

God's Eternal Purpose

Chapter One:

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLAN

When Christians first believe {agree to submit to God's ways}, they generally turn to God with their whole heart. They then are enabled to partake of His grace and receive the gift of His Spirit. The indwelling Spirit provides them with a real desire to follow the ways of the Lord. But this is only the doorway into a spiritual life in which God wants to become our All. The ultimate intention of salvation is to turn people from a self-centered way of life to a God-centered way of life.

God uses tribulations to separate His called-out children from their love for the world. He wants them to turn to Him as their only source of spiritual life. But as He takes them through a spiritual wilderness on the way to His life of promise, with the intent of teaching them to live by faith in Him alone, many begin looking back to the things of this world for relief. Like Israel of old, they begin to complain and long for the things they had given up in Egypt {a type of the world}.

While God is seeking to make His children holy, they are generally looking for personal blessings. Consequently, when trials begin to occur in their lives, they tend to be drawn away from the straight and narrow path that leads to the Kingdom-life of God.

Jesus had thousands of followers after He fed the five thousand. But when He began to explain how they would need to sustain themselves on Him alone, which would require them to fully surrender their will to His will (John 4:34), they turned away. "On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' ...From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." (John 6:60, 65)

Jesus, in His Parable of the Sower said, these are the "the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. *They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.*" (Luke 8:13 Emphasis added) They are willing to follow Christ while He is blessing them in the temporal realm, but they reject His way of the cross. They prefer

to develop a spiritual life by following after their own personal desires. They are unwilling to die to this old worldly form of life so they may have a supernatural life from the heavenly realms. “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has {from the self-life} cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

Falling away from Christ’s way of life in the time of testing does not necessarily imply a separation from the organized church. These people will often hold to fundamental beliefs about Jesus. But they do not trust Him enough to fully surrender to His way of life. Christ’s message to the church at Ephesus applies to all church members who find themselves drifting back to a self-centered way of life. This group of Christians at Ephesus was involved in church activities when Christ sent His warning. They also believed in the fundamental doctrines of the church. But they still needed to repent: “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. {Their service was more focused on self than on God.} Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.” (Rev. 2:1-5) He will eventually take His Spirit away from everyone who refuses to turn away from their self-centered way of life.

The salvation offered by the Lord is not man-centered. Christ has come to save His followers from their fallen nature. He does it by purifying the hearts of His tested disciples so they may “*serve Him* without fear, *in holiness and righteousness* before Him all the days of [their] lives.” (Luke 1:74-75 Emphasis added) He provides them with a pure heart so they will have the capacity to overcome all the temptations of the world and continue to live in an entire devotement to God. (Acts 15:8-9)

Until this Kingdom-life has been established within the heart, even earnest believers will periodically find themselves being pulled away from the life of holiness and righteousness that God requires of His children. The devil uses many crafty devices to draw these unstable Christians into fleshly activities. Even while they remain members of a church body, they are drawn back to serving themselves.

The leaders of Christ’s church have not been reminding Christians of their need to deny themselves and take up their cross. Because there has been a neglect of this all-important doctrine, we do not find very many church members entering into Christ’s Kingdom-life. Let us therefore begin

to exhort one another daily while there is still an opportunity, “lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:13)

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. (Heb. 2:1)

Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life {the Kingdom-life}, and there are few who find it. (Matt. 7:14)

God’s children do not have the right to live for themselves or even to do what they please. God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling...according to His own purpose.” (2 Tim. 1:8-9) His intent is to separate us from the self-serving ways of the world so we will be available for His exclusive use. He created us to live for His purposes.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless... (1 Thess. 5:23)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification. (1 Thess. 4:3)

If you have not been looking for a salvation from your self-centered and self-serving nature, then you are not following the true Christ. Phoebe Palmer, in her book *Full Salvation*, has described this principle more clearly:

There are many who take upon themselves the name of Christ who do not renounce the world. They seem to have found some broader, easier way than the way of the cross. But the Bible presents but one direct way to heaven, and that way is the narrow way of the cross... The Bible... presents no way of going around the cross without getting out of the way. Jesus says, “If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, {not try to go around it} and follow Me.”

Those, therefore, who attempt to go around the cross instead of taking it up, get out of the way to heaven into the by-path that seemeth to be right, but the end whereof is death. And these are the “many” to which the Savior refers when He says, “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not

prophesied in Thy Name? And in Thy Name have cast out devils? And in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you!”...How evidently had these people died in their deception! And now they come to the very door of heaven, expecting admission, but the Savior says, “I never knew you.”

