

# The Christian Life

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## **THAT UTILITARIAN CHRIST**

We must be extremely careful that the Christ we profess to follow is indeed the very Christ of God. There is always the danger that we may be following a Christ who is not the true Christ but one conjured up by our imagination and made in our own image.

In our eagerness to lead men to “accept Christ”, we are often tempted to present for acceptance a Christ who is little more than a fictional caricature. He becomes a Christ of carnal convenience and is therefore more like the god of this world.

The whole purpose of God in redemption is to separate us from the ways of this fallen world by making us holy and restoring us to the spiritual image of the true God. To accomplish this He disengages us from earthly ambitions and draws us away from the cheap and unworthy prizes that worldly men set their hearts upon.

Christ will not be used by any of Adam’s self-seeking brood. We had better learn these things fast if this generation of Christians is to be spared the supreme tragedy of following a Christ who is merely a Christ of convenience and not the true Lord of glory after all.

## **ON RECEIVING ADMONITION**

A state of heart that rejected admonition was characteristic of Israel at various periods in her history. These periods were invariably followed by judgment. When Christ came to the Jews, He found them full of that arrogant self-confidence that would not accept reproof. “We be Abraham’s seed,” they said when He talked to them about their sins and their need of a new life. To reprove them was to insult them. Their pride had taken them beyond reproof.

Professing Christians in every generation have shown this same tendency to fall into this error of presumed righteousness that destroyed Israel. Like the leaders of Israel claimed to be the seed of Abraham, Christians today present their defense based on being the seed of Christ. But Christ is still telling everyone to look for divine fruit coming from their life before resting on any presumed righteousness.

Those who have already entered the state where they can no longer receive admonition are not likely to profit from this warning. After a man has gone over the precipice there is not much you can do for him. Therefore, keep your eyes open to the correction of the Lord and be ready to respond regardless of who brings the message.

## **THE GREAT GOD OF ENTERTAINMENT**

The greater someone's need for support from people or things of the temporal world, the greater is the obvious emptiness of the inner man. This being true, then the present inordinate attachment to every form of entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern Christians is in serious decline. The average Christian has no spring of Living Water "welling up" from within their inner being, no inner presence of divine life to place them above the need for repeated psychological shots to keep them filled with peace and joy. Even people in the church are now drawing their life from this environment, unable to live apart from the stimulation which this fallen world provides. Life without some form of entertainment is simply intolerable for them.

*Dependence upon the temporal things of this world, instead of turning to the true source of Living Water for divine life and fulfillment, is the essence of sin.* The early church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was - a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from the missing presence of God. For this she was abused by the sons of this world. But today she has become tired of the abuse and has joined the ways of the world. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment, she may as well join forces with him and make what she can of his powers. So today, we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven.

Is it not a strange thing and a wonder that with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements as well as seeking fulfillment from temporal pleasures? That in an hour when mature saints are so desperately needed, vast numbers of believers should revert to the clamor of religious toys and earthly recreation?

## **BIBLE TAUGHT OR SPIRIT TAUGHT?**

It may shock some readers to suggest that there is a difference between being Bible taught and being Spirit taught. Nevertheless it is so.

It is altogether possible to be instructed in the rudiments of the faith and still have no real understanding of the divine life. And it is possible to go on to become an expert in Bible doctrine and not have spiritual illumination and be enabled to walk as Jesus did. There is a fleshly veil over the mind and it prevents it from apprehending the truth in its spiritual essence. The religious lives of these professing Christians may appear correct and reasonably moral, but wholly mechanical, because they lack the radiance of the divine life.

Such persons cannot be dismissed as hypocrites. Many of them are serious about it all. They are simply living by the pride of the flesh and therefore remain spiritually blind. Because of a lack of the divine life from the Spirit, they are forced to get along with the outward shell of Christianity while all the time their hearts are starving for spiritual reality. And yet they do not grasp what is wrong with themselves.

This difference between the religion of the creed and the life of the Spirit is well set forth. No one denies this. But such a statement will go over the heads of those who hear unless the Holy Spirit inflames the heart.

Among religious persons of unquestioned orthodoxy, there is often found a dull dependence upon the letter of the text, without the faintest understanding of the Spirit of divine life. *Jesus Christ is Himself, Truth, and He cannot be in someone who is not manifesting His way of life.* The best a book can do is to give us the letter of truth. If we ever receive more than this, it must be by the Holy Spirit who gives “the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16)

## **THE TERROR OF THE LORD**

A truth fully taught in the Scriptures and verified in personal experience by countless numbers of holy men and women through the centuries might

be condensed thus into a religious axiom: No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God.

The first announcement of God's redemptive intention toward mankind was made to a man and a woman hiding in fear from the presence of the Lord because of their fallen state.

The spirit of the world raises people in an environment of building self-confidence in fallen man. *Until this natural pride has been defeated, God will not manifest His own divine life in the believer.* “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” (1 Pet. 5:6 NIV)

The effort of liberal people in the church to woo men to God by presenting the soft side of religion is an unqualified evil because it ignores the very reason for our alienation from God in the first place. Until a man has gotten into trouble with his heart, he is not likely to get out of trouble with God.

A congregation will feel this mysterious terror of God when others in the church are filled with the divine life of the Spirit. When Moses came down from the mount with his face shining, the children of Israel were afraid because of the supernatural work of God seen in the face of Moses. We will begin to see a true converting fear in the church when people are able to see the glory of the Lord's divine life being manifested from the lives of Christians. “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”(2 Cor. 3:18 NIV)

## **NO DIVINE LIFE WITHOUT REPENTANCE**

*The idea that God will pardon a rebel who has not given up his rebellion is contrary both to the Scriptures and to common sense.* How horrible to contemplate a church full of persons who have been pardoned but who still love sin and hate the ways of righteousness.

The promise of pardon and cleansing is always associated in the Scriptures with the command to repent. To divorce the words from each

other is to do violence to the Scriptures and to convict ourselves of deceitful handling of the truth.

I think there is little doubt that the teaching of salvation without repentance has produced a multitude of deceived religious professors who erroneously believe themselves to be saved when in fact they are still living as rebels in the bondage of iniquity and are under penalty of eternal wrath. The whole thing must be acknowledged as a clear victory for the devil, a victory he could never have enjoyed if unwise teachers had not made it possible by preaching the evil doctrine of “forgiveness” without repentance. People cannot help but spew out a carnal nature until they turn from the self-willed life of sin in true repentance.

“Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.” (Luke 17:1-2 NIV)

### **TRUE FAITH BRINGS COMMITMENTAL**

We can prove our faith by our commitment to it, and in no other way. Any belief that does not command the one who holds it is not a real belief. *It might shock some of us profoundly if we were brought suddenly face to face with our beliefs and forced to test them in the fires of practical living.*

Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives through the works of the flesh so as to claim to be Christian without being embarrassed by its implications. We arrange things so that we can get on well enough without divine aid; while at the same time involving ourselves in prayer for God to work in our lives. We boast in the Lord; but watch carefully that we never get caught in any kind of circumstance where we must depend on Him. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9 NKJV)

*Real faith gives up all fleshly efforts, so it may be wholly led by the Spirit of God, as sons of God. It gladly allows itself to be stripped of any second way or makeshift substitutes. For true faith, it is either God’s glory or total collapse. No one is able to manifest God’s glory while they are walking in*

*the strength of the flesh.* Not since Adam first stood upon the earth has God failed a single man or woman who truly trusted Him.

What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now in their daily walk as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us, the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away, and we shall have only God. To the man with artificial faith, that is a terrifying thought. But to real faith, it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain.

It would be a tragedy indeed to come to our last day, where we have no other hope but God, and find we had not really been trusting God by walking wholly under the control of the Spirit during the days of our earthly sojourn.

### **THE GREAT DISPARITY**

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun. It is the glaring disparity between theology and practice among professing Christians.

*So wide is the gulf that separates Christian teachings from practice in the church that an inquiring stranger who chances upon both would scarcely dream that there was any relation between them.* The average church simply does not dare to check its practices against Biblical precepts because it tolerates things that are diametrically opposed to the will of God.

It appears that too many Christians want to enjoy the feeling of being accepted by Christ, but are not willing to endure the inconvenience of being partakers of His righteousness. So the divorce between theory and practice becomes permanent.

Could this be the condition our Lord had in mind when he said, “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead?” (Rev. 3:1 KJV) What can the effect be upon spectators who live day after day among professed Christians who habitually ignore the commandments of God and continue to live under the bondage of the world? Will they not conclude that the whole thing is false? Will they not be forced to believe that the faith of Christ is an unreal thing, which they are fully justified in rejecting? The deadening effect of religious make-believe on the human mind is beyond all describing.

