilege of sons and daughters of God means having the luxury of belonging to the family of God, even though the world is against us. This

privilege means we are so secured by God it is possible to be a servant even to our enemies.

We receive the indwelling Spirit

'Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"' Gal 4:6-7

The Spirit dwells in us to reveal Christ to us so we can follow His example by taking up our cross in obedience to Christ in service to Almighty God. God's children are not left to make their own way in the world, for to be a son of God is to be blessed with the enabling of God so that we can reflect the life of God our Father.

This work of God results in the giving of the Spirit of God to all who believe and obey Him. (Acts 5:32) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life in Christ who is given to bring spiritual life to the believer and to live in all those who have given up all things to claim Christ as saviour.

The life of Christ is implanted in us by the Spirit. Because of this we learn that to be born of God's spirit means a new beginning, so our whole existence is for the sake of Christ, to live His life in us, to reveal His plan to redeem sinners, and promote His salvation work for the kingdom of God on earth.

It is only then we begin a new life with God, and we follow the example of Christ in service to our God. This is not living according to our own ability, instead being in Christ is to have Christ in us by the powerful working of His Spirit, this means His character and purpose are now the only reason we have for living.

Therefore there can be no time in our walk in the darkness of the world when we are separated from the love and peace of a life lived in union with God.

Victory over the flesh is absolutely possible for the faithful, so that we knew we cannot do as we would please according to the flesh.

The flesh may war against the Spirit, but the Spirit of God has the power of God to give us a way out of temptation. 1 Cor 10:13

God's children are to grow up into Christ

'My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed in you.'
Gal 4:19

We are not saved to remain children; we are saved so that Christ becomes our life, His life is to be formed in us. We are saved by having faith and we are to continue to live and grow by faith in Christ Jesus. Once we are justified we are to be sanctified, because we are to be like Christ; and this is only achieved when the truth changes us to be like Him. Growth comes by being determined to do all things in conformity with His teaching. Consequently we are to share in His obedience, His suffering, and His resurrection as we enjoy a new identity in Christ.

Since Christ is our life we need to: *'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

All in Christ will be persecuted

'But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.' Gal 4:29

Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by the free woman. But the son by the slave was born according to the flesh and the son by the free woman through the promise of God. (Gen 4:23) Now, in the fullness of time, the child of the promise is the one who is born of the Spirit in Christ.

The flesh means the people of the world will live in rebellion to God as they seek to do all things according to their own understanding and reject the need for obedience to God alone. Those born of the flesh today continue to persecute those born of the Spirit who will inherit the promise by the working of the Spirit of God.

Therefore persecution will come to those in Christ from unbelievers in every sphere of life, including the Church. It will come from those who

hold to a religion originating in the mind of men. It will come from some who claim to be spiritual but will not bow down to absolute obedience and submission to Christ. Persecution will come from worldly minded people who have no real regard for God.

Jesus said, *"In this world you will have tribulation."* (John 16:33) *'Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.'* (2 Tim 3:12) Jesus said, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD."* Matt 10:34-36

Followers of Christ guard against attempts to modify the gospel of Christ

A little error can be a fatal dose. 'A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.' Gal 5:9-11

Having no other view than that revealed by the word of God means obeying the truth we have received. Holding to the truth of Christ without compromise means we will be persecuted for the sake of Christ.

Where there is any hint of someone preaching a gospel plus of their own addition, we must stand firm to that which we receive from God in the Bible. To do this we need to understand what we read in its proper context, because most additions of a plus come from taking some part of the Bible out of its original context to propose a different opinion other than what God has revealed.

Victory is for those who walk by the Spirit

'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

We are at war with the flesh in the world, but also in us. The only way for us to succeed is to walk by the Spirit.

When Paul says, *-you may not do the things that you please -* he is not speaking of the spirit life, he is referring to the desires of the flesh. It is sometimes taken that this verse is saying the good we would do we don't do; aligning the meaning with Rom 7:14ff, but there the inability to do what is right is because the writer is living under the law. What Paul is saying is not speaking of the Christian who are indwelt with the Spirit to fulfil the law. *'so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'*

Rom 8:4

If we are caught in an offence against God by living according to the flesh, that is bad enough, but it also means we have been unfaithful towards the one who loves us enough to die that we may live; and that disloyalty by itself should cause us more grief than we would like to bear, so we walk by the Spirit.

We who walk by the Spirit have crucified the flesh to conform to the life of Christ. Therefore we need to understand what 'flesh' represents.

Paul lists some of the qualities of the flesh here, *'Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.'*

Gal 5:19-21

This list is not exhaustive because Paul adds more in his second letter to Timothy. *'For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.'*

2 Tm 3:2-5

It is not the occasional failure to deny these things in us that prohibits entry into the kingdom of God, but the habits where these things are part

of the normal mindset exclude the one who practices these things. *'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.'*

Rom 8:5

The Holy Spirit provides the obedient believer with the qualities needed for the kingdom of God. *'if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.'*

Rom 8:11

'His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which 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 1:3-4

In this regard God gives us the life of the Spirit which is called the fruit of the Spirit. However we must not see the following list as all there is to the life of the Spirit, for the Spirit has all the qualities and characteristics of God the Father.

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.'

Gal 5: 22-25

Practically speaking, the fruit of the Spirit's life enables the believer to fulfil the law of love. To *'Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfil the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.'*

Gal 6:2-5

'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a

grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.'

Col 3:12-14

Living the Christ life requires endurance

'Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.'

Gal 6:9-10

We have crucified ourselves to the world, and the world in its relationship to us, so we do not lose heart and stop believing God when faced with the darkness of the world. We are now a completely new creation in Christ, free from reacting negatively to the world. To keep us from losing heart we behold Jesus who lives in us, we look to His example of love in action as we love Him.

In this way we commit ourselves to doing good deeds, so our light will shine in the darkness so the world will give glory to God.

In our perseverance we remember the fullness of the promises of God are not yet for today, because the working of the kingdom of God is progressing to a climax in the coming of Christ to receive those who love Him. Therefore we do not lose heart; instead we boast in nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness, the one who is our life now and our glory to come.

'But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.'

Gal 6:14-15

Don't be disappointed

The condition of our heart decides what we will accept from God. The spiritual condition of the heart will determine how we understand the Bible. The heart decides what is important to us, and will mean we will see only what we are looking for that supports the condition of our heart towards God. The hard heart is indifferent to the prodding of the Spirit

we see nothing. The obedient heart welcomes the Spirit of God with gladness.

A dead spiritual heart will only see what is written in the Bible as dead words on a page. The spiritual baby will be attracted to stories which support childish dependence. The spiritual immature or carnal believer will want to find things that seem to allow for worldly attachment and a life of plenty and comfort. The spiritual adolescents will be full of action but will see far less in the Bible than they think they already understand. The spiritually mature will find the living word of God that will constantly feed them and provide for their sanctification as they grow more each day into the image of Christ. Therefore it's important to grow in grace.

God promises the faithful who look to Him and what He has done and is doing; that He will keep them in perfect peace. Therefore if we are anxious, worried, agitated, and fearful, we are not looking to God but to be flesh and the world. In these ways we live in fear when our Christ has told us not to fear.

We should see disharmony in our hearts as a warning from the Spirit that we are looking in the wrong place. Anxiety is the sign we have to redirect our focus back to God. When the Lord was troubled before being horribly crucified He prayed to God the Father. He would thereby have been secured in the knowledge He was God's Son and His death for the sins of the world was the Father's will for Him.

'If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.' Col 3:1-4

As we face the darkness of the world we need to keep our focus on God so we are reminded who we are in Christ, as we live His life believe in what God has done, and is doing according to His will. We look *'to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.'* Eph 3:20

The answer to the troubles of the world, whether unbelief, false teachers, persecution, disease, or poverty; is having Christ living in us. If we are in Christ we have God. Look to God, for He has made it possible for us to live the Christ life.

In the church there are always the unfaithful, they are like the tares that grow up with the wheat and the goats that pasture with the sheep. Therefore we need Christ' discernment, we need to remain faithful to the one who now lives in us an not be swayed by unbelievers.

When we purposefully go against His teaching, we not only sin, but we are unfaithful to the one who gives us life.

When we consider what the true Christian life is to be, many will have to agree they have been mistaken and need to go back to the beginning and start all over again. Others will be faced with the reality that there is much more that needs to be attended to considering their spiritual maturity.

Regardless of where we are in our faithfulness, we have as much of God as we have been willing to die for in order to be like Christ. God offers all of Himself for those who will give all, so if we are not satisfied with the way things are, there is definitely something we can do to change things and put on Christ. Gal 6:7-8

We will all be called to give an account for the way we have lived; our Father doesn't want any of us to be disappointed; our future is in our hands. Live the Christ life.

'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' Heb 11:1

Don't be disappointed, put on Christ.

Spiritual Light is having God Inside

'In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.' Psalm 16:11

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

Jesus walked in intimate fellowship with the Father. He walked by the Spirit. His kingdom was not of this world. His kingdom values are not like the world's values. The world is unable to comprehend what He was talking about. But we are to live just as He lived, according to the standard in which He lived, in holiness we are to live.

"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. ...But because I say the truth, you do not believe Me." John 8:43-45

Jesus wasn't concerned with changing the world. He was about changing people. The world will not be moved by the light of God. *'In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.'* John 1:4-5

'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.' 1 Cor 2:14

Jesus was about moving souls from darkness to light *'For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.'* Col 1:13

But we often have a habit of wanting to change the world so that those in the world adopt or accept our Christian point of view. We constantly criticise governments and organisations for lack of understanding and true foresight.

We get frustrated with friends and family who seem unable to grasp our Christian perspective.

This can especially occur in the Church, because of the presence of unbelievers who are barely nominal who can only understand ideas and information without spiritual transformation and not know of the life transformation of the heart, and also, with the immature in the Church who have not grown sufficiently in their spiritual transformation by constantly digesting the solid truth of God's word.

“There's such a thing as teaching a sinner to act like a Christian. You baptise him and confirm him and feed him the Lord's Supper regularly and you instruct him in ethics and soon he begins acting like a Christian, just as a chimpanzee act like a man. But he is not a Christian, because he doesn't have that inward factor that impels him to righteousness and true holiness. He is only taught from the outside to be a Christian. A vast number of church members are taught to imitate Christians. They read the Sermon on the Mount and they know how a Christian should live. They don't live like that at all, but they approximate it; they play it by ear and get close to it. Enough that they are accepted into the church and they go to church and sing and give, and people think they are Christians. But they are living by external pressure and by artificial training and imitation, not by a native factor inside of them which teaches them to act in a certain way. That unknown factor, which impels them to act like Christians, is what they don't have.” A.W. Tozer. Fellowship of the burning heart.

To know God's presence is a matter of the heart. We are created to experience the presence of God deeply. Sin deadens the heart. We can't love with our head. We can't be comforted in our head. We need God to know God. Knowledge of God's presence begins with compelling repentance as a wounding of the guilty heart. No sinners broken hearted surrender to obey God, means no experience of God's presence in a new heart, to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Who can teach us about God unless God is working in us?

When frustration happens because we speak spiritual words, we need to ask ourselves whether we are also getting confused, because we want

those who live in the darkness of the world, or those who haven't yet grasped the difference between light and darkness, to be able to operate with the light they don't yet possess.