Now would you love to imagine yourself in the way to heaven in some other way than the way of the cross? Christians are called the light of the world, and would you love to take upon yourself a profession as a light of the world and have others follow you, as you are wishing to follow other worldly-minded professors, and then find in the end that souls have been lost by following you instead of being saved through your influence? Suppose one puts up a beacon-light in a wrong place and a vessel is decoyed from the right channel and stranded and all on board perish. Who is responsible for the loss of life?

Now do you desire to take upon yourself the profession of Christ, without giving up the world? Would you be willing to be looked up to as one of the lights of the world, without having previously taken upon you the cross of Christ?

Christ’s true disciples will follow Him through the cross. “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has {from his self-life} cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:33) These true believers in Jesus Christ stop living for themselves {they come out from the ways of the world}. They begin denying themselves by offering their flesh-life to the cross, so they may enter into a life of self-sacrificing love as Jesus did. (1 John 2:5-6) They will therefore begin saying with Jesus, “My food {or spiritual sustenance} is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:34)

In contrast to how Jesus lived, much of the church today has become man-centered. The members of Christ’s body are not being set free from their self-centered nature. Most Christians will frankly admit they expect their pastor to provide church services that will make “them” happy. After all, who is more important?

Activities that are centered around the desires of the members of Christ’s body will actually feed their flesh-life and make it stronger. As long as the

work of the church remains man-centered – starting with man, centered in his needs, thinking of his welfare, and seeking his blessing – people will be led away from Christ and His way of the cross.

It should be very obvious today that we have been led terribly off course by our leaders. There are many within the church now walking on the broad road to destruction. They have been unwilling to take up their cross and lose their self-life so they can find Christ's Kingdom-life of perfect love. (Matt. 16:24-25)

There needs to be a real change in the way the church functions. It was never intended to provide spiritual life by acting as a social organization. The church is a place where seekers after the life of God are to be encouraged to press forward in their faith until God has become their "all in all." "Exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:13) Everyone who enters into Christ's Kingdom-life will be found living in an entire devotion to God.

As Christians, we will need to renew the way we think before we can walk in the ways of the Son. In the past, we have responded to our own selfish desires. Whenever there was something within the grasp of our fleshly desires, we simply did it. This is how the world lives. The children of God are to live differently.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)

There is something Christians are to seek. But it does not include anything from this world. Christians, according to Jesus, are not even to focus their attention on the things they will need to eat, drink and wear. (Matt. 6:31-33) The primary concern of Christ's disciples is to seek after the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In faith, they can rely on the Lord to be their Sustainer.

Once we have been credited with Christ's righteousness through a faith that is fully yielded to Him, we are expected to seek out His Kingdom-life.

We are then to depend on Him to take us through the cross and into the reality of His resurrection life. He has promised to manifest His life of true righteousness within the inner being of everyone who obeys Him. (John 14:21)

In this process of seeking out the Kingdom-life of God, we need to be laying aside every weight that holds us back. (Heb. 12:1) We are responsible for pressing forward in our faith until we have received the promised “abundant entrance” into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:10-11)

The moment believers are able to trust in the Son to save them from their sin, they enter into a glorious new “position in Christ.” But there is a serious problem in the way this doctrine of imputed righteousness is generally presented. The primary emphasis is on the individual. When man is placed at the center, these new Christians will naturally begin to build on a false foundation. The church has remained in a carnal condition because the members of Christ’s body are being taught to think about their imputed righteousness from a self-centered perspective.

If the scriptural teachings about imputed righteousness are twisted and become man-centered, the hearers will remain in a bondage to their fallen nature. They will never learn what it means to die to this old way of life and be gloriously lifted by the power of God into the Son’s Kingdom-life of perfect love. This is why all our messages, even those about imputed righteousness, must be God-centered.

A. W. Tozer, as quoted from *Born After Midnight*, once said, “The flaw in current evangelism lies in its humanist approach. It struggles to be supernaturalistic but never quite makes it. It is frankly fascinated by the great, noisy, aggressive world with its big name, its hero worship, its wealth and its garish pageantry. To the millions of disappointed persons who have always yearned for worldly glory but never attained to it, the modern evangel {gospel} offers a quick and easy shortcut to their heart’s desire. Peace of mind, happiness, prosperity, social acceptance, publicity, success in sports, business, the entertainment field, and perchance to sit occasionally at the same banquet table with a celebrity - all this on earth and heaven at last...”