The present neat habit of quoting a text to prove we have arrived is quite dangerous if we have not yet begun to experience the inward reality of the described text. Among the many who profess the Christian faith, scarcely one in a thousand reveals any passionate thirst for God. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”(Matt. 5:6 NIV)

## THE CROSS IS A RADICAL THING

The cross of old Roman times knew no compromise. It never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponents and silencing them for good. The individual had no more self-will once He had died on the cross.

After Christ was risen from the dead and glorified, the apostles went out to preach His message, *and what they preached was the cross. And wherever men would take up their cross in a death to the self-life, the resurrection power of Christ’s Spirit entered their life.* His power changed self-centered men into the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

All this it did, and continued to do, as long as it was permitted to remain what it had been originally, an instrument of death. Its power departed when the cross was changed into an instrument of decoration - a mere ornament. As such, it is revered today by millions who know absolutely nothing about its power.

*The true cross effects its ends by destroying the established pattern of life. It never compromises, never negotiates nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It destroys the old Adam pattern by bringing it to an end. Then the God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer, and a new life begins.*

*This, and nothing less, is true Christianity.* Of course, we may not hear this message by the rank and file of evangelicals today. But the cross stands high above the opinions of men and everyone will eventually be judged by their acceptance or rejection of the “cross of Christ.”

*We must do something about the cross. We can only do one of two things - flee it, or die upon it. And if we should be so foolhardy as to flee it, we*



*shall by that act put away the faith of the first century saints and make of Christianity something other than it is. Then we shall have left only the empty language of salvation. The power will depart with our departure from the cross. The spirit of the world says, "Save yourself." The Spirit of Christ says, "Deny yourself." Thus, Paul tells us "to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross...is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:17-18 NIV) There can never be resurrection power from God in our life until there has first been a death to the self-life.*

If we are wise, we will do what Jesus did: endure the cross for the joy that is set before us. To do this is to submit the old self-willed way of life to be destroyed in order to rise again in "the power of an endless life."

### **WE MUST DIE IF WE WOULD LIVE**

To Augustine, the experience of God inwardly enjoyed was life itself, and anything less than that was spiritual death. To exist under the darkness of the fallen nature without the realized Presence of God was a condition not to be tolerated. Whatever hid God's face from him had to be taken out of the way, even his own self-life, his dearest self-love, all the most cherished treasures of the heart. So he prayed, "Let me die."

This great saint's daring prayer was heard, and as might be expected, was answered with a fullness of generosity characterized by God. He died, and could testify with Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20 KJV)

In every Christian's heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne until he agrees to be led to the cross. If he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne of self-will as a rebel against God. This is the reason for the backsliding and worldliness among gospel believers today. We want to be saved but we insist that Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying to self. We remain king within the little kingdom of Man-soul and wear our tinsel crown. But we doom ourselves.

If we do not die to self, we must die a spiritual death for eternity. Our uncrucified flesh will prevent us from receiving purity of heart and a Christ-

likeness of character, along with making it impossible to experience the presence of our Lord's divine life.

“If anyone would come after me {into the divine life}, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matt. 16:24-26 NIV)

“Make every effort...to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14 NIV) “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them...for he purified their hearts...” (Acts 15:8-9 NIV) “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Matt. 5:8 NIV)

### **CHRIST DIED FOR OUR HEARTS**

If men do not have joy in their hearts they will seek it somewhere else. If Christians are not filled with the joy of the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, they will turn to the flesh for sources of enjoyment. And that is exactly what Christians have been doing during the twentieth century. God's people have turned to the amusements of the world to try to squeeze a bit of juice out of the temporal, for the relief of their dry and joyless hearts.

For multitudes of professed Christians today the Holy Spirit is not a necessity. They have learned to cheer their hearts and warm their hands at other fires.

The human heart, with its capacity to receive heavenly life through the Spirit, must no longer be allowed to remain the victim of bad teaching. Christ died for our hearts and the Holy Spirit wants to come and satisfy them.

### **TO BE OR TO DO**

In spite of all our opportunity to know the truth, most of us are still slow to learn. The tendency to “accept without question” and “follow without knowing why” is very strong in us. For this reason, whatever the majority of Christians hold at any given time is sure to be accepted as true and right.

This is why *BEING* has ceased to have much appeal for people and *DOING* engages almost everyone's attention. Modern Christians lack symmetry. They know almost nothing about the Spirit-imparted divine life. They are like a temple that is all exterior without any interior. Color, light, sound, appearance, motion - these are thy gods, O Israel.

“The accent in the Church today,” says Leonard Ravenhill, the English evangelist, “is not on devotion, but on commotion.” Activity, without first waiting to receive power from on high and divine life from the Lord, causes the work of the church to look just like the social work of secular organizations. God is not able to receive the glory because the work comes from the power of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit. “But whoever lives by the truth comes into the {divine} light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through {the power of} God.” (John 3:21 NIV) “This all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor. 4:7 NIV)

But externalism has taken over today. People now think that God speaks by the wind and the earthquake and so they cannot hear the still small voice of the Spirit. The old question, “What is the chief aim of man?” is now answered, “To dash about the world and add to the din thereof.”

What a man is must be shown to be more important than what he does. While the moral quality of any act is imparted by the condition of the heart, there is a world of religious activity that comes from a carnal life in the flesh. It stems from the current cult of commotion and possesses no sound inner life. In contrast to the first disciples who waited to receive divine life through the power of the Spirit before they went to work for the Lord, infants today are sent out to build up strength in their fleshly activities and so they never do receive power from on high.

The message “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” needs to be restored to the Church. We must show a new generation of nervous, almost frantic Christians that power must come from the Spirit of divine life. Speed and noise are evidences of fleshly weakness, not spiritual power. Our preoccupation with time and the temporal is a sad evidence of our basic lack of faith in God's ability to manifest His own power and glory through our life.

## THE WHOLE LIFE IN COMMUNION WITH GOD

We assume that most of those who read these pages are not satisfied to get a prayer through occasionally. They want to know a more satisfying prayer life, one that elevates and purifies every act of body and mind and integrates the entire personality into the divine life of the Lord. Such prayer can only be the result of a life lived under the control and power of the Spirit.

Many prayers are like a fire escape, used only in times of emergency to escape from unpleasant circumstances confronted in this cursed world. They do not represent the regular life or beliefs of the one who offers them. God does not listen to these prayers. To enter into a covenant relationship with God, the self-willed way of life must be devoted to destruction. Israel also had to learn this lesson.

“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Stand up!’ What are you doing down on your face {in prayer}? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep... I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.”

“Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, ‘Consecrate yourselves...’ That which is devoted {to destruction} is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it.” (Josh. 7: 10-13 NIV)

As we come out from the self-willed way of life and live under the control and power of the Holy Spirit, we shall see the excellency of the life of constant communion where all thoughts and acts are prayers, and the entire life becomes one holy sacrifice of worship to God. “We have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16)

To pray effectively it is required of us that there be no unblessed areas in our lives, no parts of the mind or soul that are not inhabited by the Spirit of our Lord, no disparity between our prayers and our conduct.

All this may appear to be placing the standard too high to be reached by men and women under the sun. But, in fact, it is designed to make us all the more dependent upon God, who will make it possible. “If by the Spirit you

put to death the deeds of the body, you will live {in the divine life}”. (Rom. 8:13 NKJV) If Christ is the kind of Savior He claims to be, He can obviously save His people from the bondage of sin. This is not to support the man-made doctrine of “sinless perfection”; it is rather to declare the God-inspired doctrine that it is possible to “walk in the Spirit” and so “not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” (Gal. 5: 16 NKJV) The Spirit has the power to enable us to walk in all the light that we have received. God has made provision in the cross of Christ for His children to be delivered from the galling yoke of sin.

Individual acts of prayer that rise up from the will of God through the power of the Spirit will have about them a wondrous result not known to the careless or the worldly Christian.

### **NO SAVIOR WITHOUT LORDSHIP**

Mankind appears to have a positive genius for twisting truth until it ceases to be truth and becomes downright falsehood. By overemphasizing in one place and under-emphasizing in another place, the whole pattern of truth is so altered that a completely false view results without our being aware of it.

This fact was brought forcibly to mind recently by hearing again the discredited doctrine of a divided Christ. It goes like this: Christ is both Savior and Lord. A sinner may be saved by accepting Him as Savior without yielding to Him as Lord.

Now, it seems odd that none of these teachers ever notice that the only true object of saving faith is none other than Christ Himself; not the “savior-hood” of Christ nor the “lordship” of Christ, but Christ Himself. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14:6 KJV) God does not offer salvation to the one who will believe on one of the works of Christ, nor is a work of Christ ever presented as an object of faith.

A man cannot be saved who comes to Christ for His help if he has no intention of obeying Him. Christ’s savior-hood is forever united to His lordship. The salvation our Lord offers is salvation from our old life of self-willed rebellion so we may be united to His divine life.