Maybe there are times we are attempting to operate from the understanding of the world by offering the indigestible and incomprehensible to the unbelieving who reject our proposal. It could be possible that we need to improve our understanding of the different ways of darkness and light a little better than we presently have, so we can better share the light we do have.

Spiritual Light is the knowledge of God for a relationship with God

'This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.' 1 John 1:5

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 2 Cor 4:6

'Who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.' 1 Tim 6:16

Anybody who has not yet denied themselves and taken up their cross daily to follow Christ has not repented from their self-centred life, and they continue to walk in the darkness of the world, separated from the light that is real life, namely Jesus Christ.

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." John 3:19-21

'Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12

Jesus spoke of the difference between darkness and light

And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins."

John 8:23-24

'So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

John 8: 31-32

'Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin."

John 8:34

"So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free."

John 8:36

"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot listen to My word."

John 8:43

"The one who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

John 8:47

"Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone follows My word, he will never see death."

John 8:51

And Paul sums it up like this: *'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 8:6-8

'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), as you try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.'"

Eph 5:8-10, 13-14

Real knowing is having the light of God, this is the work of the Spirit of God who opens our hearts to the truth of God. *‘Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.’*
2 Pet 1:3

Therefore, our ability to understand is limited by the degree we rely on our own understanding, this means we do not trust in God by putting away the darkness and our fleshly knowledge to rely on God and obey all He has given us to understand.

We are born again in the light to live in the presence of God

‘Certainly the righteous will give thanks to Your name; The upright will dwell in Your presence.’
Psalm 140:13

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.”
John 3:5-6

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh provides no benefit; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life.”
John 6:63

‘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 8:9

By the Grace of God, in Christ, by the gift of faith and spiritual rebirth, we have been united spiritually with Christ’s resurrected nature as the Son of God. We are never the same again. We now live for another dominion. We live for Him in whom we are made new in the image of God. We live for His plan and purpose according to His Kingdom. We are part of His living body on earth, the Church.

This is the Salvation of God

“This Salvation can’t be taught. Salvation, among other things, brings an implantation of an unknown fact within the soul that impels us to

holiness, and the true Christian cries out, "Abba Father," by an impulse of the Spirit. He doesn't have to be taught, nobody says to the new Christian, now say, "Abba Father." He says it because the Spirit of the Son is in his heart compelling him to say it. The biggest question before us this morning is, has this happened to you? Have you received Him, believed on Him? Has He wrought in you that miracle, which impels you to want to do right, and that makes you grieve if you don't? It's most serious, my friends, that we ask the question and answer it." A.W. Tozer. 'Fellowship of the burning heart.'

We have received the Spirit of God to live in the presence of God

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." "that they may all be one; 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 17:3, 21

'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'

1 Cor 3:16

It isn't enough to have faith without experiencing the manifest presence of God. To have faith without the ability to walk in the presence of God is like being an orphan.

It is only as we remain in His presence that we can rest in His love; and be able to trust His word and look to Him in all things that we can walk in His ways and bring forth much fruit to His praise and glory.

Jesus lived His life looking to the Father moment by moment, and we are called to keep our eye looking to Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The beauty of our spiritual abiding in Christ as we surrender to His will means we have the inner guidance of His Holy Spirit so that we will walk in His way, and have the power to live as He lived. As we abide in Him, we will be empowered by His Spirit to walk as He walked and become an outward expression of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

The believer is chosen by God to walk in the light of His presence

'But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.' 'If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.'

Gal 5:16, 25

'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.' 1 Peter 2:9 7

However, to keep us from getting big headed we must be careful we don't start thinking more of ourselves than we ought. The shadows of darkness remain in our minds as we are undergoing our sanctification. Our spirit we call our heart, has received life from God, but the mind of the flesh needs to be further transformed into the mind of Christ.

Eph 4:23; Rom 12:2

Discipleship is about coming from the darkness of the world into the light of the kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom does not automatically produce fullness of godly thinking. Discipleship is about becoming like our Master.

The Father brings us into the kingdom but not all of us is immediately transformed into what we will be in heaven. Due diligence is required so that we put to death what remains of the earthly in us so that we can grow in holiness and reflect the light of God.

In this holiness undertaking of our spiritual maturity, Christ has provided His church for the spiritual growth of all His disciples. This church is to be made up of all who believe in Him, and all are equipped to contribute to the growth of the whole church by the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ to serve as He served.

If the corporate body of Christ does not have our deepest affection, we have not understood what it is to be in Christ who lives in His body the Church. It is not possible to claim to be in the will of God if the power of the Spirit is not having effective dominance in the life of the believer.

All of life without God in control is a fraud. In the end, each of us needs to examine ourselves to see if there is any semblance of fraud in us who claim to know Him.

Shades of darkness and light

Because we don't know what we don't know, which is mostly because of our personal fleshly shadows, we need each other and the gifts all have received from the giver of light for the common good. This is so that we can benefit from the growth of light in others. 1 Cor 12:11

Because holiness is a process, there are varying degrees of light in the church. Light is the fruit of Christ and the working of the Spirit blooming in the life of the Saint. The more the mind is set on the Spirit, the more internal light, and the better saints will reflect the life of Christ. The more the saints are committed to the corporate life of the body of Christ, and their application of the gift of the Spirit, the more mature the individual saint, and the more useful the body will be in carrying out the will of God to go into the world to bring people out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Therefore, every idea and proposal concerning the truth we want to share with anyone, must be verified first by the whole word of God if we are to avoid errors and venture into the dark shadows of the world. If we have an opinion that we think is valid, we must always be able to support it from many biblical references, and see that it is compatible with the whole teaching of God from Genesis to Revelation.

The Spirit of God's presence is our light as we walk together in the darkness

In Jesus Christ, we have the light of God to enable us to experience the manifest, conscious presence of God. *“The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.”* John 14:21

In Christ we have God living in us. And since God is light, love, knowledge and peace, all of our personal struggles come from not being aware that we are looking at things from the perspective of the darkness of the world, rather than abiding in Christ. We need to be able to confidently say: *'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

If this truth is not taken to heart, and remains some distant doctrine in our heads, our heart is not in it, and then we will not be able to live in the presence of Christ, we will not be able to abide in Him and produce the fruit of His life. *"the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

John 15:5 9

By the grace of God in Christ, we are now in God as children of the light. To be true to God we must always stand in the light and see the darkness with His eyes, and only then, we will observe the world as it actually is, and we will stand in the light and remain in the peace of God, even though we are heartbroken because of the sin we seen in the world.

'But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then, let's not sleep as others do, but let's be alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk, get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let's be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing.'

1 Thess 5:4-11

And because our Father has providence over our walk, the light of God doesn't remove the pain of our suffering with Christ our Lord, but it does ensure we can rejoice in the fact of our security in the love of God.

'The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' Rom 8:16-18

We can only claim to own the truth of God when we live in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, knowledge of the light and darkness helps us keep our spiritual standing in the chaos of the world.

Whenever we naturally fall back to thinking about the world as before, we have stepped back into the darkness, and then our light is not light, and we are exposed to the flesh and ignorance remaining in our minds. Thinking like this does not keep us in the wisdom of God.

"The eye is the lamp of the body; so then, if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"
Matt 6:22-23

However, all are not equal, there are degrees of light in the church

Light produces the fruit of Christ's life manifest as the working of the Spirit blooming in the life of the Saint. The more the mind is set on the Spirit, the more the saints will reflect the life of Christ. The more the saints are committed to the corporate life of the body of Christ, and the application of the gifts of the Spirit, the more mature the individual, and the more useful the body in carrying out the will of God. And as a result, the more the Church will be seen as relevant in the darkness of the world.

It is not possible to claim to be in the will of God if the power of the Spirit is not having effective dominance in the life of the believer so they walk in God's presence in preference to all other desires. If we choose to walk in the darkness God will hand us over to experience our folly.

For God's presence to be known, He requires the control of our mind. We must learn to put away our natural thinking and train our minds to live in the light where the presence of God dwells. The more we look to

worldly things, the less the presence of God is manifest in us, and the more the shadows hinder our sight. The church is where the light of the manifest presence of God can be known corporately among those who no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. The presence of God is the result of transforming our minds in spiritual maturity.

The more the church resembles the world's thinking, the less useful it will be able to witness to Christ, and the less anyone can know that God actually dwells within His people. The fewer the people who dwell in the conscious presence of God; the more worldly thinking will disrupt the congregation.

In order to possess the hidden nature of God which is birthed by the light of the Spirit, the born-again Christian must always be seeking to be motivated by the light of God, and as a result of absolute surrender to Christ, they are therefore compelled from the inside to no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Our degree of obedience in submission to Christ in His Church and our sacrificial service reveal the level of our maturity.

In his book 'Fellowship of the burning heart' A.W. Tozer wrote: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33). So there's where we get it. "I will put my laws into their heart." A Christian is one who has had the laws of God inscribed in his heart, the motivation centre of his life. That's a Christian. Nobody else is a Christian, and nothing else is a Christian."

And we can add: *"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."*

Ezek 36:27

'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.' Rom 8:3-4

The Father says in a way, that the mature Christian will obey the Spirit and be involved in the Church by using the spiritual gifts that God has provided for the common good. The mature Christian will be delighted to witness to Christ at every opportunity as they go about their business in the world. The mature Christian will be manifesting the qualities of the love of God, for God, and each other, and the world. Therefore, how is it possible to claim Christ and fail to do what He died for?

If the believer's faith doesn't extend to actually walking in the presence of God which means living according to His sovereign will, there will be many outward worldly distractions that will compete with the internal motivation of the Spirit.

Often the light of the knowledge of God will be 'turned off,' and the fruit of righteousness and truth will be undeveloped. Where the mind has not been sufficiently transformed by the refining fire of adversity; and we have been lazy in putting to death what is earthly in us according to the discipline of God; the mind of the flesh and darkness is the only alternative, and it quickly acts as the default path of any understanding.

Providentially, God has not left us without support

God is at work in all His children. The antidote for every disagreeable experience is not to get into a bind over our supposed rights in the world, or go on carping and complain about the cruel injustice we have to endure.

We must be mindful that the world is fallen and doesn't know it; and the saints of the most high have no right of reply, they live for another kingdom based on holiness.

Instead, we have God. *'For it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted*

generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.'
Phil 2:13-16

It is only those who have worked on their maturity who live in the presence of God, who are mindful of His awesome holy presence, who will know the reality of fear and trembling, because they know their God is at work in them and He knows their innermost thoughts and desires. Those who reveal the inner working of the Father are the ones we need to get advice from.

The church is to follow the example of Christ, so it is all about sacrificially serving Jesus Christ on His terms, and not about what we want to make up comfortable in the world. When we are at odds with the Spirit, we are not comfortable and we need to ask ourselves some serious questions.

Is our discontent with where He has placed us serving His purpose? Is our grumbling about His training in adversity showing ingratitude for His salvation? Is our impatience with the disagreeable aspects of life showing His humility? Is our anger consistent with His mercy? Is our self-absorption dishonouring God? In our understanding we need to be mature.
1 Cor 14:20

Instead of grumbling against the sovereignty of God who uses all things for our good according to His providential power in transforming us into the image of Christ; we lovingly and dutifully turn to the light He has placed in us, remembering we are but clay in the Potter's hands, as He does with us as He wills, and we, with determined faith, fix our minds on worshipping Him, who is majestically beautiful, and infinitely agreeable; then we, knowing His judgments are perfect and always true, and we bow down to His flawless training in our righteousness.