“In this quasi-Christian scheme of things, God becomes the Aladdin lamp who does the bidding of everyone that will accept His Son and sign a card. The total obligation of the sinner is discharged when he accepts Christ. After that, he has but to come with his basket and receive the religious equivalent of everything the world offers and enjoys...”

“This concept of Christianity is in radical error, and because it touches the souls of men, it is a dangerous, even deadly, error. At the bottom it is little more than weak humanism allied with weak Christianity to give it ecclesiastical respectability. It may be identified by its religious approach. Invariably it begins with man and his needs, and then looks around for God; *true Christianity reveals God as searching for man to deliver him from his ambitions.*” (Emphasis added)

If we are ever to enter into the divine purpose that God has for His children, we will need to follow the Son’s path of the cross. God’s spiritual children will be found living for His kingdom and glory. *They surrender their own wills so they may be led by His Spirit and filled with the Son’s Kingdom-life of sacrificial love.*

Chapter Two:

FULL STATURE

And He Himself gave some to be...pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry...till we all come to the unity of the faith...to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

The full stature of Christ is not merely some distant hope to be realized, but a very present opportunity for everyone who believes. How glorious is our Father’s plan for mankind. He has purposed to provide many children through whom He would manifest the spiritual life of His Son. He has predestined to conform every yielded believer into His spiritual image. (Rom. 8:29)

The apostle John, in writing his first epistle, wanted to help his readers understand what it means to enter into the *full stature* of Christ’s spiritual life. To help distinguish the “spiritual” Christian from other less mature stages of Christian life, he separated all Christians into three categories. He

said, “I write unto you little children... I write unto you young men... I write unto you fathers....” (1 John 2:12-14)

When referring to the little children, John says they are conscious of two main points: “God is our Father” and “our sins are forgiven for His name’s sake.” Their faith has enabled them to believe in a loving Father who takes care of them. They are also conscious of being reconciled to God and being at peace with Him. These little children possess a basic understanding about redemption. Through repentance they have turned and submitted to the Lord. But their understanding of what this implies is very limited. Only as the Lord is able to strengthen them in their faith and reveal His deeper truths within their hearts will they begin to realize the real nature of their calling.

Next, John describes Christians who have matured into young manhood. As “young men,” we are required to bring every facet of our life under the authority of Jesus Christ. But we can still only form pictures in our mind about Christ’s nature of love because His life of love surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:19).

Two things have occurred in this level of Christian growth: “You have overcome the wicked one” and “you are strong, and the word of God abides in you.” These Christians have turned from their old way of life and have begun to earnestly follow after the ways of their Lord and Master. The Son can say of these disciples, “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (John 17:16) These “young men” have been willing to devote themselves fully to serving their Lord. They have taken steps to separate themselves from the self-seeking ways of the world so they may become like their Master. While other disciples may have turned back to the ways of the world after learning of the cost of discipleship, these devoted Christians have remained with their Lord. Even when passing through very difficult times, they keep saying to Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68)

The “young men” are Christians who no longer need milk. They are fully grounded in God’s word and committed to doing everything their Lord teaches. Through experience, they have moved from a position of defense to a position of offense. Instead of always running from the arrows of Satan, they have “overcome the wicked one.” They have also learned to serve God by fighting against the powers of darkness through prayer and supplication.

The “young men” of the Christian faith want to see people fully submitted to Christ’s Lordship. They desire to press the “little children” forward in their Christian walk. Their form of righteousness, however, is still based on what they have worked out through their own efforts. They therefore have a tendency to preach law. They also have a tendency to be critical when others have not yet reached their current standard of righteousness.

Unfortunately, many of these “young men” in the faith tend to think they are spiritually mature. In truth, however, what they are trying to do for Christ they are attempting to do in their own strength. They study for the purpose of making themselves more effective Christians. Most of their thoughts are centered around the activities they have planned to do for the Lord. Instead of receiving their spiritual life and work from Christ through the Spirit, resting from all human efforts, they remain engrossed in *what they can do for Him*. In effect, they are still more focused on *doing* than on *being*. They have not yet entered the Sabbath-rest where God’s children cease from their own works.

There remains therefore a rest *for the people of God*. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works... Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest... (Heb. 4:9-11 Emphasis added)

We now come to what John considers the mature Christian life – the spiritual fathers. These are the ones who “have known Him who is from the beginning.” They have come to know the Eternal Life of perfect love. Because they have been willing to submit to all their Lord’s teachings, including the dying that must take place to self and all forms of self-sufficiency, He has come to reveal the firstfruits of the Father’s eternal life within their inner being.