## **“A SWEET LUTE, SWEETLY PLAYED”**

“It is one thing,” said Henry Suso, “to hear for oneself a sweet lute, sweetly played, and quite another thing merely to hear about it.” An examination of the state of things in gospel churches creates a strong suspicion that an alarming high percentage of professing Christians today have never heard the lute for themselves. They have only been told about it by others.

Even in those circles where the doctrines of the Spirit-filled life are taken for granted, there is a strange lack of understanding about the divine life. We hear the “deeper” truths recited with a glibness that makes us wonder whether the preacher is not telling us about something of which he has only heard, rather than about something which he himself has entered into through a personal experience.

Year after year we are turning out from the Bible schools of this country young men and women who know the theory of the Spirit-filled life but who do not enjoy the experience. These go out into the churches to create in turn a generation of Christians who have never felt the power of the Spirit and who know nothing personally about the inner fire. The next generation will even drop the theory of the deeper life. (Of course this prophecy has now proven to be true.)

One word from the lips of the man who has actually heard the lute play will have more effect than a score of sermons by the man who has only heard it was played by others. An actual witness is always better than what is heard from hearsay. Christ is looking for people to become witnesses of His divine life.

How long must we in America go on listening to men who can only tell us what they have read and heard about, never what they themselves have experienced?

## **THE ALL-IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVE**

Christians, and especially very active ones, should take time out frequently to search their souls to be sure of their motives. Many a solo is

sung to show off; many a sermon is preached as an exhibition of talent; many a church is founded as a slap at some other church. Even missionary and soul winning activity may become competitive to satisfy the flesh. Do not forget, the Pharisees were great missionaries and would compass the land to make a convert.

To sum it up, we may say simply that in the sight of God we are judged not so much by what we do as by our reasons for doing it. Not what, but why, will be the important question when we Christians appear at the judgment seat to give account of the deeds done in the body.

### **THE PRESENCE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PROGRAM**

The point we make here is that in our times the program has been substituted for the presence of the divine life. We are more interested in doing things than entering into the life of Christ and permitting Him to manifest His glory through us.

The most popular gospel church in any city is likely to be the one that offers the most interesting programs; that is, the church that can present the most and best features for the enjoyment of the public. These features are programmed so as to promote attendance by keeping everyone entertained.

The evil of it all lies in its effects upon Christians and churches everywhere. Even persons who may honestly desire to serve God after the pattern shown to us by our Lord's Sermon on the Mount become caught up in programs and never learn to walk under the power and control of the Holy Spirit. Many of them go on year after year totally unaware that their weekly programs are nothing more than secular works of the flesh, super-imposed upon the church by zealous but misled persons.

### **OUR FRUIT WILL BE WHAT WE ARE**

The fruit of a tree is determined by the tree, and the fruit of life by the kind of life it is. What a man is interested in to the point of absorption both decides and reveals what kind of man he is; and the kind of man he is, by a secret law of the soul, decides the kind of fruit he will bear.

Of what do we think when we are free to think of what we will? What object has become the focus of our attention? We will never bear the divine fruit of the Lord until He has become the undivided focus of our life.

It is written of Moses that he “went in before the Lord to speak with him...and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel.” This is the Biblical norm from which we depart, to our own undoing and to the everlasting injury of the souls of men. No man has any moral right to go before the people who has not first been long before the Lord. And the prophet or spokesman of God should spend more time in the secret place communing with God than he spends in the public place speaking God’s word to the people.

God’s children live by spiritual laws that are both as kind and as severe as the natural laws found in nature. Grace operates within those laws but never contrary to them. Our fruit will follow its native tree, and not all our frightened prayers can prevent it. If we would do holy deeds we must be holy men, every day, and all the days that God grants us here below.

### **NEEDED: A BAPTISM OF CLEAR SEEING**

That Bible religion in our times is suffering a rapid decline is so evident as to need no proof. I think it is altogether accurate to say that there has never before been a time in the history of the Church when so many persons were engaged in Bible study as are so engaged today. If the knowledge of Bible doctrine were any guarantee of godliness, this would without doubt be known in history as the age of sanctity. Instead, it may well be known as the age of the Church’s Babylonish captivity, or the age of worldliness, when the professed Bride of Christ allowed herself to be successfully courted by the fallen sons of men in unbelievable numbers. The body of evangelical believers under evil influences, has, during the last twenty-five years gone over to the world in complete and abject surrender, avoiding only a few of the grosser sins such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

That this disgraceful betrayal has taken place in broad daylight with full consent of our Bible teachers and evangelists is one of the most terrible affairs in the spiritual history of the world. Why? The answer can only be the lack of spiritual vision. Something like a mist has settled over the Church as



“the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” (Isa. 25:7 KJV)

Surely we need a baptism of clear seeing if we would escape the fate of Israel and of every other religious body in history that forsook God. We need Christian leaders with prophetic vision. We desperately need men and women of God who can see through the mist. And when they do begin to speak out, we can expect the church to crucify a few of them in the name of our worldly orthodoxy.

Mere evangelism is not our present need. Evangelism does no more than extend religion, of whatever kind it may be. It gains acceptance for religion among larger numbers of people without giving much thought to the quality of life. The tragedy is that present day evangelism accepts the worldly form of Christianity now current as the very religion of the apostles, and busies itself with making converts to it with no questions asked. And all the time we are moving farther and farther from the New Testament pattern.

### **NARROW MANSIONS**

When Augustine looked within his own heart, he saw only narrowness and constriction; and it made him sick. “Enlarge Thou it!” was the involuntary cry of his soul.

How vastly different is this from the self-satisfied spirit we see everywhere these days. To be saved from our sins appears to be the highest ambition of most Christians today.

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited expansion. It may be filled to overflowing with the divine love of God. “And I pray that you...may have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:17-19 NIV) And one of the world’s worst tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves.

Godliness means God-likeness. Paul said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV) Paul was a little man with a vast interior life; his great heart was often wounded by the narrowness of those he was teaching. Paul also said, "be ye also enlarged," but he did not say, "Enlarge yourselves." That they could not do. Only God can work in the heart and fill it with His divine life.

If we surrender our hearts to God we may expect a wondrous enlargement. And who knows what he can do if we permit Him to take complete control of our life so He may turn our life into an instrument of His glory?

### **THE SANCTIFICATION OF OUR DESIRES**

Whatever a man wants badly and persistently enough will determine the man's character. In the Pauline epistles, the gravitational pull of the heart in one direction or another is called the "mind." In the eighth chapter of Romans, for instance, when Paul refers to the "mind" he is referring to the sum of our dominant desires. The mere intellect is not the mind: the mind is intellect plus an emotional tug strong enough to determine action.

By this definition it is easy to understand the words of Romans 8:5-8 (NKJV), "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The desire after God and holiness is "to be spiritually minded." The longing cry of the God-hungry soul can be expressed in the words of the song, "Oh, to be like Thee!" Those who have the one desire to be filled with the righteousness of Christ will be taken into the Sabbath-rest of divine life and peace. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6 NKJV)

Unsanctified desires will prevent the seeker of God from entering the Sabbath-rest of divine life. For that reason our own thoughts are our own

worst counsel, for when our mind is filled with worldly desires it will give us bad advise and will remain averse to the righteous life of our Lord.

As Christians, our only safety lies in complete honesty. If the Scriptures condemn an object or an action, we must accept that judgment and conform to God's eternal truth, no matter how we may for the moment feel about it. This testing will take place during our desert pilgrimage to the promised Sabbath-rest of divine life. Because once we enter the promised land and are participating with Christ in His divine nature, we will find that our Lord's commands are no longer burdensome. The old flesh-life dies and the new life in the Spirit begins. "And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world." (1 John 5:3-4 NIV)

The glory of God and the everlasting welfare of His people are always bound up together. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse not only actual sins which have been committed, but the very inward desires, so that we will not want to sin. Purified desires will tend toward righteousness by a kind of heavenly gravitational pull. Then it can be said that we are "spiritually minded." A blessed state indeed, and blessed are they that enter into the Sabbath-rest of divine life.

### **ABOUT HINDERANCES**

Let a man set his heart only on doing the will of God and he is instantly free. It is only when we introduce our own will, which includes our opinions, into our relation to God that we get into trouble. When we weave into the pattern of our lives threads of our own selfish desires, we instantly become subject to hindrances from the outside. If I mingle some pet religious enterprise of mine with the will of God and come to think of them as one, I can be hindered in my religious life. Then I'll begin to blame whoever stands in my way and excuse spiritual breakdowns as being caused by someone or something that is working to "hinder" me.