The truth is, God Himself in His presence with us is the cure for all our troubles as we walk in the darkness of the world. God is the only fix we need, the world He will fix later when the Lord returns.

We need to stop the chatter and ask ourselves, how are we more like the Son each day as a result of living in His presence together?

Because our sanctification has not been completed, every one of us manufacturers our own favourite method of disconnecting from the presence of God, and therefore from His presence in each other. This is our own little justification in how we privatise our faith while hoping to give the appearance of singular devotion.

As His lights we go into the world with the light of the gospel

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Matt 5:14-16

‘That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,’

Phil 2:15

"I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Acts 26:17-18

Only those who are sufficiently compelled by the light and love of Christ will carry out His commands. *‘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.’*

2 Cor 5:14-15

Walking and living in the presence of God is a corporate affair and can never be totally private. Because Jesus wants to be known and seen in us who live for Him, we need to work together so that those in the darkness can see the benefits of coming to the light of the glory of Christ.

So we pray: Lord forgive us our wrongheadedness, and forgive the lost Lord, we know what we are doing but they do not know what they do. May they receive the knowledge of the light of life in Jesus Christ.

And we shall worship Him. *'One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. For on the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; He will hide me in the secret place of His tent; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer sacrifices in His tent with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.'*

Psalm 27:4-6

'For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courtyards. Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples fairly."

Psalm 96:4-1

Our God of all Comfort

‘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 Cor1:3-5

Many believe that our life should be trouble free and not too much trouble for us to cope with so we can enjoy our time on earth. But is this realistic; is this what the Bible teaches us?

If we can be comforted by God, there must be the reality of discomfort and affliction. While many would rather deny the reality of evil and deception in the world; the world is a place of trouble and strife, since the ruler of the world is the devil. *'We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.'*

1 John 5:19

Consequently, if we believe the world is basically a good place, and if we believe God will keep us from being hurt by the evil in the world, we will be seriously disappointed. Jesus warned His disciples that they would suffer at the hands of ungodly men. *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."*

Matt 24:9-12

In reality, the world is a place of suffering, trouble, strife, and pain. Even without any unusual difficult situations being considered, ordinary life comes with many struggles, just because of our fallen humanity and self centred desire for more of everything, including control over others. So there is always going to be pain in child birth and the possibility for conflict between men and women. (Gen 3:16) Difficulties will be part of everyday living on earth because Adam listened to his wife and not the Lord his God.

Gen 3:17-19

'For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.'

2 Tim 3:2-5

"They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."

John 16:2

The evidence of everyday suffering is seen in the frequency of domestic violence, and pain and suffering is experienced in the very homes where we should find peace and tranquillity. The increasing occurrence of break and entering for robbery is also the cause of much suffering, both in homes and businesses. Crimes of theft and robbery cause pain and suffering, including to the perpetrator when caught, and the victim at the time of the offence. And then there are the endless wars in our world causing much pain and death.

The damage caused to the created order of life when Adam and Eve disobeyed God also brings sickness and suffering with death. Along with all this there is financial struggle for most people who seek the things of the world, even though the Bible tells us that wealth, prestige, position, and power in this world are not God's priorities for His people.

1 Cor 1:26-29

In fact, God knows there will be difficult circumstances of our lives. In writing to the Roman Church Paul gives us the assurance that nothing we may face as God's children in the world will be able to separate those in Christ from His love. Look at this list of difficult circumstances that will not overcome the faithful.

'Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Rom 8:35-39

Even though the Lord may allow us to go through these things, we are safe for He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. Heb 13:5

Since physical blessings may or may not be part of God's way for our life; so neither our wealth nor our poverty is an indication of our standing with God. Paul was content in whatever physical circumstances he found himself. (Phil 4:11-12) Paul even went on to say *'If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.'* 1 Tim 6:8

Our life as Christians is not determined by the quality of our circumstances or the duration of life, but our relationship in the presence of God.

What has God done to comfort us?

Everything God has done for us is a source of blessing and comfort.

God has forgiven us.	Col 3:13
We have been washed in the blood of Christ.	1 Cor 6:11
We are reborn by God's Spirit.	John 3:3
We have received every spiritual blessing.	Eph 1:3
We are given a new divine nature.	2 Pet 1:4
We are made part of God's family.	Eph 2:19
We are anointed with the Spirit.	1 John 2:20
We share in Christ's inheritance.	Rom 8:17
We have eternal security.	Rom 8:37-39
We share in Christ's glory.	John 17:22
We are made as living temples of God.	1 Cor 3:16
We are appointed as God's royal priesthood.	1 Pet 2:9
We are able to abide in Christ's love.	John 15:4

If we forget all these things God has done in giving us a new life, we will live as if the old damaged life in the flesh is still the only life, and we will not be comforted.

But the holy word of God encourages us. *'He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises'* 2 Pet 1:4

'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.' 2 Tim 3:16-17

For this reason, the Christian's life is concerned with *“growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* 2 Pet 3:18

This life is a continual process of learning, practicing, and maturing, as well as failing, recovering, adjusting, enduring, and overcoming, because in our present state, *“we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.”*

1 Cor 13:12

But one day we will see God face to face, and we will know Him completely as we are known completely. (1 Cor 13:12) We will no longer struggle with sin and doubt. This will be the fulfilled abundant life in the unending comfort of God.

To enjoy God's comforting truth in this life our perspective on life must be transformed to fit God point of view. (Rom 12:2) Just as we become new creations when we come to Christ, (2 Cor 5:17) so our understanding of life must be transformed. True abundant life enjoying the comfort of God consists of an abundance of love, joy, peace, and the rest of the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal 5:22-23) It is not an abundance of “things.” True life consists of life that is eternal, and, therefore, our interest is in the eternal, not the world of things. Paul admonishes us, *“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”* Col 3:2-3

The Christian life may not be easy, but the difficulties do not cancel out the joy. We consider Jesus, who *“for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb 12:2). God has set us free from the slavery to sin. The victory is ours now. (2 Cor 2:14) Through the Holy Spirit, believers receive encouragement, strength to persevere, and comforting reminders of our adoption into the family of God. We know that our *“present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed”* Rom 8:18

If God is able to comfort us when we experience the painful things of life; (2 Cor 3:5) we need to consider if we actually know this God of all comfort if we are not comforted. If we are not comforted when we face trials and difficulties, how can we say we know Him, and how will we be able to comfort others?

Why do we suffer as if we are alone?

Jesus has promised us peace. *'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) Is His peace a great comfort to us? Or are we stuck in a dark place where peace and comfort escape us? Is it that we have little true knowledge of the world as it is in darkness, and even less knowledge of what God is doing for us? Is it possible we don't know God well enough to be able to walk with Him in our difficult circumstances so we are comforted? Do we really believe He has given us a new life? *'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

Do we believe we are children of light? *'You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.'* Eph 5:8

Do we believe God is changing us to be like His Son? *'For those whom God 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

The God of all comfort makes Himself available to us. *'The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.'*
Psalm 23

The Holy Spirit is our present comforter

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." (John 14:16) *'So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.'*
Acts 9:31

In those early days the whole Church enjoyed peace, they were being built up and going on in the Lord in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The peace the Church enjoyed came as a result of the comfort of the Spirit of God. *'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

The comfort of the Holy Spirit means we have a real and abiding friend who loves us; a real friend will not abandon us in the midst of difficulty. As our comforter friend He will encourage us; as our friend He will be beside us with strength right when it is needed most. Like a counsellor, He will take time to listen and hear our deepest woes; as a friend He will offer us wise advice and provide help with difficult decisions.

The first real comforter was Jesus in his physical presence. Just a few days after Jesus went into heaven, the second comforter, the first Helper and Comforter came. *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*
John 14:26

If we are to live in peace, if we are not to fall apart when things don't go our way, if we are to stand firm in the faith, we need to hold on to the comfort of God through the person of the Holy Spirit. *'Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.'*
Psalm 119:49-50

What we need to do

'Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.' (1 Cor 16:13) *'For we walk by faith, not by sight.'* (2 Cor 5:7) We must not compromise our faith but trust in the Lord Jesus. *'holding fast the word of life.'*
Phil 2:16

'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

'For this reason we need to bow our knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant all of us, 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 our hearts through faith; and that we, 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 we may be filled up to all the fullness of God.'

Eph 3:14-19

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain."

Phil 2:12-16

To "*work out our salvation*", means to live out our faith as we trust in God who works all things for our good as we walk like a follower of Jesus Christ. This is not optional.

Our God works the way He chooses, and He chooses to work in us and with us so that we may be transformed into the image of His Son. (Rom 8:29) Therefore, whatever happens to us happens with His knowledge, whether we see it as good or as a problem. For our God uses all things together to accomplish His purpose in us, the good and the bad.

So when things are not as comfortable as we would like, and not helpful to our finances or health, we remember God is at work in us, so no grumbling. When we look to the world and experience difficulties and struggle, we need to look to God. When we draw near to God, He draws near to us. If we are not able to give thanks in all things, (1 Thess 5:18) we are not living by faith, we are not trusting in God, we are not standing firm in His word, we are not walking in the Spirit. And we will not be

comforted by the Spirit because we are looking somewhere else but to Him.

'For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.'
Heb10:36-39

'Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.'
James 1:12

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."
Rev 3:5

To be comforted by the Lord, we need to abide in Him and He will abide in us. We are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit lives in us. God does not comfort us from afar, as if He reaches down from heaven, He comforts us from within, because He lives in us as God the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is our greatest comfort, and He comforts us by His presence. We cannot enjoy His comforting presence if we are constantly looking at the world for understanding or comfort with our attention fixed on our problems and difficulties. God allows difficulties into our lives under His enabling to assist our growth, to strengthen our faith as we hold fast to Him and His word in growing up in the Lord. God does not expect too much, for He will not test us more than we can bear. (1 Cor 10:13) If we are looking to Him, He will always show us a way to overcome since He is the giver of wisdom.
James 1:5

As His children we are to '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

We need to talk with God as we walk. *'Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'*

(1 Thess 5:17-18) *'Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.'*

Col 4:2

Be encouraged. *'For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.'*

2 Chron 16:9

Christ is our life

Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Col 3:3

Christ lives in me.

Gal 2:20

The Spirit of God dwells in you.

Rom 8:9

Christ is in you.

Rom 8:10

We have the mind of Christ.

1 Cor 2:16

We often live with a contradiction regarding who we claim to be and how we actually live. Sometimes there is a gulf of difference between our Christian theory and the realistic practice of living the Christ life.

At best, most Christians only see themselves as forgiven sinners who are doing the best they can to be good. What have they understood about being born again in the image of Christ? Do they see being born again as a figure of speech for being forgiven, but still retain the same old self as before?

If our salvation is by faith, we are born again to a living hope by being crucified with Christ, and raised up to live with Him, then the life we are supposed to claim as our life is the life of Christ. We are not someone who is still alive in the flesh having put on a religious cover.

Would it be reasonable to say it is not possible to sin while walking by the Spirit and living the Christ life? The Bible says it is. Therefore we can also say we can only sin when we function according to life in the flesh. If that is true, and it is, while we mostly think we are not living according to the flesh, it appears that at the same time we are not aware we are making choices not to live the Christ life.

Our awareness of where we are at any time in our thinking has a lot to be desired. How can we be aware of impure thoughts if we sleep in our faith in regards to our life in Christ? How will we know we have thoughts of pride, arrogance, and condescending if we are sleeping? How will we be aware we are unteachable and resist good instruction if we have no consciousness of what is going on? How will we know we are alive if we sleep? God may be knocking but we don't hear.

The Christ life needs mind control

If we are to be renewed in our minds as the Bible indicates, (Rom 12:2) we need to know what's going on in our minds. We need to ask ourselves, is our mind conforming to the mind of Christ?

This requires spiritual knowledge; we cannot live the Christ life if we are not fully informed of His life, and how He has provided for our growth in holiness to be aware of His thoughts. "*But we have the mind of Christ.*" (1 Cor 2:16) by His Spirit and His written word.

The mindset of the Christian needs to be with the Spirit while taking the effort to disregard the mindset of the flesh. (Rom 8:5-6) We are responsible for guarding against the mindset of the flesh, and then taking decisive action. The tongue might be like the rudder of a ship, but the mind is the motor that moves the rudder. James 3:4-5

Nobody sins without first entertaining thoughts that are inclined to speak or act in this way. Someone may say they have acted without thinking, but the real point is, they have not considered the consequences of their thoughts. If we are to behave in a way that pleases God, we must first guard against thoughts that result in wrong doing.

To keep our behaviour pure, we must understand who we are in Christ and hold fast to what God has done if we are to avoid acting in a way that is not consistent with what God has done by giving us the life of Christ.

'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. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.'

Col 3:2-3, 5, 10

Faithfully putting on Christ makes us more spiritual, so we need to live as spiritual beings in the image of Christ, and not just as those saved from the dead. We have to remember we dwell in the presence of Christ in God, so it is only right that He puts us to the test to see how much we

have grown in Christ. He tests us through on the job training to see if we do as we say.

The Christ life is consistently faithful

It's not that we make a jump from the spirit to the flesh without knowing, we are often already aligned with the flesh because we are already thinking as people of the world who are addicted to earthly things. We can be dreadfully unaware we have put on the old way of life which makes us vulnerable to temptation. We cannot live the Christ life by default; it must be a conscious decision, we must work it out.

Walking or living by the Spirit of Christ is a conscious choice that needs to be made continually throughout the day. Coasting along merrily in thinking our spirit life will take care of itself is to take the easy road that invites compromise of our faith.

Neither can living the Christ life be done with our minds in neutral. Coasting along in neutral is sleeping at the wheel. The danger is it is natural for the sleepy undisciplined mind to want to travel on the broad road of least resistance. Walking in the spirit must be a conscious decision. We need to be aware we enter the kingdom of God through the narrow gate of the Cross, and that requires commitment.

Our actions correctly reveal what's on our mind as we walk either ignorantly or wisely. The renewing of our minds has to be a present and continuous process because our minds are always looking for things of interest, they continue without ceasing, so if we don't direct our interest towards the kingdom of God, the world will have our attention as the memories of our old life in the flesh take hold.

Knowing this truth doesn't absolve us of responsibility, because the choices we make are still ours, we are the ones who sin and the consequence must be endured. We are called on to be diligent, to be on guard, to be careful as to what we say and do because the devil prowls around looking for people to devour.

If we are continually struggling with our sinful nature with little result, could this mean we don't really believe God has given us a new life in Christ? Do we believe our old life has been put to death to be given no more air space? Isn't it true that we are now to live the new life we have

received in Christ? How can we live the Christ life if we still see ourselves as alive in the flesh, or that the flesh still has power over us?

Even when we begin to think about doing that which is not suitable for a child of God, we have already begun to think of ourselves as being of the flesh, so the next step to doing is even more likely. When we get angry and behave in a less than loving way, we have rejected God and denied who we are in Christ.

Faith requires the mind to be focused on the truth revealed by the Spirit while actively killing off the sinful thoughts as no longer suitable for the life of a child of God who has been given everything pertaining to life and godliness.

The Christ life is staying in step with God

'If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.' Gal 5:25

The word 'walk' is not an invitation but a command. Walking by the Spirit is best understood in the sense of keeping pace with the Army drill instructor. Not to mention that the one who is out of step disturbed the whole formation. When many are out of step you have a rabble, not a regiment. In some churches there are many who call their own timing which results in an unholy rabble.

The command to keep step with the Spirit is of utter importance because our lives and the lives of others depend on us obeying. God's children were never intended to make their own way; they are to follow the way of Christ under the guardianship of the Spirit. To walk correctly we need the light of the Spirit, the way to the light is obedience, and so we turn on the light and walk as Jesus walked.

Our focus needs to be on the life of the Spirit of Christ, so that we are true to the heavenly life we have received from God. However the opposite truth is the popular trend, we focus on the earthly life, as to what we will eat and drink, where we will go, and what we will do; as a result the kingdom of God is not the first thing in our life. Matt 6:31-33

In the midst of this confusion the flesh wars against the spirit. To aid in this war we are not to give the flesh any sense of having an influence in our life. We must remember the flesh has no power other than what we

give it. We cannot live as if we have developed a dual identity, we are not to be divided, and we are not to be double minded. If we are not living and walking by the Spirit who lives in us, then we are living in the shadow of the flesh.

Of course, there are obviously lingering memories of the past life of the flesh which we need to put away with discipline and determination, but that is not the real us God has made new. We are children of God; we are not to be confused about our life. We are to reckon the flesh to be dead to us by faith, as we live in the Spirit by the same faith, while we are being transformed by the renewing of our mind into the image of Christ.

Rom 12:1-2

Christian faithfulness means being true to the Christ life by faith, always looking to the enabling of the Spirit. If we are battling with the flesh as if this is still our life, then we have not understood what God has done in us by giving us a new life in Christ. This is why we *walk by faith and not by sight*.

2 Cor 5:7

'Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete.

Col 2:6-7, 9- 10

The Christ life has God's kingdom priority

'But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'

Matt 6:33

Having the Christ life means loving God with all our heart, mind and strength. *'And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment."*

Matt 22:37-38

Living the Christ life means loving our neighbour as ourselves. *"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Matt 22:39-40

Having the Christ life means fulfilling the requirements of the Law of God. *'For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not*

do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'

Rom 8:3-4

Living the Christ life means we can overcome the world and the darkness. *'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 8:12

Having the Christ life means we can endure persecution for His name sake. *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Matt 5:11-12

Having the Christ life means making the effort to confirm our calling. *'For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'*

2 Pet 1:5-8, 10-11

Having the Christ life means having the same attitude as Christ. *'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'*

Phil 2:5-8

Having the Christ life means working with God to be blameless and innocent. *'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you,*

both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life.'
Phil 2:12-16

Having the Christ life means leaving the old nature behind by clinging to God. *'put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.'*

Eph 4:22-24, 32

Having the Christ life means loving others in the most excellent way possible. *'Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'*

1 Cor 13:4-7

Embrace the Spirit of Christ' life

What is impossible for natural man is a piece of cake and simple to accomplish for the Spirit of God. The demands of Jesus Christ for the lives of those who follow Him are not achievable without abiding in the Spirit. The major thing we seem to have been forgetting is what God has already done in giving us a new life, which is necessarily coupled to the Spirit as a working unit. Forget the Spirit of Christ, and the unity God has created is disjointed and unable to function as God intends. When we begin to manage our affairs as if we are not coupled to God, we are without power to live the Christ life.

The evidence that we are endeavouring to walk alone becomes clear when we speak of ourselves and Christ as if we are not joined inseparably to God. This is seen when we talk of our inability or weaknesses in contrast to the goodness of God which escapes us. Instead, we should be seeing evidence of the flesh as inconsistent with the life of a child God has made to be holy. This weak way of thinking is a denial of what God has already done through Christ; it also denies His power is at our

disposal to defeat the darkness that clings to us. When we continue to re-run bad habits we are not walking as Jesus walked.

We may be able to quote the Bible about the new life in Christ, but we often live as if it is only a future prospect to happen when Christ comes again. But just as eternal life has already started now, to be fully realised later, the joining with the Spirit of God for our holiness has already happened with the complete fullness to come. The clearer we see ourselves in Christ, the greater the motivation we have to draw even closer to Him by denying what is foreign to His life.

At the present time we have to live as if our future hope is already working, not to claim what hasn't been achieved, but to crystallise our efforts to be true to the union with the Spirit of Christ that God has already set in place.

It is painfully clear we often have a problem with our insight into God's word. We may know the details of the working of God but miss the reality because we are still too connected to the flesh as a significant part of our identity. We may agree we are not our own, and insist we are never alone, but when the rubber hits the road, we show signs of being disconnected from the power and peace of Christ in God.

'As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.'

1 Pet 1:14-19

Any evidence of the flesh, any hint of anger, pride or isolation, any fear, any anxiety or despair, indicates our real depth of understanding needs further development to include the Spirit of Christ to be abiding in us as the power of God unto righteousness. These things should serve as a warning alarm that we have taken our eyes of God.

Now, since God is all powerful with absolute sovereign authority over all things, and since He dwells in us by His Spirit, then the only way we can fail to reflect His life is when we don't live by faith, but live as if we have spiritual amnesia and walk as if we are alone. Therefore we must believe God who insists we are indeed His children who have been crucified with Christ and reborn with the divine nature in order to live with the Spirit of Christ in God.

We need to wake every morning with the intent of living according to what God has already done, and remember we are joined together with Christ by the all powerful work of the Holy Spirit. God can't fail. Every failure we see is a failure of our faith through unbelief and disobedience to comply with the revealed will of God in Christ. Every Christian has all of Christ available to them all the time. Every Christian has God indwelling in them with Christ all the time. When we consider other Christians, we must consider Christ to be with them all the time.

When we think of ourselves, we must recognise we are joined to all who have been raised up with Christ in God who is our sovereign Lord. With this in mind we should not forget we live on holy ground for God lives here in us all the time. We should also not presume on God by saying He is our friend, He is our Lord and Master, who treats us as His friends.

The Christ life is a New Testament

Sometimes we can have a problem of perception in that we often read so much of the Bible from the perspective that God is up there somewhere. References to God and the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament are made from the point of view that God is far above. This is the time before the Spirit was given to indwell the believer in the New Testament. So if we are not careful we will fail to understand the Old Testament from the more informed New Testament.

Understanding the work of God in the lives of the chosen people from the view given us by God in the New Testament gives us a whole new understanding to what is true for the brothers and sisters in Christ. The unity enjoyed by the Father, Son, and Spirit, now includes the children of God. When we speak to brothers and sisters, we need to keep in mind we are also dealing with the indwelling Spirit of God. When we consider other Christians, we must consider God to be with them.

The Christ life means we represent Christ

We have escaped the corruption of sinful desire to become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet 1:3-4) Not two natures but one with God. There must be no confusion, if we have died with Christ, we have received His life as our life, we have God, our body is a temple of God.

All those who have died with Christ are our brothers and sisters who have God, who now represent Christ, be respectful of this, and give thanks to God. Whether they know it or not, all those in Christ have God, and should be treated accordingly. Do we treat others like we know God is with them? Do we treat unbelievers as those who desperately need to be born of God so they too can have eternal life?

This work of God enables us to live according to His written word. This means the words of Christ for His disciples are abundantly doable. The teaching of Jesus Christ explains what God has in mind for us to do when we are in Him by the giving of the Spirit of God. It is written: *'The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'* Rom 8:4

The sermon on the mountain shows us how the children of God are enabled to live in obedience to God the Father. These teachings of the Lord are His explanation of how the law of God is to be personally experienced through obedience by all those who follow Him because they trust in Him for strength.