Like Martha, many Christians are working in their own strength according to their own will. They may be working for the Lord, but they are not permitting the Lord to do His work through them. They have not yet submitted themselves to become instruments of God's glory. Jesus is still saying to many in the church, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed." (Luke 10:41 NIV) We must enter the

Sabbath-rest of divine life and become an instrument in the hands of God. “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the {regenerate} people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work...” (Heb. 4:9-10 NIV)

If we find ourselves irked by external hindrances, we can be sure we are victims of our own self-will. Nothing can hinder the heart that is fully surrendered and quietly trusting, because nothing can hinder God from working in the life of someone who has no will but God's will.

### **THE USES OF SUFFERING**

The Bible has a great deal to say about suffering and most of it is encouraging.

The prevailing religious mood is not favorable to the doctrine, but anything that gets as much space as the doctrine of suffering gets in the Scriptures, should certainly receive careful and reverent attention from the sons of the new creation. We cannot afford to neglect it.

As long as we remain in the body we will be subject to a certain amount of that common suffering which we must share with all the sons of men.

But there is another kind of suffering that is for Christians only. It is voluntary suffering, deliberately and knowingly incurred for the sake of Christ. Such is a luxury, a treasure of great value, a source of riches beyond the power of the mind to conceive. And it is rare as well as precious, for there are few people in this flesh-pleasing age, who will of their own choice go down into this dark mine looking for this fabulous jewel. But of our own choice it must be, for there is no other way to find it. God will not force us to go through the kind of suffering that leads to resurrection life. Such riches are reserved for those who apply to serve in the legion of the expendables, who love not their own lives unto the death, who volunteer to suffer for Christ's sake and who follow up their application with lives that challenge the god of this world. Such as these have said good-bye to the world's toys. They have chosen to suffer affliction with the true disciples of Christ found in every age. The marks of the cross are upon them and they are known in heaven and in hell.

But where are they? This breed of Christian is nearly extinct on earth. When the church ceases to perform its function of producing Christ-like Christians, we can expect the Great Tribulation to be close at hand, along with the triumphant return of our Lord to put everything under His feet.

### **PRAISE GOD FOR THE FURNACE**

It was the enraptured Rutherford who could shout in the midst of serious and painful trials, “Praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace.” The devil, things, and people being what they are, it is necessary for God to use the hammer, the file and the furnace in His holy work of preparing a saint for true sainthood. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has broken his self-life. It is in this sense that God will use suffering to break our independent and self-sufficient wills, which by nature keep us separated from His divine life.

Without doubt, salvation in this generation has come to mean deliverance from unpleasant things. Our prayers are clearly focused on having God fix up our temporal life, rather than on receiving a divine life that would enable us to spiritually overcome all the circumstances of this world.

Strange as it may sound, it is yet true that much of the suffering we are called upon to endure on the highway to holiness is an inward suffering. Only the enemy and God and the Christian who has been led into a death of the flesh-life knows what has taken place. The inward suffering has been great, but the mighty work of purification has been accomplished. Thank God for the furnace.

### **VICTORY IN THE GUISE OF DEFEAT**

When Joseph was sold into slavery, the end appeared to have come for the young dreamer. Years later when the deep ways of God had come to light, he could say to his now repentant brethren, “You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” (Gen. 50:20 NKJV) Joseph’s humiliating defeat

had turned into personal victory for him and preservation for his entire family. God led Joseph into the dark dungeon of helpless humility before He exalted him into a place of honor. This is the only path into union with Christ's resurrection life.

When the three Hebrew children disappeared into the furnace that was heated seven times normal, we have to assume that everyone turned away expecting nothing but death. But things looked different the next moment when the king discovered that the men of God were preserved whole, without the smell of fire upon them.

And it must not be forgotten that this principle works just the same in reverse. When David had succeeded in stealing Uriah's wife, he no doubt felt he had scored a real conquest. But subsequent events showed instead that he had suffered a stunning defeat by this work of the flesh. He was never the same after his "conquest." What the armies of the alien world could never do on the field, David himself accomplished by one act of self-seeking; that is, he brought about his own defeat. When he met Goliath for the glory of God, without any concern for self, God turned what looked like defeat into a glorious victory. "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through {the power of} God." (John 3:21 NIV) But when David met Bathsheba and gave into his self-seeking flesh, he turned a long record of glorious victories through the power of God into a shameful defeat.

One thing about all this is that we cannot always be sure at the time just who is winning unless we keep our hearts very pure and our minds focused on the glory of God. When the soldiers of Pilate flung Christ to the ground and began to drive in the nails, everything looked as if our Lord had ended as a failure. Surely this terrible suffering and death would not come to a man of God. There must be some mistake. Jesus had been an idealist, a visionary, but now His hopes and the hopes of His followers were collapsing under the brutal attacks of tough, practical men. So reasoned the onlookers. But our Lord could die to the flesh-life knowing the joy that was set before Him. He had looked beyond the cross to the triumphant resurrection life. *How about you?*

## **LOVE OF THE UNSEEN IS POSSIBLE**

It is wholly impossible to love the unknown. There must be some degree of experience before there can be any degree of true love. Perhaps this accounts for the coldness toward God and Christ evidenced by the average Christian. How can we love a Being whom we have not known through experience? We may work up some kind of reverence for the noble ideals that the thought of God brings to our minds; we may feel a certain awe when we think of the high and holy One; but what we feel is hardly love.

The command to love God with our whole being has seemed to many persons to be impossible of fulfillment. It would be like commanding the barren tree to bring forth fruit or the winter forest to be green. What then can it mean?

The answer is found in the nature of man and of God. God, being who He is, must have obedience from His creatures. Man, being who his is, must render that obedience. And he owes God complete obedience whether or not he feels for Him the faintest trace of love in his heart. It is a question of the sovereign right of God to require His creatures to obey Him. Man's first and basic sin was disobedience. It was the beginning of self-will. This is the one act, if persisted in, that will lead to eternal wrath. When man disobeyed God, he violated the claims of God and the Spirit of divine love had to withdraw His presence. Now, what can he do to restore that love to his heart again? The answer to that question is given in one word - Repent. We must turn back from the evil of a self-willed life and enter into a life wholly under the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

For the act of repentance (turning from self-will) will bring a corresponding act of God in a revelation of divine life, and intimate communion in due time. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. 5:6 KJV) Once the seeking heart finds God in personal experience, there will be no further problem loving Him. "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful ("fear" - KJV) that none of you be found to have fallen short of it... There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest {of divine life} for the {regenerate} people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work..." (Heb. 4:1,9-10 NIV)

If this should all seem too mystical, too unreal, we offer no proof and make no effort to defend our position. This can be understood only by those who have experienced it. By the rank and file of present Christians, it will be

rejected or shrugged off as preposterous. So be it. But some will read and will recognize an accurate description of the sunlit peaks. And such will need no proof. The Spirit's convicting power will confirm it in their heart.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live {in the divine life}. On that day you will realize that...I am in you. *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.* He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:15-21 NIV)

### **WE NEED COOL HEADS**

The human heart is heretical by nature, and unless well instructed by the Scriptures and fully enlightened by the indwelling Spirit, it is sure to introduce some of its own notions into its religious beliefs and practices. It may, for instance, confuse the fervor of the Spirit with the heat of the flesh, and mistake the overheated imagination for the work of the Spirit. And this can be extremely dangerous, especially when it is found among religious leaders.

Among the gifts of the Spirit, scarcely any one is of greater practical usefulness than the gift of discernment. This gift should be highly valued and frankly sought as being almost indispensable in these critical times when the vast majority of those in the church are being led astray by strange doctrines, bizarre imaginations and even miraculous works from the evil one. The gift of discernment will enable us to distinguish the chaff from the wheat and to divide the manifestations of the flesh and the devil from the operations of the Spirit. For want of this gift, many of God's people continue to chase fireflies in the mistaken belief that they are following the Spirit of God. And this they do to the great harm of their own souls and to the confusion of others.

The priests of the sanctuary, when they went in to sacrifice, were not permitted to wear “any thing that causes sweat.” (Eze. 44:18 NKJV) While this does not mean that the man of God will never sweat in His work for the Lord, it does mean that we cannot take our flesh-life into this work. Human works can add nothing to the work of the Spirit. “The Spirit gives life; the



flesh counts for nothing.” (John 6:63 NIV) The hottest fire of God makes the heart glow but leaves the judgment completely calm.

These are days of great religious turmoil. We do well to remember that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1:7 NKJV) We are to seek the power of the Spirit who provides divine love and quiet wisdom.

### **WE CAN AFFORD TO WAIT**

A *real* Christian is an odd number. He empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can enter into true righteousness, goes down in order to be raised up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he is emptied of self. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can store up treasures, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which passes all understanding. And all the while he may be confounding his critics by his unbelievable practicality and heavenly life.