Walking in the Spirit is the only way to live as a child of God under His sovereign control and leadership. Considering that the word of God is a revelation from God for the training and development of His chosen people, it is therefore able to be obeyed and implemented by those who no longer live in the flesh but are led and empowered by His Spirit of holiness. The Spirit helps us know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that we may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Obedience to God will inevitably cause suffering, but there is never a time when the children of God are not enclosed in His presence. So it is always God's purpose that we are comforted by His love. Regardless of what difficulty we face, nothing can shake us from the security of God's sovereign authority and power. Rom 8:35-39

God has a master plan for those who overcome the flesh and the world by walking as Christ walked by the power of the Spirit. God is uniquely perfect and without blemish, He is all powerful, and it is His plan to make us to be completely formed into the likeness of Christ, so that we can rule with Christ in the new heaven and earth while sitting with Him on His throne. Therefore Christ' holiness is to be increasingly seen in the children of God.

Just as Jesus Christ is the exact representation of God the Father, the children of God are destined to become complete reflections of Christ in God. God's children will be clothed in the beauty of God's holiness. We must look forward to the living promise of God, and never look back with interest to the dead past that is crucified with Christ.

We were born into sin and dishonour by the natural working of the flesh, but this is not to remain as it was. *'It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.'*
1 Cor 15:43-44

We represent Christ to each other as we seek to build up each one as Christ's ambassadors to the world. We represent Christ to the world so we speak of the plan of God to reconcile the world through the sacrifice of Christ on behalf of all who will believe and obey Him as Lord and God. We represent Christ in everything we do in our community knowing we do this in the presence of Christ as His servants on earth.

When we are at work, we do all things in a way that is honouring to Christ. When we are out and about, we always represent Christ and His mission on earth. We represent Christ in our homes so that we treat each other as Christ would nurture them in His love.

How much difference would there be if all Christians treated each other as living bearers of God to the church? How much improvement would there be in the ministry of the church if everyone used their God given spiritual gifts? How much more evangelism would take place if all Christians acted as bearers of God to the world? How much more desire would there be for the fullness of maturity if all Christians followed the Spirit's leading? How much more would the world see Christ in us if we all lived the Christ life as provided by God?

This is not just a spiritual fantasy. *'When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.'* Col 3:4

And what does this mean for Christian unity? All Christians would speak with one voice as the Spirit of Christ gives the same truth to each one. How much more would the church be what Christ designed it to be?

As with all aspects of our growing in holiness, the fullness of the Spirit is something we work towards daily through faithful obedience. Wouldn't it be a tremendous blessing if we all worked daily towards our potential for the kingdom of God? Not to mention the harmony and brotherly love that would shine like a full moon even in the darkest hour.

The problem we face is that many are not at all actively working on their growth in holiness on a daily basis by putting on the life of Christ while guarding their thinking. Regardless of where we are today as individuals, we are obligated to be working together with each other towards the fullness of maturity in Christ.

Diligence in spiritual growth cannot be said to be taking place if the only time given to that work is one hour on Sunday. The Holy Spirit is interested in our moment by moment commitment to spiritual growth and development in our service to God. Operating as we truly are in Christ means we will feel God's constant pleasure.

The apostle Peter warns those of us who have entered into a relationship with Jesus that we are to remember we are not who we used to be, we have been cleansed from our old sins and we have a new life with a new purpose. We cannot fail to grow in Christ and be comfortable with ourselves. *'For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.'*

2 Pet 1:9

How much more delight would we have in serving each other in the Lord, if we could just remember when we serve one another we are actually serving God Himself at the same time. How many more people would see the light of God in Christ through His disciples if we lived the Christ life by loving them as we love each other?

Brothers and sisters, Christ is our life, live His life with all your heart, mind and strength. Abide in Him.

God's proven cure for anxiety is Himself

The Lord tells us to be anxious for nothing because we can trust in God's protective care for each of us as His beloved children. This means that when we believe in God, we must trust our life into His powerful hands.

The cure for anxiety that can overwhelm everyone of us begins with trusting in God even while we are dealing with the curse caused by the sinfulness of man. And in the same way as our salvation can't be addressed until we acknowledge our sinfulness; our anxiety can't be adequately resolved until we accept that its cause is with ourselves and where we have invested our hope away from God.

To begin with, it is often the case that we are not mindful enough that we live in a world that remains under the curse of God's judgment against sin until Jesus returns. Mankind rebels against the sovereignty of God so that the full blessings of God are forfeited. Some of that independent spirit that bought Adam down still lingers in us, so instead of trusting God we want to insist on looking to the world for what we want. Even when we say we are Christians who are supposed to trust in God for what we need, but we fail to rely on Him. We seem to be blind to the fact that nothing in the world is going to be ideal all the time, and even if our heart is towards God, we are told that suffering will increase because sin increases.

So the Lord Himself has told us to consider our ways:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will

put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Matt 6:19-34

Here we see two realms of desire that can claim our hearts. Our desires can either be for the physical world which is in decay, or the kingdom of God that is eternal. There are two masters that we can be slaves to, one ruling over earthly desires that can dominate our life, making us slaves to coveting which isn't going to give peace but make us even more anxious. The other master is when heavenly desires enslave us to God so we can give up being anxious because God is the Master of our lives. We are either mastered by the creation or the Creator. And behind the creaturely world lies the deceiver of the world, the lord of the flies. Baal Zebub, "Baal of flies,"

2 Kings 1:2 Matt 12:24

We can also see two treasure locations, heaven or earth. The issue for us is where we have placed the treasure of our hearts. What is of most importance that we devote most of our time and consideration to achieve? What occupies our minds most of the time, and what are our priorities? Are our aspirations Heavenward or earthly?

We also see that there is a condition of spiritual sight, if our eyes are on the world which is no substitute for God, we may think we see, but the light we think we have is darkness, and how dark is the darkness that doesn't know it's blind. This poor spiritual vision will ruin the whole

direction of our lives. *“The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”*
Matt 6:22-23

And if there is darkness there is also the light that God gives to those who place their trust in Him. The followers of Christ have received His light so they don't walk in the darkness. *“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”*
John 8:12

If we walk in the light we will know our treasurer is Christ, and our hope is in heaven waiting for us in Christ Jesus. If we think we walk in the light, but our hope is still in the world, we can't see because we have a rubbish bin over our heads.

The only way the kingdom of God is going to be seen in this world before Christ comes again, is if we show it by the way we live as citizens of heaven as obedient subjects of the King by depending on Him for life and godliness. The world needs to see the humble obedient way of Christ in His followers, but if we are looking for what we want in the world, they will not see light because we are in the darkness of the world and we aren't any different to them.

Jesus asked the Father: *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* When we get personally upset about the plots and schemes of fleshly people which are orchestrated by the evil one, we have begun to think the world owes us something, and we have been deceived and become blind again. We are not to identify with the world, but the evil one will try to get us to believe our hope is in the world.

God gives security against anxiety

Therefore we need to take stock of our priorities. We need to see where real life actually comes from. *‘Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”*

John 14:6

We need to know the basic meaning of the kingdom of God, so we need to acknowledge God's kingly rule, His reign, His action, His lordship,

His power; His sovereign governance over all things in heaven and earth is without contradiction. Seeking the kingdom that Jesus commands means surrendering to the Majestic Authority of God in Christ in all things. It means we don't live as if we need to be in control, for that is impossible and leading to treason, 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 that is 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 goes about submitting to the rule of God. 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. The unbelievers will be anxious because they ignore God's rule and have no power to enlarge their lives by one minute beyond the decay of the fallen world. Believers are safe with God: *"So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."*
Matt 10:31

'For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"'
Rom 8:15

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

You of little faith

So: *You of little faith! Do not worry.* Little faith means we lack confidence in God. We are allowing ourselves to be distracted by the darkness. We need to take more care about our thoughts. Our worry is

the result of unbelief and a failure to rely on Him. Why are we concerned when we clam to believe in God, what's going on? Belief determines behaviour, so if we are worried, our belief is lacking. It's a bit like the Israelites in the wilderness when God put them to the test of faith, and they preferred to go back to Egypt to eat onions in horrible conditions of slave labour.

To those of little faith "*do not worry*" is repeated five times. Five repetitions are telling us of a serious issue we must pay careful attention to.

For this reason do not worry, (v25) you can't serve God and wealth, (v24) you can't be healthy and have an attachment to wealth and God at the same time. That will only increase your worry and worry will not be productive. (v27-28) Do not worry then, (v31) because unbelievers are worriers like that. But you must know that God knows what you need, (v32) so seek first the kingdom of God. (v33) Do not worry, you can't change tomorrow, tomorrow will look after itself, regardless of how much you become anxious for the things of the world. Matt 6:34

Don't be anxious for this reason: "*Your heavenly Father feeds you, God so clothes you; your heavenly Father knows what you need.*" "*Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things*" God has it in hand.

While the world falls apart and corruption destroys what blessing 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. Rom 8:17

The answer to worry and anxiety is God who manages 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. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against 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, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Rom 8:28-31, 38-39

Trusting in God for our life is the essence of the faith. His gift of faith is what we need as we are prepared by our Father for heaven through godly training in the midst of this sinful world. His faith is not 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

We are not to be blinded by being attracted to the world

'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.' Heb 11:1, 16, 36-40

To this spiritual training in suffering by faith we can add from more recent history, some were fed to lions, some burnt at the stake, some beheaded, some hung from gallows, some burnt in their houses, some blown up with bombs, some drowned in rivers, some starved to death, some enslaved and tortured in prison.

And all these champions of faith didn't turn back when they were denied the good things of life. They suffered patiently. *'For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favour with God.'*

1 Pet 2:20

Like those who went before them: *'All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had*

provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.'

As we are transformed by suffering, Paul tells us to follow his example and to watch out for imposters: *'Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and suffering, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.'*

2 Tim 3:10-13

We are told to ask God for what we need, but we are confused as to what that is because we look too fondly at the world and forget we are a holy people belonging to God.

1 Pet 2:9

Jesus says: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"*

Matt 7:7-11

However earthly minded empty clouds will try to interpret this passage as making the things of the world available to the children of God, but they can only do that by taking God's word out of context. The false prophets will always tell the people what they wanted to hear, and the earthly minded only want to hear about the stuff of the world.

The context of asking, seeking, knocking Jesus talks about is the exclusive kingdom of God. *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."*

Matt 7:13-14

When we keep looking to the world as the unbelievers do, haven't we forgotten who we are? *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you*

milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

1 Cor 3:1-3

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 12: 34

The asking and seeking Jesus is talking about is not after the world of flesh, His concern for us is our heavenly home. When we seek the King and His rule to reign over us, our Father in heaven will give us what is good for us according to the heavenly realm. *“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”*

Matt 6:9-10

This is the abundant life Jesus offers; it is fellowship with the Father and the Son. (John 17:3) Fellowship with God is the answer to all anxious thinking. Without fellowship with God the thorns of worry will strangle any potential for life. *‘And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.’*

Matt 13:22

But the good soil produces good fruit, *“the man who hears the word and understands it.”* (Matt 13:23) He does this by *‘casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.’*

1 Peter 5:7

God has provided the means for us to understand

God has provided His trustworthy owner’s manual we know as the Bible for those who are possessed by God, but the warrantee is only valid when the manual is followed correctly.

‘All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.’

2 Tim 3:16

‘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.’

Col 3:1-3

We need to look up to where Christ is because there is a tendency to look down; we need a heavenly perspective because we live with the earthly remnants of our mind that must be dealt with as we grow in Christ.

When we are joined to Christ Jesus, we begin the task of putting to death the fleshly thinking and desires that resist faithful obedience to God's manual 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 way of thinking. *'And 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

According to the biblical training manual, this new way of thinking means trusting in God who gives us peace in the chaos of this world, because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Gal 2:20

Paul said we can know peace in hunger and suffering: *'I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.'* Phil 4:12
'in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.' 1 Thess 5:18

Therefore is God's provision a general idea or an absolute reality?

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matt 6:33

Is this teaching to be understood as uncontradictable? Does it mean God will give you what you want all the time?

What does the rest of the Bible say, and what does Jesus say elsewhere? The answer is it is both general and absolute. In a way the general deals with everyday concerns, and the absolute the ultimate goal of eternal life in the image of Christ for those whom He died and rose again. It is not too hard to know from experience that generally God provides for the majority of His people the majority of the time, but we also know sometimes the reality of a shortcoming where greater trust is needed. So

we shouldn't conclude that this verse tells us all there is to understand about what the Father is doing on our behalf?

There is a bigger picture that we must never forget in fear of taking the daily struggle for our needs to be the greatest reality and forget we have eternal life in Christ.

In the beginning God's provision was absolute. But from the fall and the curse of sin this provision is more general and sometimes uncertain. This is obvious because the early churches suffered persecution, and Christians often suffer a lack of provisions.

Jesus said we would suffer tribulations. (John 16:33) Jesus also said "*For you always have the poor with you.*" John 12:8

Poverty was the normal situation for many churches

'They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.' Gal 2:10

'In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

'Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.' James 1:27

'For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.' Rom 15:26

'Even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' Phil 4:16-19

As the family of God we care for each other, we are commanded to help the poor. The early churches were often poor. The health and wealth

teaching wasn't know in the first century. Those who were well provided with were often the means of God's provision for those who had little.

'But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?'
1 John 3:17

'Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.'
Phil 2:3-4

In the early church, the majority of the members were poor, the early church had a view of poverty and a disposition towards the poor that is far different from that of the prosperity preachers today. The early Church saw suffering as the only way to follow Jesus. The early Christians saw struggle as muscle development in the things of God. The early church was wedded to poverty, prisons and persecutions as they suffered with Christ.

Suffering persecution for His sake is one means God uses to bless those who represent Christ. *"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me."*
Matt 5:11

But today there is a push by some towards being married to gaining more prosperity, glorifying and promoting personalities, and being popular and successful in the secular world while denying the need to suffer with Christ in order to be glorified with Him.

Sickness was not unknown in the early Church

Although Paul was able to do some miracles of healing, all who he knew were not healed miraculously.

'Epaphroditus was sick to the point of death?'
Phil 2:27

'use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.'
1 Tim 5:23

'Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.'
2 Tim 4:20

'For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.'
1 Cor 11:30

If Christians were to always have what they need of health and goods as supplied abundantly by God, as many would insist, then God's word got it wrong in all the above verses. And there would be little need to live by faith as we are put under the test in a fallen world.

The gospel is the same yesterday and today

Today the gospel of God is the same as it was when He called His disciples. *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*
Matt 16:24-26

This is the way of Christ and self denial, sincere humility, daily cross bearing, constant suffering in the world, increasing alienation from the world, patient contentment in little and grace in much hostility.

But this true Gospel has been replaced with another easier gospel finding comfort and enjoyment in the world that is alienated from God.

If we don't walk as Jesus walked we haven't taken up our cross so we have every reason to be anxious. Our cross is our key to heaven, not our pillow. An abundant life of health and happiness now is not what Jesus had in mind. *'Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*
Matt 19:28

Instead of looking to the world Jesus would have us trust the Father in time of plenty and in times of little, because it is the Father's privilege as to how He works out the details in our lives according to His will. Therefore the Father is not subject to our demands as if He can lose His ability to direct our lives the way He has planned from the beginning. *'We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.'*

Eph 1:11

“The LORD Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.’” Isa 14:24

When there are shortcomings in our physical supply of *“these things,”* our God often wants to make up for what we lack with supply from His other children, and most importantly with Himself as He abides in us so that we are filled up with the fullness of God. Eph 3:19

Those who have gone before us and suffered severely at the hands of men still had inner peace because God abides in them. But we have a tendency to forget, that above and beyond our physical life we are the spiritual children of God. We are the dwelling place of God. We are the temple of God. We are new creations of God. We have a heavenly home that is not of this world. What is of most importance is that we have been made to be one life with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We have no need to be fearful or anxious, because we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus our Lord. *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* Matt 5:6

The health and wellness promoters are most interested in gratification of the physical world. Our Father in heaven is most interested in our primary spiritual inheritance in Christ; therefore we are here for training by the Spirit in righteousness so that we overcome the world by faith as we grow in Christ. We may not want to give thanks for all things but we can give thanks in all things because we know our Father is using that disagreeable person or that uncomfortable event to assist our transformation into the image of Christ. In this way He *‘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’*

Rom 8:28-29

If all was health and wellness there wouldn't be any need for faith in undertaking the trials of deprivation that are designed to produce mature children of God. Health and wellness people would have us believe that somehow disciplined and diligent training under sufferings transforming power isn't necessary, for as they promise all things here below, they make the incorrect assumption that we have somehow already arrived at the fullness of the maturity of Christ.

God our Father has prepared us for training now and heaven later

If our attachment to this world is where our idols come from, then it is for our benefit that our heavenly training takes place by the removal of that which takes God's place so we can focus better on Him. We enjoy that as much as children when the candy is placed out of reach.

"Your will be done" means whatever God wants to happen will happen. When we surrender to His sovereign will His law can be fulfilled in us who do not walk by the flesh but by the Spirit of God given to us, (Rom 8:3-4) to compel us to keep His statutes and commandments.

Ezek 36:27

Therefore we are to trust in God, whether we are full or hungry, well supplied or lacking. We can give thanks in all things because our Father has us and we have Him. When we trust in God as we suffer with the rest who don't know Him, we will be as lights in the darkness of the world. We will be witnesses to the divine redemption made available in Christ, and our testimony of His kingdom reign will be the power of God for the salvation of all those who the Father has chosen to be born again in the image of Christ.

Before the second coming of Christ the redeemer for His people, the corruption of creation continues with poverty, sickness and suffering, even for those who believed in Him. Although He had purchased us with the shedding of His blood from the power of sin and death, the creation is still waiting for its redemption. Sin and corruption remain until Christ returns and the whole creation waits with great expectation for the glory to come.

'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. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within

ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.'
Rom 8:18-23

This is a wonderful truth about life in our present experience in pain and suffering, and the fullness of blessings and glory that awaits us in Christ. And while we suffer now, it is not to be compared to the glory that awaits us in the future. The creation's expectation of wholeness is not possible until we are changed in the coming of the Lord. Therefore we have a living hope that our suffering is not meaningless. The futility of the world now is part of God's judgement against the sin that must face its final eradication in the Day of the Lord. And when He comes for us the creation will rejoice with us. So even while we have been given the Spirit to dwell in us, we still groan in our suffering with creation while we await our final and full adoption to come with the redemption of our bodies. We have suffering now and heaven later.

This is the now and the not yet of the Kingdom of God

When God called His chosen people who would live under His rule in the kingdom of Israel, He would be their King and rule over them, He would give them the laws to live by, He would be their God and they would be His people. But the people wanted a king like the nations of the world.

"The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them."
1 Sam 8:7

The same situation exists today. Jesus told a story about the attitude of pride amongst the people He came to rule over.

"While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.' But His citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'" "
Luke 19:11-14

But still Jesus shows us God is ruling over the world.

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.” Matt 6:9-10

The kingdom is now and not yet. It has already come because the King has come. (Matt 4:17, 23) It is also now for those who are poor in spirit and those who are persecuted because of righteousness. (Matt 5:3, 10) And it is still to come. *"Your kingdom come."* (Matt 6:10) *‘So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’* Phil 2:10-11

The Kingdom is moving towards a comprehensive conversion of the entire universe: with a new heaven and a new earth. *“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’”* Rev 11:15

Because of the kingdom we must exalt God who is *“Hallowed.”* He is to be worshiped. His is most worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness. *"Your will be done,"* means whatever happens on earth, only happens because it is within His purposed will and ultimately plan in heaven and on earth. His will, will be, what He allows, He allows, for nothing can take place other than what He determines will occur. No one argues with God and wins.

When God handed man over to reap the consequences of his sin, it was obviously not His will for man to sin, but it was part of His divine judgement to hand him over, (Rom 1:24, 26, 28) it is part of His plan for the final consumption of all things under the rule of His Son.

"He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." Eph 1:9-10

God's will is for our training now and exaltation later

Any apparent lack in the world now is for our benefit later as we rise above the darkness through faith and point the way to God in Christ by our personal witness to Him who died and rose again on our behalf. In this faithful reliance on God regardless of our circumstances, the world will see we have a living faith, because we have a living God who supplies all our needs according to His sovereign will that we should walk as Jesus Christ walked in the darkness of the world.

'For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.'

Heb 12:3-8

Our salvation comes to us in Christ while we live in the midst of the curse of sinfulness. Therefore our training in righteousness is like a refining fire in the sinful world, so that we would appear as lights in the darkness that show the way to God in Christ.

If our prayer hasn't changed our circumstances, God is using our circumstances to change us. We have to change; we have to put off the old life of the flesh and put on the new life of holiness in the image of Christ. We should be quick to give thanks to God that we even have the privilege of a cross that we can take up to follow Christ, for it is God who is working in us, (Phil 2:13) so that we can be transformed into the image of God in Christ.

Rom 8:29

Be careful about false lights

But there will always be those religious people who look for what they want in the world. Some have been teaching that we can expect to see the benefits of the blessings of kingdom of God right here where we live

on earth. But Jesus has declared that His kingdom is not in this world. Those who offer the blessings of heaven now are clouds without water, according to the word of God they can't deliver.

The promise of God is in Christ who we have now, and heavenly blessings will be ours when He returns to take us home. Right now we have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Eph 1:3

Seeking the kingdom of God is trusting in God to take care of our needs according to His will. However we must not assume we can have it all now because the flesh that remains in our thinking still wants to be satisfied, suggesting that we can go through life without struggle because Jesus has paid the price of our salvation. Our needs in Christ are more than earthly things. We cannot be slaves to two masters, at the same time be a slave to the world and also a slave to Christ.

Jesus said we will have tribulations now. (John 16:33) There is a war raging between the earthly and the heavenly. *'Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.'*

Eph 5:11-12

We will have difficulties because the flesh wars against the spirit. *'For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.'*

Gal 5:17

If our minds are preoccupied with earthly things we will be anxious, because we know deep down that the earthly cannot be counted on. When our minds are preoccupied with the world we will not see God's provision in Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. *'The mind set on the flesh us death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.'* Rom 8:6

We need to consider the whole council of God's word

'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.'