The man who has met God is not looking for something - he has found the Source of Living Water; he is not searching for light - upon him the light has already shined. His certainty may seem extreme, but his is the assurance of one who knows by experience. His religion is not hearsay; he is not merely trying to be like Christ; he is an original from the hand of the Holy Spirit.

The first disciples had received three years of intense instruction from the mouth of our Lord, and did not yet know this life. *There is no way to teach someone how to manifest Christ's divine nature through human effort.* “The Spirit gives {divine} life; the flesh counts for nothing.” Therefore, Christ commanded His first regenerated disciples, who had already had the Spirit breathed into them (John 20:21-22), to wait until they had been “clothed with power from on high” before they attempted to work for the Lord. The blessing is sure to come to those who tarry in a consecrated and supplicating position before the Lord. Considering the outcome of their waiting, we can also afford to wait.

### **GOD: THE FIRST AND THE LAST**

Man, in the plan of God, has been granted considerable say. But never is he permitted to utter the first word nor the last. That is the prerogative of the Deity, and one which He will never surrender to His creation.

Man has no say about the time or the place of his birth. God determines that without consulting the man himself. One day the little man finds himself in a state of consciousness and begins to assert his will. There his volitional life begins. Before that he had nothing to say about anything. After that he struts and boasts and utters his defiant proclamations of individual freedom. And encouraged by the sound of his own voice, he may declare his independence of God by remaining his own self-directed god. Have your fun, little man. You are only chattering in the interim between the *First* and the *Last*. You had no voice at the first. And you will have none at the last! God reserves the right to take up at the last, where He began at the first, and you are eternally under the control of God whether you will to be or not.

*The time of self-will in this world is no more than a vapor.* “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” from the world. (Jam. 4:14 NIV) *It would be great wisdom for us to begin to live in the light of this wonderful and terrible truth: God is the first and the last.*

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of {divine} life and may go through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 22:12-14)

“ I know, O Lord, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.” (Jer. 10:23 NIV)

“This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths {of a Spirit-controlled and directed life}, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jer. 6:16 NIV)

## **THE TRUTH’S MOST POWERFUL ALLY**

The most effective argument for Christianity is still the divine lives of true Christians. A company of pure-living and joyous Christians in the community is a stronger proof that Christ is risen than any learned treatise could ever be. And a further advantage is that, while the average person will never read a theological work, no one can evade the practical argument presented by the presence of holy men and women manifesting the divine life of Jesus Christ.

To the sons and daughters of this tense and highly mechanized age, a holy life may seem impractical, but among all the fancy and pleasure giving toys of the world, a holy life stands apart as the only thing slated to endure.

*The holy man is also the humble man and the humble man will not advertise himself nor allow others to do it for him.* True spiritual life runs deep and silent.

The Church suffered a greater loss than she has yet recognized when she chose to follow the spirit of the world by looking to the celebrity of the hour for spiritual guidance. Human greatness cannot be determined by popularity polls. It is altogether unlikely that we know who our greatest men and women are.

*The true Christians are those who quietly promote the cause of Christ by living in the power of the Spirit and thereby reproduce the life of Christ in the sight of men.* In deep humility and without ostentation they will let their light shine. The world may pretend not to see, but it will see, nevertheless, and more than likely it will get into serious trouble with its conscience over what it sees.

## **WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE WHOLE MESSAGE**

To many observing persons today it appears that conversion does not do for people as much as it once did. Too often the experience passes, leaving the seeker unsatisfied and deeply disappointed. Some who are thus affected, and who are too sincere to play with religion, walk out on the whole thing and frankly, turn back to the old life. Others try to make what they can out of a bad bargain and gradually adjust themselves to a modified and imperfect form of Christianity enlivened by forms of entertainment to give enjoyment.

Could it be that, in our eagerness to gain converts to our beliefs, we have distorted the true Christian life? The Pharisees once committed this serious error. Jesus said to them, “You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.” (Matt. 23:15 NIV)

*The fact is that the New Testament message embraces a great deal more than an offer of free pardon. It is a message of pardon, and for that may God be praised. But it is also a message of sin, righteousness and judgment through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (John 16:8 NIV) If professing believers have not become convicted and turned to a life of holiness to the Lord and godliness, then there has not been a conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel message includes separation from the world, taking up the cross in a death to the old self-life, and a new resurrection life where we are enabled by God’s powerful grace to participate with Christ in His divine nature. (2 Pet. 2-4) “This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:5-6) To offer sinners the gift of salvation by merely believing on a work completed by Christ, without teaching them how they must enter into a participation with Christ in His divine nature through the “Spirit of grace,” is to do untold eternal injury.*

Many evangelical teachers do not understand the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit and how He will always *transform* the life of those who truly believe, and so they offer only unconditional pardon to create the impression that ongoing sin is not a serious matter. They indicate that God is focused on leading people into an escape from the consequence of sin. They do not believe in His power to enable them to escape the evil of ongoing sin through a participation with Christ in His divine nature. But the heart that has felt the weight of its ongoing sin and then has heard the true gospel promise of union with the nature of our Lord, will never believe that a message of forgiveness without transformation is a message of good news.

{Paul became a servant of the church} “to present to you the word of God in its fullness - the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” (Col. 1:25-28 NIV)

“It was {the Spirit} who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13 NIV)

### **“I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS”**

Unfortunately the word “church” itself has taken on meanings which it did not originally have and has suffered untold injury. The universal Church is the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, the habitation of God through the Spirit. *This forming of the body of Christ takes place through an indwelling of the Spirit within each truly converted soul.*

The local church is a community of people purchased outright by the blood of Jesus. It is a minority group, a colony of heavenly souls dwelling apart from the ways of the world. *It lives as aliens on the earth*, a division of soldiers on a foreign soil, a band of reapers working under the direction of the Lord of the harvest, a brotherhood of like-minded men and women, a visible representation of the Invisible God.

*A true church is something supernatural and divine, and is in direct lineal descent from that first church at Jerusalem, through the same transforming power and divine life of the Holy Spirit.* The primary aspect of the church is its spiritual life. Its social aspect is secondary and may be imitated by any group regardless of the absence of divine life. *The spiritual essence of a true church, which reflects the nature of Jesus Christ, cannot be reproduced anywhere but in a company of renewed and inwardly united believers.*

The religio-social institution, with which we are all too familiar, where the worship is a weekly form, the sermon an essay, certainly does not qualify as being tied to the first century church through the power of the Holy Spirit. The elements of a true church are few and easy to possess. Let the Lord be worshipped, the whole word of truth be expounded as the only rule for faith and conduct in the church, the Spirit be faithfully obeyed, and the power of God will begin to show itself as it did to Sampson in the camp of Dan.

The church will produce a spiritual culture all its own, wholly unlike anything created by the mind of man and superior to any culture known on earth. God is getting His people ready for another world, and He uses the local church as a workshop in which to carry on His blessed work.

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can {divine} light have with {carnal} darkness?... For we are the temple of the living God... Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 NIV)

### **WE MUST TRY THE SPIRITS**

These are times of moral and religious confusion and it is sometimes hard to distinguish the false from the true. Toward the end of the age, we are told, there shall be a time of stepped-up religious activity and frenzied expectation. But much of the activity taking place will be influenced by the evil one.

There will be a great increase in religious excitement and supernatural happenings generally. “For many shall come in my name...and shall deceive many... For there shall arise...false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mark 13:6,22 NIV)

Many tender-minded Christians fear to sin against love by inquiring into anything that comes wearing the cloak of Christianity and breathing the name of Jesus. They are afraid to examine the credentials of the latest prophet lest they be guilty of rejecting something which may be of God. This is supposed to indicate a high degree of spirituality and love. But in sober fact it indicates no such thing. It is an obvious evidence of the absence of the Spirit’s leading. He will discern all truth from error and in this day of

so much false religion, we must seek out His guidance in *all* matters pertaining to our eternal welfare.

## THE TRUE SAINT IS DIFFERENT

*The church's mightiest influence is felt when she is different from the world in which she lives. Her power lies in her being different, rises with the degree in which she differs and sinks as the difference diminishes.*

*This is so fully and clearly taught in the Scriptures and so well illustrated in Church history that it is hard to see how we can miss it. But miss it we do, for we hear constantly that the Church must try to be as much like the world as possible, excepting, of course, where the world is too sinful for our respectability.*

All conformity to the world is a negation of our Christian character and a surrender of our heavenly position. *Let us go up on the hill of Zion in the presence of God and invite the world to come over to us, but never under any circumstances can we go over to them.*

The cross is the symbol of Christianity, and *the cross speaks of death and separation, never of compromise. No one ever compromised with a cross. The cross is either accepted or rejected. Only the cross can separate someone from the evil of their flesh-life. The timid and the fearful will cry "Extreme!" and they will be right. The cross is the essence of all that is extreme and final. The message of Christ is a call across a gulf from spiritual death to divine life, from sin to righteousness and from Satan to God.*

The first step for any Christian who is seeking spiritual power is to accept his position as a son of heaven temporarily detained on the earth, and to begin to live as becometh a saint. The sharp line of demarcation between him and the world will appear at once - and the world will never quite forgive him. The sons of earth will make him pay well for separation, but it is a price he will gladly pay for the privilege of walking in fruitfulness and power.

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves."  
(2 Cor. 13:5 NKJV) *Is your heart united with Christ's divine life in the*

*heavenlies or are you still attempting to fill your cracked cistern with the temporal things of this world. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21 KJV)*

## **SALVATION WALKS THE EARTH**

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24 KJV)

It is like the Lord to fasten a world upon nothing, and make it stay in place. Here He takes that wonderful, mysterious microcosm we call the human soul and makes its future weal or woe to rest upon a single word - "if." "If any man," He says, and teaches at once the universal inclusiveness of His invitation, and the freedom of the human will. *Everyone may come; no one need come, and whoever does come, comes because he chooses to.* Every man holds his future in his hand.

"If any man will...let him follow me," He says, and some will drop the things of the world and go after Him, but others give no heed to His voice. So the gulf opens between man and man, between those who will and those who will not. *Silently, terribly the work goes on, as each one decides whether he will hear or ignore the voice of invitation.* Jesus will not put Himself again on trial; he will not argue. But the morning of the judgment will confirm whether or not someone has decided to follow Him in His path.

*Those who would follow Him must accept His conditions.* "Let him," He says, and there is no appeal from His words. *He will use no coercion, but neither will He compromise. Men cannot make the terms; they merely agree to them.* Thousands turn from Him because they will not meet His conditions. He watches them as they go, for He loves them, but He will make no concessions. *Christ will be Lord, or He will be Judge. Every man must decide whether he will take Him as Lord now or face Him as Judge then.*

What are the terms of discipleship? Only the Lord of lords and King of kings could place such a rigorous demand: "*Let him deny himself.*" We hear these words and shake our heads in astonishment. Can we have heard aright? Can the Lord of glory lay down such severe rules at the door of His



kingdom? He can and He does. *If He is to save the man, He must save him from himself. It is the "himself" which has enslaved and corrupted the man.*

*The Lord has also revealed the source of the power which is to set the soul free from the fallen nature: "Let him take up his cross." The cross has gathered, in the course of the years, much beauty in its symbolism. But the cross of which Jesus spoke had nothing of beauty in it. It was an instrument of death. Slaying men was its only function. Men did not wear that cross; but that cross wore men. It stood there, and naked men, stripped of everything in this world, were pinned on it. A living man fastened like some grotesque stickpin on its breast to writhe and groan till death stilled and silenced him. That is what the cross will do to us. "Let him take...his cross," said Jesus. And in death to the self-life, he will know deliverance from the fallen nature.*

*The cross becomes the end of the flesh-life and the beginning of the divine life. The life that ends is the life of slavery and bondage to sin (self-will); the life that begins is a life of holiness and spiritual freedom. Until we know of the hope of glory, which is Christ's divine life in us, we can never know what our Lord meant when He invited us to follow Him in the way of the cross.*

"Preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:17-18 NIV)

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." (Eph. 1:18-20 NIV)

## **GOD'S LOVE AND OURS**

Potentially, God loves all men alike. But His active love lights upon some men more than upon others, the degree depending upon how much of Himself He is able to impart to them. The truly Christ-like soul enjoys more

of God's divine love through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. God loves His Son with infinite perfection because He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."

God desires that all men submit themselves to Him, as Jesus did, so that God may fill them with His divine life and love. By presenting ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, we present a larger and more perfect object for the reception of His outpoured love. We can be conformed to the nature of Jesus Christ when we give up our self-will and become instruments of God's glory. When He restores the image of God in the soul, He thus makes it possible to lavish on the soul, without restraint, all the boundless love of which He is the original fountain.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship... Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Rom. 12:1-2 NIV)

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have the power...to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:16-19 NIV)

### **THE URGE TO SHARE**

When the love of God enters our heart by Christ manifesting His heavenly nature from within our inner being, we begin to receive, through the power of the Spirit, the unselfish nature of our Lord. *Hence, when the river of divine life begins to flow from within our inner being, all selfishness is purged out and we become a fountain of Christ's selfless love.* This increasing spiritual experience brings with it a strong desire that others may know the same supernatural grace that we ourselves enjoy. This leads quite naturally to an increased effort to lead others to a closer and more satisfying union with God.

Of course, there will initially be a time when it is necessary for the earnest seeker of God's divine life to separate themselves and wrestle alone

like Jacob on the bank of the river. But the result of this emptying experience is sure to flow out to family, friends and society. *Mankind was never intended to love others with his own self-centered nature. We were created to be a fountain of God's selfless agape love. This love must flow from within us through the supernatural source of the Holy Spirit.* Like Jacob, we too must wrestle with God until He cripples our self-life and gives us the divine blessing.

The impulse to give up self in order to share the overflow of this blessing with others will naturally rise up from within the child of God. This is not to say that God will not send us off into isolation for a period of time immediately after the blessing to relearn life in the kingdom of God, like He sent Paul into the Arabian desert for three years. *But sooner or later, God will send out each of His instruments to manifest the light of His glorious life in this world of carnal darkness.*

The self-seeking persons who remark that they do not need to serve God are far from understanding the divine nature. They prove that the Lord has never come to manifest His divine life from within their inner being and created this compelling urge to share it with others. In effect, these individuals do not have anything rising up from within their life to share.

Of course, there will always be those who serve others for the return they expect to receive. Their efforts are always centered around getting others to appreciate them and recognize their services. They are dependent upon other people as a source to fill the emptiness in their soul. Their giving always expects some kind of return - even if it is only recognition. But this is not the selfless love of God that He pours out of those who are in union with the life of Christ. *The divine life of God is complete in itself. It needs nothing. But His supernatural love has a compelling need to cause us to lay down our own life in order serve others.*

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:16-17 NIV)

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had... There were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned

lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Acts 4:32-35 NIV)

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possession and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:32-34 NIV)

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph. 5:1-2 NIV)

## HOW THE LORD LEADS

One of the problems most frequently encountered by serious-minded Christians is how to discover the will of God in a given situation. This is no small matter. Our peace depends upon knowing that God is actually guiding us.

First, it is absolutely essential that we be completely dedicated to God's high honor and surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. God says that He "opposes the proud." (1 Pet. 5:5) All self-willed people inherently have pride in themselves in order for them to assume they can actually direct their own affairs. God will not lead us unless it's for His own glory, and He must oppose us if we are resisting His will for our life. *We can only enter a life under the power and control of the Holy Spirit after we have given up self-will.* "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (1 Pet. 5:6 NIV)

The practice of attempting to use God to achieve our own ends is evil at its very core. Furthermore, *God does not listen to anyone who has not first devoted to destruction the self-seeking nature.* (See Josh. 7:10-13) On the other hand, Satan will gladly give people their own little kingdoms in this world in order to keep them on his path as a self-willed evildoer. "Again the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You fall down and worship me.'" (Matt. 4:8-9)

NKJV) We cannot expect to be led by the Spirit of God as sons of God (Rom. 8:12-14) until after we have put to death the self-willed way of life. “Not everyone who says to Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, *but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:21-23 NKJV) “I know, O Lord, that a man’s life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps.” (Jer. 10:23 NIV)

*Now, assuming that we are wholly committed to God and His will for our life, with every intention of obeying Him, we may rely on the power of our Creator to direct our every step in life.* The Scriptures that teach this are so many that one scarcely knows where to begin quoting. It only remains for us to believe they mean what they say.

Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice...and they follow me. I give them {present tense} eternal life...no one can snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:27-28 NIV) Many people have attempted to use this verse to convince themselves of their eternal security while they are still living according to Satan’s self-willed way of life. They have not given up self-will (directing their own lives) in order to follow the path of our Lord. All they have to do is examine their life and they will discover that they have not received the firstfruits of Christ’s divine nature and eternal life. Safety can only be found on the path of our Lord. Only when we have wholly given up self-will to be led by the Spirit of God, as sons of God, can no one snatch us away from our Good Shepherd.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God {in childlike humility and dependence}, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” (Jam. 1:5-8 NIV)

“I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.” (Isa. 48:17-18 NIV)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:11-13 NIV)

“The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail...then you will find your joy in the {divine life of the} Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the {promised} land and to feast on the {firstfruits of the eternal} inheritance.” (Isa. 58:11,14 NIV)

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths {of a Spirit-controlled life}, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’ But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jer. 6:16 NIV)

## **OUR BUSINESS IS GOD**

If we could bring together in one huge directory a list of all the organizations, great and small, that exist throughout the earth for the promotion of special interests, we would be astounded at the number of them.