Phil 3:2-3

'For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.' Phil 3:18-19

Is there a danger that in playing the Prophet and teaching earthly prosperity that the little ones may be caused to stumble? I believe there is, woe be to the ones who promote this way. In the Day of the Lord, great sorrow and distress will be upon the false teachers. Isn't it obvious that when people are already anxious about worldly desires, that encouraging them to desire more from the world will ultimately lead to more anxiety? The Lord Jesus Christ has called His disciples out of the world, though they remain in the world, they are not of the world. *"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

John 17:15-16

Why in the world would Jesus agree that we should seek what we need in the world again, isn't that like a dog returning to its vomit for a second course of vile bile? *'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

Listen to the judgement of God: *"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"*

Matt 18:6-7

The church is built on the foundation of the Prophets and the Apostles. We don't need new prophets and apostles to lead us astray by encouraging worldly aspirations. The roles of prophet and apostles as reserved for our foundational education in Christ have finished, the foundation is sound, and it is built on solid Rock. God has already provided what we need to know, we just have to obey the word of God

and abide in Christ. If we are in Christ we cannot be divided from Him or His will for our transformation into His image.

In Christ we are not afraid to surrender all we have

‘But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 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; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.’ Phil 3:7-11

Worldly loss will not separate us from God

‘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. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Rom 8:35-39

Because we have God we can never be separated from His love regardless of the chaos in the world.

God is with us

Satan rages and the world is terrified as the curse of sin wreaks havoc under the judgement of God. But because God's word tells us Christ is in us and we are in Christ, we shall not be moved regardless of what is happening in the sinful world. The Lord our God is not under the curse of sin so that He is unstable and unreliable. He is not limited or frustrated by the blindness of men. The Lord Almighty has victory over all things and rules all things forevermore.

For the Lord is our shepherd, He keeps us safe from the curse of sin and death. The Lord makes up for everything that is lacking in our life by faith as we wait for His return to take us home. We can rejoice even if there is physical illness, or a lack of personal intimacy and love, or difficult poverty or even persecution. He is our life and secures us like a mother hen protects her chicks under her wings to shield us from terror. He is our high tower so that we can rise above the turmoil below which is revealed in a state of great disturbance, confusion, and uncertainty.

Christ is real bread and drink to keep our heart fully satisfied because we can feed on the immortal life of God so we can be content in every situation. He constantly whispers to us that we should not be afraid because He is with us, and He isn't going anywhere. He assures us that He is always faithful and will never abandon us. He promises us whatever happens He will take us to be where He sits on His throne.

The Lord Himself is our peace; because of His love we are comforted all the days of our life. He is our life. 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. Blessed be the Lord God almighty; Who was, and still is, and will come for us, so we will not be moved because we trust in Him.

'who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.' Phil 3:3

It doesn't matter how badly the world attacks us or denies us, 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

However, while the Lord says we can't have two masters, I don't think He means it is impossible, we do our best to make it so, but to be truly free of anxiety it is impossible. But if we insist on having one foot in

heaven and one in the world it is easily possible and disastrous. Unfortunately this is how many attempt to live the Christian life, thinking they can manage with one foot in the world while hoping for heaven. All this worry means, is that we are not securely attached to Christ, we are not abiding in the true Vine, so we won't produce the fruit of the kingdom, and instead be gathered and burnt in the fire. Having a foot in both the world and heaven is at best like straddling a strong barbwire fence while standing on wet slippery grass.

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

We need the uncanny single minded ability of homing pigeons to always return to their home base to be fed by their master instead of being distracted by seagulls scrounging for scraps of rubbish in the sand. If you haven't surrendered your life to the King of Glory you will be as anxious as scrapping seagulls fighting over rubbish in the sand. Jesus calls all to Repent and believe in the only Son of God who has the gift of life and peace.

Jesus is God's proven cure for anxiety because He is Christ our Lord and King. If we aren't living under the sovereign rule of God and denying ourselves and taking up our cross, then we have every reason to be worried and anxious. Even as sin continues, God is always in control. How big is your God? Is He the one who gives His life to those whom He has chosen so that they will never be alone or lack the power of His presence? Or do you have a god who is unable to uphold you with His feeble hand. We need the only God who is able, so that we are anxious for nothing, and give up worrying because He cares for us. Jesus said to His disciples: *"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

If Jesus is King we need to submit to His rule in order to know His provision and His peace, for He alone determines our spiritual needs as His chosen people. *"Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD."* Psalm 32:10

‘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

This prayer isn’t designed to change God’s mind, prayer is meant to change us so that we have the mind of Christ. *‘O LORD, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; For You have worked wonders, Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.’* Isa 25:1

It is worth saying again. If our prayer hasn't changed our circumstances, God is using our circumstances to change us. When our prayers see no change it means we have to change; we have to put off the old life of the flesh and put on the new life of holiness in the image of Christ. We should be quick to give thanks to God that we even have the privilege of a cross that we can take up to follow Christ, for it is God who is working in us, (Phil 2:13) so that we can be transformed into the image of God in Christ. Rom 8:29

‘The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.” Isa 14:24

‘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.’ (Prov 3:5-6) God Himself is the only answer to worry and anxiety, trust Him. *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”* Phil 2:14

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 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 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, means His love is controlling us as we are enlarged when we trust in Him.

Walking with God is the practical reality of our loving God as 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 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 respond. 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."
Prov 3:5-8

Without Christ we want to take possession of the earthly things that are not ours, but with Christ in us 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 in unbroken and continuous change from one degree of glory to another 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 our worldly lives daily. (Luke 9:23-24) And this is shown as we remain committed in obedience to His word, in 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 His love. (John 15:10) If there is no fruit of Christ's love as we walk in earth 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, it 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 increasingly 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.

John Newton. 1725-1807. "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."

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 spoiled, 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 in our effectiveness as witness to the glory of Christ. 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 fleshly thinking 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 task is denying the flesh in order to stay close to God, regardless of 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 into 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 are God's training ground in the way of our purification. 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 working 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 and love Jesus 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 in order to live in the love of God. 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. 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 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. 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 of God working on the inside. God is not a distant spectator; He has bought His team in Christ, and now runs things in the field from within the hearts of His players. The encourager has taken over to instill 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 charge. Whatever we may lose in the world, be it the loss of things, or relationships, or beloved family; (Matt 19:29) 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.

Love is God in us

True fellowship is the love of God shared with His children. We should consider how we might, by our words and deeds, encourage one another to give ourselves in self forgetfulness, to love and good deeds as we follow the example of Jesus. If we are to know the love of God, we are to die to self and then do all things for the glory of God.

Naturally we go after what we desire, and we naturally desire what is pleasing to the flesh. But the Holy Spirit desires that we build up one another in love. *"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."* 1 Cor 12:7

If we love God, we pursue holiness. In that case, we war daily with the flesh, the world, and Satan. If we are not aware of the battle with the spiritual forces of darkness seeking to relentlessly bring us down, for they never rest in pursuing God children, then we have forgotten we are a soldier of God who stands firm and never stops using the full armour of God.

Do we live with God's love or are we confused. How often we need to confess how dull we are. God is near! When we pray, do we pray to God in the heavens somewhere? Apart from us as far as the furthest universe. Or do we pray to Him who is closer to us than your own breath?

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Rom 6:5-8

He is the One who gives life to our mortal body.

The One who said He would be in us.

The One who said He would never leave us.

He is the One who lives in us because we have denied ourself and taken up our cross to follow Him.

He is the One who lives in us as our hope of glory.

He is the One who said: *"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

"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

This is the One who lives in us to teach us all things concerning Christ. This is the One who intercedes on our behalf when we don't know how to pray. This is the One who dwells in everyone who lives for Christ so that they can love one another as He has loved us. This is the One who gives gifts of the manifestation of His love to every believer, so that together they can assist each other to grow up into the image of Christ.

This is the Spirit of the one who said to His disciples, but also applies to us as His disciples: *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me"...."Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."* John 15:4, 9-11

Dane Ortlund. 'The life of Jonathan Edwards'

"Edwards then makes the striking claim that this holy energy of love between Father and Son is the Holy Spirit. Drawing on 1 John 4, he suggests that if God dwelling in believers produces love in them (1 John 4:12), and God dwells in believers by His Spirit (1 John 4:13), then this divine love in them must, quite simply, be the Holy Spirit. The Spirit "is God's infinite love to Himself and happiness in Himself."

"To be a Christian is to love. Love is neither optional nor peripheral. It is not required of only certain personality types. A

Christian is one who has been welcomed into the great dance of mutual delight within the triune Godhead, having had the very love of this Godhead implanted in his own soul.”

“For a Christian, moreover, love is not a bonus to sound doctrine, a nice extra or add-on for some believers. No, love is the very point of sound doctrine. Sound doctrine without love is itself deeply self-contradictory "a cold and hard-hearted Christian is the greatest absurdity and contradiction. It is as if one should speak of dark brightness, or a false truth!" Accumulation of doctrinal knowledge nets out as loss, not gain, if such theological growth fails to foster benevolent, heartfelt goodwill toward others.”

“Divinely implanted love is not only the sum of all Christian living but also the "root and spring" of all Christian living. Not only does love fulfill all that a Christian is called to do. It is also true that any given virtue is, when considered carefully, a specific manifestation of love. Love is "that from which all good dispositions and behavior do arise, the stock on which all good fruit grows, and the fountain in which all that is good is contained and from whence it flows."

If we think God is only up there somewhere we will live by the flesh

Surely it is the flesh that remains in us that feels isolated from the presence of God? The Bible teaches us that we have Christ in us, and that He is also in heaven as our Interceder with the Father. Rom 8:34

We must awaken the sleeper in us and live in the presence of God. God lives in us, there is no separation in the mind of Christ between Himself and all of us who now compose His body on earth.

Since Christ is in us His love is ours to give as His light on earth

In Christ we are here to represent His love to one another and the world. We are not separate individuals but united in Christ to love as He loves. Because His love has been poured out into our hearts by the Spirit of

God. *'The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'*

Rom 5:5

'Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.'

1 John 25-6

In our on-going spiritual war with our flesh, the world and the devil, we are to be strengthened by the presence of God in us, and with God in us for each other, so that we can be assured that we are never separated from the love of God. *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

1 John 4:4

God's love is healing for the flesh

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails;

1 Cor 13:4-8

One writer put it this way:

The essence of God's love is endless goodwill, abundant benevolence, and delight in the object of His love, and is always just. Because *God is love*, (1 John 4:8) He is the foundation of love. Everything God does flows from His love. God loves because that love is consistent with His nature and the nature of His being. He loves the unlovely, so it is not because we deserve to be loved, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature. The love God has for us, should to describe the quality of our love for God.

Matt 22:37

God's love is always seen in what He does as the Lord of Lord's. God's love is most clearly seen in the cross of Jesus Christ. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

John 3:16

God's love is graciously available for those who walk in the darkness of rebellion. And He constantly seeks the benefit of the ones He loves. God's love led to the sacrifice of His only Son for those He loves. *'How great a love the Father has bestowed on us.'* 1 John 3:1

Michael Horton wrote in 'Calvin and the Christian life'

"The law of love is not the path to God's favour, but the highway from it that leads out into the world.... The Word creates faith that receives justification in Christ and then produces the fruit of love and good works.... God's gifts come to us, and then through us to others."

B.B. Warfield, wrote on 'The Emotional life of our Lord'

"As His love to the Father was the source of His obedience to the Father, and the living spring of His faithfulness to the work that had been committed to Him, so He declares that the love of His followers to Him, imitating and reproducing His love to them, is to be the source of their obedience to Him, and through that, of all the good that can come to human beings, including, as the highest reach of social perfection, their love for one another. Self-sacrificing love is thus made the essence of the Christian life, and is referred for its incentive to the self-sacrificing love of Christ Himself: Christ's followers are to *"have the same mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus"*

We are the ones who have Christ and His love

to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Col 1:27

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Col 3:3-4

"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." *"In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."*
John 14:17-18, 20

In Christ we are bound together in love

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

1 John 4:7-11

It is easier to do religious works than to love like God. Religious works that don't spring from true love are not from God. The work of God requires a sacrificial love that places our priority on reflecting the Spirit of love revealed in the death of Christ for sinners, and subsequently those the Father has given the Son.