Almost everything that human beings do or can do has its organization, association, society or guild to focus attention upon it. In the midst of all this there is one group of persons whose absorbing interest should be God. *Christianity should be working to bring people back to God so they may receive divine life from Him.*

*The business of the church is God. She is purest when most engaged with God and she is astray just so far as she follows other interests, no matter how “religious” or humanitarian they may be.*

There are a thousand useful, even noble, pursuits in which the Church may engage. As these things come to the Christian *in his pursuit of God* they may have a proper and useful place. But when they are chosen as ends to be followed, they can only be false substitutes for God’s glory.

For choosing to be instruments of God's glory as our one all-absorbing interest, we Christians are sometimes scorned or written off as hopelessly narrow-minded. But must we apologize for having chosen to manifest the life of Christ as our career?

### **CHRIST IS ALL WE NEED**

*One thing the young Christian should be taught as quickly as possible after his conversion is that Jesus Christ is all he needs. When he believes effectively on Christ as his Lord and Savior, he can humbly declare his independence of everyone and everything outside of Christ.*

This the New Testament teaches with great emphasis and clarity and with fullness of detail. *To have Christ and nothing else is to be rich beyond conceiving. To have all else and have not Christ is to be a cosmic pauper, cut off forever from all that will matter at last.*

### **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF TRUTH**

The fact that several hundred persons will gather in an air-conditioned building once a week to sit on cushioned pews and listen to good music appears to be enough to satisfy many ministers.

Either to avoid embarrassment or because he is not sure of his own beliefs, the said minister is usually careful to avoid definitions, so no one knows exactly what it is they are supposed to be looking for. But it gives a tremendous lift to the man's self-respect to think of himself, if only briefly and once a week, as one searching for truth.

The world is full of seekers, true enough, and they gravitate quite naturally toward the church. Seekers after peace of mind are plentiful enough to keep the Christian printing presses busy. But real seekers after truth are almost as rare as albino deer. And here is why:

Truth makes moral demands upon us. It claims a sovereign right to control us. It never flatters people and never compromises with them. It demands all, or nothing, and refuses to be used or patronized. *It will be all in all or it will withdraw into silence.*

It was Christ who capitalized truth and revealed that it was not an “it” at all but a Being with all the attributes of personality. “I am the truth,” He said, and followed truth straight to the cross. *The truth seeker must follow Him there if they hope to be united as one with His divine life; and that is the reason few seek truth.*

Behind all our failure to find light is an unconfessed and possibly an unconscious love of darkness. “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil... But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” (John 3:19-21 NIV)

*We should always remember that we are accountable not only for the light we have but also for the light we might have if we were willing to respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Truth is sovereign and will not allow itself to be trifled with. Obedience is the big problem and unwillingness to obey is the cause of continued darkness.*

## **WHAT ABOUT THE ETHIC OF JESUS**

*The truly sanctified man is a new creature. He belongs to another order of being. He has another kind of life, another origin, and another destiny.*

The teachings of Jesus belong to the Church, not to society. In society is sin, and sin is hostile to God. Christ did not teach that He would impose His teachings on a fallen world. He called His disciples to Him and taught them, and everywhere throughout His teachings there is the overt or implied idea that His followers will constitute an unpopular minority group in an actively hostile world.

The divine procedure is to go into the world of fallen men, preach to them the necessity of repenting by turning back to God, and then teaching them to live as disciples of Christ under the control and power of the Holy Spirit. Only those disciples who have willingly come out to find Jesus Christ are to be taught the ethics of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount and told how they must do “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”



*The ethics of Jesus cannot be obeyed or even understood until God has given the believer a regenerate heart that hungers and thirsts after Christ's righteousness. The Spirit of Christ becomes the only source of all righteousness in the lives of an individual.*

The dream of a universal brotherhood based upon the ethics of Jesus is just that - a dream. *Fallen mankind has an inwardly focused heart that seeks to serve self even when attempting to do good in the world.* Self-will cannot help but turn evil whenever it is crossed. And the only way for the world to come together as one is for everyone to give up self-will and be united as one into the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.

The hope of the individual is a regenerate heart and the acceptance of the teachings of Christ as a way of life. But even then there cannot be true participation in the divine nature until the Spirit of Christ wholly sanctifies the soul and sets up God's undivided kingdom of heaven (kingdom of love) in the heart.

## **WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY**

Among the many wonders of the Holy Scriptures is their ability to frequently compress into one sentence a truth so vast, so complex, as to require a whole shelf of books to expound on it. An example is found in Jeremiah 10:23. The prophet has described the whole problem of mankind: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Man is seen as a traveler making his difficult way from a spiritually dead past into a future about which he knows nothing. And he cannot stay in one place and find life, but must each morning strike his tent and journey on toward a future wholly planned for him by God, but which will only be revealed if he takes the required steps each day.

It is a simple axiom of the traveler that if he would arrive at the desired destination he must take the right road. When he has gone the last step, will he enter into eternal bliss or will it be "A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation?" (Zep. 1:15 NKJV)

The prophets, as well as our Lord and His disciples have all said that man does not know the way. The worried Thomas spoke for every man when he asked, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5)

That is the truth, and we had better face it squarely. The way of man is not in himself. However severe the blow to the worldly pride of self-sufficiency, each of God’s creation should bow their heads and admit their ignorance before it is too late.

Our Lord has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” *The only way to enter into eternity with Him is to enter into a participation with Him in His divine nature, through a union with His life, while we remain in this world.*

## **THE TRUE MOTIVE OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT**

Selfish personal interest, says the Greek moral philosopher Epictetus, is the motive behind all human conduct.

By way of illustration he points to two dogs romping on the lawn with every appearance of friendship, when suddenly someone tosses a piece of raw meat between them. Instantly their play turns savage as each struggles to get the meat for himself. Their friendship lasts only as long as their interests coincide. When those self-centered interests conflict, they become snarling enemies.

The truth is, people are not basically good, they are basically evil, and *the essence of sin lies in their self-centered nature.* They are basically selfish.

The putting of our own interests before the glory of God is sin, and putting our own interests before those of our fellow human race is sin. We know people are sinners because when they must choose between others and themselves, they choose for themselves. Personal interest sees to that.

Two people can live together in perfect harmony as long as their interests coincide. But if the self-will of one is crossed, the harmony turns to anger and conflict. “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get

it. You kill {in your heart} and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.” (Jam. 4:1-2 NIV)

Occasionally, small groups recognize the evil in the heart of fallen mankind so they come together in an attempt to form a selfless society. But in every instance they have lived to see their little utopia tear itself apart by the centrifugal force generated by the very selfishness they were trying so nobly to escape. The fallen human heart is essentially selfish and it cannot be cured by external organization or dedicated human effort.

With the advent of Jesus Christ, a new and radically different motive for human conduct was introduced into the world, and its symbol is the cross. By His words, Christ exposed the evil of self-interest, and by His cross he demonstrated the eternal life of God in its pure agape, or selfless love. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, to give His life so that all may receive the same divine life. Christ pleased not Himself, but lived in total devotion to the honor of God and the welfare of mankind. And when He died to self, He set a crown of beauty upon a God-centered and others-centered life.

*The cross is a symbol of the selfless, others-centered, life of Christ, but it does not end there. Our Lord also made it a symbol of the normal Christian life. “If any man will come after me,” He said, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me... For whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25 KJV)*

The teaching here is too plain to miss. *The self-interest motive in our conduct, though it is inherent in fallen human nature, is nevertheless an evil and destructive thing that can at last only lead to tragic and everlasting loss.*

*Jesus Christ has called us into a union with His divine life that can only be reached by taking His path of the cross. It means a death to the self-life so we may enter into a union with His selfless nature. “I have given them {access to} the {Spirit of} glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one {in nature}: I in them and you in me.” (John 17:22-23 NIV) “God is love. Whoever lives in love {selfless agape} lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.” (1 John 4:16-17 NIV)*

*It is time we checked our brand of Christianity against the New Testament. There is a real danger in overlooking this divine life by going on in a service to others that remains inwardly focused and is done to please self. And that is a mistake none of us can afford to make.*

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of {selfless} love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph. 5:1-2)

### **WHY FAITH IS INDISPENSABLE**

God is a being of supreme moral excellence, possessing in infinite perfection all the qualities that constitute holy character. *He deserves and invites the unreserved confidence of every moral creature, including man.* Any proper relation to Him must be by confidence, that is, by faith. Where there is not faith it is impossible to please God or receive His promises.