Jesus Christ died to reconcile us to live in loving fellowship communion with God, and this connection with the love of God unites all His children in His love.

The quality of the fellowship we have with God's children, reflects the fellowship we have with the Father and the Son by the Spirit.

God's love is Christ's death for us so His love can be in us

"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us....so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
Rom 5:8, 21

The love we have received from God is expressed through the lives of those who are in Christ; it upholds all things in the lives of the people of God. Love gives meaning to service, and love gives divine value to the family of His beloved children. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*
John 13:34

Since love is to be sacrificial in following the example of Jesus Christ, it is opposed to a life of self-seeking. Because love is the blessing given to the humble spirit, there is no room for pride and self-seeking. Therefore, the inclination to save our life for ourselves needs to be denied if we are to live with God and each other in love. Love binds God's people to God and one another. *'That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'*
Col 2:2-3

It is only possible to become a lover of God by giving ourselves as a living, and complete sacrifice to God in absolute surrender to the love of God in His Son Jesus Christ. *'Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 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

The Evidence of our love for others

Evidence of God's love in us is that we love as He loves. Our responsibility to act as God's children means we do as He would do. *'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.'*
Matt 22:38-39

Jesus prayed for our complete union with God's love. *"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us."*
John 17:21

In love the Son laid down His life so we can live with Him in love. Therefore, the basis for the Christian life as the community of God, is love, love from God. *'How great is God's love that we should be called children of God.'*
1 John 3:1

'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

God's love is to have an effect on our daily living in fellowship with the children of God and even with those who resist His love to go their own way. In order for us to love as God loves we need to rely on the Spirit of God who shares His godly life with those who obey Him. *'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.'* Gal 5:22-23

'So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.' Col 3:12-14

As a way of protecting us from being unloving we are commanded to put away all evidence of the flesh. *'Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.'* Eph 4:31-32

Jonathan Edwards wrote:

“A true Christian delights to have God exalted in his abasement, because he loves God. He is willing to own that God is worthy of this; and it is with delight that he casts himself in the dust before God, because he loves God.”

“Love will dispose to walk humbly among men. Love will dispose men to honour one another. Love will dispose to contentment in the station in which God has set him. Love will dispose men to meekness and gentleness in their carriage towards their neighbours. Love will dispose men to forgive injuries. Love will dispose men to acts of mercy towards our neighbours. love will dispose to those duties which they owe one another.”

“Love would dispose to all suitable carriage between husbands and wives; and it would dispose children to obey their parents; parents not to provoke their children unto wrath; servants to be obedient to their masters, not with eye service, but in singleness

of heart; and masters to exercise gentleness and goodness towards their servants.”

“Love would dispose men to do to others as they would that others should do to them, if they were in their neighbours' circumstances, and their neighbour in theirs. Thus love would dispose to all duties, both towards God and towards men. And if love will dispose to all duties, then it follows that love is a root and spring, and, as it were, a comprehension of all virtues. It is a principle which, if implanted in the heart, is alone sufficient to produce all good dispositions; and every right disposition towards God and men is, as it were, summed up in it.”

God's love is revealed in our love for the lost world

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

“I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.” Matt 5:44

God didn't just love those who are respectable; He loved those who were behaving as His enemies; us. Therefore we shall love our enemies as we imitate His love. *“I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.”* (Matt 5:44) This is a command for us to make sure our love is God's kind of love.

As the children of God's sacrificial love, we are to reflect the character of our Father, which flows from His love. We are saved for love and loving the unlovable, in the same way we were loved while sinners who knew nothing about love.

God's love is about our devotion and tenderness from Him that doesn't expect love from the unloving, but always prays for and seeks out a loving response, so that all men would be able to reflect His devoted love in all things.

The God of all love and light is devoted to drawings people out of the darkness of the unloving world and into the light of His great Love. Once we are infected with the love of God, we are then motivated by that love to act in the same way as God because we are provoked with the same motivation, His love. See 2 Cor 5:14-15

Love opens the way to service

"He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." (Matt 10:39) "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." John 13:15

Jesus insisted that sacrificial love of service is to be the distinguishing feature of the followers of Christ. *"Will you lay down your life for Me?"* (John 13:38) Christ' life of self-denial is to be the outstanding characteristic of His disciples. Therefore Jesus repeats the command to love one another. *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."* John 15:12-13

The command from Jesus is for us to live up to the love we share from Him. If we have tasted His love, we are required to share what we have received. *'Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 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.'* Phil 2:4-7

Our security is in His love

'Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.' Rom 8:35, 37

'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom 8:38-39

In the beginning God made man in His image and likeness, so that we might remain in His love by trusting in Him and obeying all He commanded. Jesus Christ came into the world to restore that relationship, so that we might abide in Him, by believing in Him as we trust in Him and obey all He has commanded; so that His life of love might live

through us who remain in His word, as we are set free from self will to live His life in fellowship with the Father of love.

Is His love on our minds?

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.

Rom 8:5-7

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Phil 2:13

What is God's love working in us to please Him?

'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 8:28-30

'for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'

Rom 8:13-14

'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. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all

aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.'

Col 3:2-10

When the flesh is active love is not present

The reverse of love is the flesh. The flesh is impatient, the flesh is unkind, the flesh is jealous, the flesh brags, the flesh is arrogant, the flesh acts unbecomingly, the flesh seeks its own, the flesh is easily provoked, the flesh takes all things into account as a wrong suffered, the flesh rejoiced in unrighteousness, the flesh does not bear all things, the flesh does not believe all things, the flesh does not hope in all things, the flesh never endures all things.

But the Love God brings to His children is for giving the quality of the holiness of God. *"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'*

1 Cor 13:4-7

'The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.'

1 John 4:8

'We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.'

1 John 4:16

We can only love with Christ because we have Christ in us for His Victory over sin and for His glory. Our final victory will only be realized when Jesus comes to take us home to live with Him. Until then we fight against sin and for holiness.

Consider David Brainerd who fought the good fight. (April 20, 1718 – October 9, 1747) He was an American Presbyterian minister and missionary to the Native Americans among the Delaware Indians of New

Jersey. Brainerd, a great spiritual friend of Jonathan Edwards who published Brainerd's diary after he died.

David Brainerd wrote:

"Oh, the pride, selfishness, hypocrisy, ignorance, bitterness, party zeal, and the want [lack] of love, candor, meekness, and gentleness, that have attended my attempts to promote religion, and virtue."

The great saints of the past were probably more conscious of the sin of their flesh than all of us who go around smiling because we think we have overcome. If we have overcome, we have put all the flesh to death and have nothing more to do in our sanctification. Are we kidding?

Has our love for God and man being made perfect in us? Not while we live on earth.

Yes, we give thanks for the grace of God we have received, but we should also know that our battle against sin has not finished.

If we want to live in happiness, as if we have achieved victory over sin, then we are absent without a leave pass from the army of God. We have gone absent from the army of God, and we have neglected our task to put our flesh to death.

Consider the Spirit of God

Would the Spirit who lives in us be impatient, unkind, short tempered, and lack mercy? Would He make unfounded assumptions about people? Would He refuse to co-operate with the gifting of those in whom He lives? Would He remain private by isolating Himself from the emotional lives of His people? Would He fail to love the brethren as Christ has loved us? Would He be indifferent to worldliness that places value on things as the wisdom of men? Would He ignore unholiness in the people in whom He dwells? Would He fail to hate sin and unrighteousness? Would He go about grumbling about short comings in the world?

Therefore, since these things of the flesh are our constant companions, we who claim to be indwelt by the Spirit mostly don't walk with God because we wink at the fleshliness in ourselves.

We go on behaving as if we have already overcome sin and have nothing to fight against that is used by the devil to make us look like hypocrites.

We need to acknowledge our desire to walk by the flesh and undertake to put it to death by walking in submission to the Spirit of God so that we can be transformed into the image of Christ.

"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." 1 John 1:8-9

Have we been regularly fighting against our flesh and the world this week?

If the answer is no, then we have not been aware of the Father's love at work in us for our good as we are being transformed into the image of Christ.

It means we have taken the way of least resistance, and accommodated the flesh, and abandoned our post in the spiritual war of God.

What is not according to the law of love in the Holy Spirit is according to the flesh and sin. Those who are in Christ have received the Spirit of love from God so they can fulfil the law from the heart.

If we don't walk with the Spirit we walk with the flesh.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want." Gal 5:16-17

God is love. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. If we don't cherish our daily walk with the Spirit of love and seek the glory of God, we will walk alone. And walking alone means we won't cherish our time with the

children God loves and seek their highest good, and we won't be interested in what He is doing in their lives.

And we won't be concerned with telling the world about the love of God who gave His only Son to die for the sin of the world, so that sinners can find salvation through the faith that compels repentance.

Those who call themselves Christian who don't walk with the Spirit of love, don't need Him anymore because they have claimed the victory that belongs to Christ alone in this world, so they think as if they have arrived in their Quest for heaven, not understanding that a Quest is a struggle for something elusive and just out of reach.

All of life is a test for His love in us as ordained by God to show us what we have according to the flesh that falls short of the life of the Spirit of Christ, so that we can die to self and be transformed into the image of Christ. Loving God means we do all things for His glory. Which means we love His children and we reveal His love to the world as demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

We haven't finished with the flesh on our earthly Quest for heaven, so there will be times when we please the flesh and don't glorify God. But we must stand firm in the faith as God completes in us all that He has begun in Christ.

Writing on John 13:34 Edwards wrote:

"Our love to others will not depend on their love to us; but we shall do as Christ did to us, love them, though enemies. We shall not only seek our own things, but we shall be in our hearts so united to others that we shall look on their things as our own. We shall look on ourselves interested in their good, as it was in Christ towards us. We shall be ready to forego and part with our own things in many cases for the things of others, as Christ expended and was spent for us. And these things we shall do without any expectation of being requited by them, as Christ did such great things for us without expectation of any requital from us."

And we can do this because the Spirit of love dwells in us.

'Always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 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 1:4-6

All that is in us that is not like Jesus Christ is our flesh, and we are called to put it to death. *if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.*
Rom 8:13

If we walk by the enabling of the Spirit of love, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.
Gal 5:16

We have to be able to say "thou art with me" and believe it. Otherwise, we are on our own. With God in us, we can give thanks in all things, because He is more valuable than all the world. When we are grumbling and complaining we are ignoring the Spirit of God who lives in us, so we get our just deserves.

If we are serious about having fellowship with God in us, we should welcome our trials and tribulation because they are tailored to increase our holiness as we overcome the flesh by faith in God. We overcome the flesh when we don't give it room to breathe unbelief into us, because we trust in God regardless of the many situations He provides for our faiths proving in His righteousness.

If the life of our flesh doesn't cause us to grieve over our incomplete sanctification so that we are poor in spirit and mourn over our weakness, then we need to reassess our reason for living.

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?"
2 Cor 13:5

Anxiety is a struggle in unbelief.

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love."
John 15:9

Living water resources

Come to the River

Compiled by:

Robert May

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com