Human sin began with loss of faith in God. When our very great grandmother Eve listened to Satan’s sly innuendoes against the character of God, she began to entertain a doubt of His integrity, and right there the doors were opened to the incoming of every possible evil. Darkness settled upon the world.

Now, it is well known that people do not go boldly to God and profess they have no confidence in Him. The frightful thing, however, is that people who claim to believe in God, frequently live out a life of unbelief that consistently refutes all their convincing words.

*The unbeliever will not trust God with their daily life. They insist upon directing their own steps instead of seeking to enter into the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.*

The joyous message of Christianity is that there is a way back from this place of unbelief and alienation from God. “Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists {as the all-powerful Creator who has plans for each of His creation} and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Heb. 11:6)

*Repentance occurs when we turn our life over to the control of God. It also includes a sincere apology for distrusting Him for so long. Thus by faith, reconciliation is achieved between God and man.*

## **SUBSTITUTES FOR DISCIPLESHIP**

*In the New Testament, salvation and discipleship are so closely related as to be indivisible.* But in the working creed of the average Christian, salvation is held to be immediate and automatic, while discipleship is thought to be something optional which the Christian may delay indefinitely or never accept at all.

The whole biblical concept of Lordship and obedience is completely absent from the mind of the seeker. The absence of the concept of discipleship from present-day Christianity leaves a vacuum which we instinctively try to fill with one or another substitute.

The first is pietism. By this I mean an enjoyable feeling of affection for the person of our Lord, which is valued for itself and is wholly unrelated to cross-bearing or entering into the divine will of God.

*It is entirely possible to feel for Jesus an ardent human love which is not of the Holy Spirit.* This kind of love is always inwardly focused and self-seeking. Witness the love for the virgin Mary felt by certain devout souls, a love which in the very nature of things must be purely from human emotion, and subjective. The heart is adept at emotional tricks and is entirely capable of falling in love with imaginary objects or romantic ideas.

Our Lord gave us a rule by which we can test our love for Him: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me...and I too will love him and show myself to him... If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teachings." (John 14:21-24 NIV) These words are too plain to need much interpretation. Of course, this means all of His commands, including all of His teachings in His Sermon on the Mount. If we reject Christ's teachings, we are rejecting Christ and living in unbelief, in spite of what we profess with our lips.

Another substitute for discipleship is literalism. It is the attempt to live by the letter of the word but ignoring its spirit. It habitually fails to apprehend the inward meaning of Christ's words, and contents itself with external compliance with those commands it is capable of obeying through the strength of the flesh.

If Christ commands baptism, for instance, it finds fulfillment in the physical act of water baptism. But the radical meaning of the act as explained in Romans six is completely rejected or spiritualized into meaningless words. Thus, *instead of finding reality in the eternal light of God's truth, we tend to pretend the text is true in our own life because we have professed a belief in Christ.*

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were therefore baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised {in reality} from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If {and the word is – IF} we have been united with him like this in his death {to the flesh-life}, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died {to self} has been freed from sin...But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is {the firstfruits of the} eternal life. For the wages of sin is {spiritual} death, but the gift of God is eternal life *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom. 6:3-7,22)

*Literalism reads the Scripture regularly, contributes consistently to religious work, attends church every Sunday and otherwise carries on the common duties of a Christian. Its tragic breakdown is its failure to comprehend the Lordship of Christ, separation from the world and the crucifixion of the natural self-willed man. Because individuals refuse to become a slave to God, they never become united as one with His divine life.*

*Literalism attempts to build a holy temple upon the sandy foundation of the religious self. It will suffer, sacrifice, and labor to feed the empty soul, but it will not die to self-will so it may be united to the good, pleasing and perfect will of the Lord. Because it rejects the concept of denying self and taking up the cross to follow Christ, it can never participate with Him in His divine heavenly life.*

*Zealous religious activity has effectively been substituted for discipleship. Working for Christ has today been accepted as the test for godliness. Christ has become a project to be promoted or a cause to be served instead of a Lord to be obeyed. The service found in Christian organizations cannot be distinguished from the work being done through secular social organizations. The world is able to see the work being done by organized flesh, but it cannot see the glory of God.*

*Thousands of mistaken persons seek to do for Christ whatever their fancy suggests should be done, and in whatever way they think best. The what and the how of true Christian service can only originate in the eternal will of God and it must be assigned by the sovereign Spirit of God. But the busy beavers who want to gain recognition for themselves ignore this fact and think up their own schemes. The result is an army of men and women who run without being sent and speak without hearing from the Spirit of God. They refuse to take the path of Jesus who never spoke or did anything of His own, but waited to be directed by the Father, according to His eternal plans.*

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph. 2:10 NIV)

“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the {divine} light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through {the all-surpassing power of} God.” (John 3:21 NIV)

## **THE MARKS OF GOD’S CHOSEN**

The Christian Scriptures, particularly the Gospel of John, contain two truths which appear to stand opposed to each other. One is that “whosoever will” may come to Christ. The other is that before anyone can come, there must have been a previous work done in their heart by the sovereign operation of God.

The notion that just anybody, at any time, can come into a life with Christ by a sudden decision of the will, is wholly contrary to the teachings of the Bible. In fact, Jesus said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” (John 6:65 NIV)

God's invitation to men is broad but not unqualified. The word "whosoever" throws the door wide open, indeed. But the church in recent years has carried the gospel invitation far beyond its proper bounds. We have attempted to make the road broad and have turned Christianity into something human and less divine than found in the eternal word.

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to {divine} life, and only a few find it...Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:13-14,21 NIV)

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber... I am the gate; whoever enters {divine life} through me will be saved... I have come that they may have {divine} life, and have it to the full." (John 10:1,9-10 NIV)

In the sixth chapter of John, our Lord makes some statements which gospel Christians seem afraid to talk about. The average person in the church manages to live with them by the simple trick of ignoring them. *The people who are clinging to the self-sufficient ways of the world do not like to be told how dependent they must become upon God's supernatural grace.* Once again let's look at what Jesus said. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." and also, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." (John 6:44,65 NIV)

It is not surprising that upon hearing these words, many of our Lord's disciples turned back and stopped following Him. *Such teachings will inevitably disturb the natural mind that expects to remain in the self-directed way of life. Christ's teachings takes from sinful people much of the power of self-determination upon which they had prided themselves while they walked according to the ways of the world.* But this is God's way. "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23 NIV)

*It takes a work of God in man to sour him on the world and to turn him against his self-willed life.* Yet until this has happened to him, he is psychologically unable to repent. As long as he remains content with the



world's way of life or his own lack of holiness, these conditions will successfully block off the flow of transforming faith into his heart.

*Anyone who lives close to the vast majority of Christians today knows that there is little spiritual hunger to enter into a true Christ-like righteousness. Religion, pious talk, yes; but no real hunger among them. Where a hungry heart is found, we may be sure that God was there first. "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."*

### **QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY IN RELIGION**

*The emphasis in Christian circles today appears to be on quantity, with a corresponding lack of emphasis on quality. Numbers, size and amount seem to be very nearly all that matters, even among evangelicals.*

This is age of the Laodiceans. The great goddess Numbers is worshiped with fervent devotion. And hardly anyone notices the deep and dangerous error. It is of far greater importance that we have better Christians than that we have more of them.

*To avoid personal involvement with the cross, we have become adept at finding or creating religious projects to soothe our conscience and make things look good in the church. While many of these works are good, all presuppose that everyone who engages in a work for Christ's church should be holy, Spirit-filled and totally committed to God. To carry on these activities scripturally, the church should be walking in fullness of power, separated, purified and ready at any moment to give up everything, even life itself, for the greater glory of Christ. For a worldly, weak, and decadent church to make converts is but to bring forth after her own kind, and extend her weakness and decadence a bit further out.*

### **ADJUSTED: BUT TO WHAT?**

The big problem with Christians is that they come to Christ with their minds already made up on one point: To avoid friction with the people of the world, they must remain adjusted to society. This notion has been drilled into them from the playpen, and it never occurs to them to question it. They think their success and happiness depends upon how well they adjust to the

norms of this world. And Christianity, though it may add some dressing on the ways of the world, must never ever disagree with the main idea. Consequently, generation after generation follows this same path into an uncertain future, while their soul remains empty and dry.

*It was to this kind of world that Jesus came, to save it from itself. He died for its sins, and now lives to impart His divine life to all those who will turn from this evil world. This is the aspect of the true Christian life that most people refuse to accept. They want their worldly comfort and so they recoil from this radical break from the world.*

*The whole drive behind the authentic Christian life is to be conformed to the image of Christ. The energy with which the true believer revolts against the self-willed ways of the world will be in exact proportion to the intensity of his yearning to be like Christ.*

“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” (Jam. 4:4 NIV)

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for {Christ’s} righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matt. 5:6 NIV)