The spiritual fathers have made their calling and election sure by permitting Christ to establish His Kingdom-life of love within their hearts. (2 Pet. 2:10-11) Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them {the “young men” who have fully responded to His way of the cross}, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21) While they have had to go through some very severe trials to stretch their faith in the time of testing, they have continued to respond to the

teachings of their Lord until He has established His Kingdom-life within their hearts.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation {in the time of testing}, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him. (Jam. 1:12)

It is this inner manifestation of the Son's life from heaven that makes these Christians mature. Because they have yielded fully to the Spirit and have died to the flesh-life, Christ has raised them into a participation with Him in His life in the heavenly realms. They have come to know the eternal life of love. "But whoever keeps His word {by denying themselves and following Him through the cross}, truly the love of God is perfected in him." (1 John 2:5)

No wonder John writes twice about these fathers who have "known Him who is from the beginning." They have fought the good fight of faith and have taken hold of His eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:12) Through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit they have come to know the love that "surpasses knowledge" and have become "filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:19)

These spiritual fathers truly have the glory of God – His spiritual image – resting on them. Because their faith has shown itself to be complete, enabling them to lose their self-life, they have entered into a new life in the heavenly realms, coming "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-13)

It is the "fathers" who have truly learned what it means to live by grace. They can say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10) This supernatural work of God's grace enables these spiritual Christians to die daily to self and to live wholly for the good of others through the life they are receiving from Jesus Christ. They know their life has a source outside of themselves.

Once we have become spiritual fathers and possess a personal knowledge of how we are required to receive our spiritual life from God through the

power of the Holy Spirit, we will not condemn people for not attaining to a certain level of legalistic righteousness. Our heart does, however, sense a burden for people who are still failing in their own attempts to be righteous. Our desire is to exhort and encourage them to come out from the self-centered and self-sufficient ways of the world so they may enter into our Lord's Kingdom-life of perfect love.

As God has said, "I will dwell in them {with the Kingdom-life}..." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean {all heart idols – anything we use from the temporal realm to lift us}, and I will receive you..." Therefore, *having these promises*, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor 6:16-17; 7:1)

Chapter Three: STARTING WITH THE CORRECT POINT OF VIEW

Our heavenly Father had a purpose for creating human children. The church today needs to gain a better perspective of His original purpose. Paul, having been taken into the third heaven, was provided with insight into this matter. He reveals some important points in the opening verses of his letter to the Ephesians.

Instead of starting out with a lesson about redemption, Paul begins by explaining the purpose that God had "before the foundation of the world." We learn that God had planned to use the Son to reveal His spiritual life through each of His children from the beginning. Man was never intended to have an independent life.

This plan for providing spiritual life to man had nothing to do with the Fall. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4) From the beginning God had planned to have many children who would reflect His spiritual image by receiving their life through the Son. "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life {His life of perfect love}, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11)

Paul also says this plan originated in God Himself. In other words, His current purpose for our lives is not a response to the Fall. “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.” (Eph. 1:9) His plan, which He has not changed, came from His own heart before the foundation of the world.

While God’s plan was temporarily delayed because of the Fall, God has not changed His purpose. He still has a plan to provide a family of children who have been enabled to display His spiritual image in this world by receiving their life from the Son. While the fall interrupted His plan, Paul assures us that Christ’s work on the cross has permitted God to go ahead with His original purpose. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ.” (Eph. 1:10) He would do this wonderful work “*according to the eternal purpose* which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:10 Emphasis added)

Once we understand God’s original purpose and recognize its eternal perspective, we can begin to see how redemption is something much more than merely forgiving fallen men and women for their sins. God still has His original purpose. He desires to have a family of children who will display His spiritual image in this world. Even the fall could not stop Him from going forward with His plan.

While it will be difficult for the “little children” and “young men” to fully understand this high calling “in Christ Jesus” while they are still being influenced by the powers of the flesh, they will be without excuse for not believing what the Scriptures teach. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:19) *Since God has the power to make His children like Him in love in this world, and since He has a current plan that permits Him to do the work through His Son, every individual is responsible {and accountable} for yielding to His plan.*

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...? (Heb. 2:1, 3)

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; *because as He is, so are we in this world.* (1 John 4:17 Emphasis added)

There is a tendency to reject as unsound any teaching that sounds like a “new doctrine.” But the truth we are explaining is not a new doctrine. It was established by God before the foundation of the world. While this teaching may have been lost in the darkness of a carnal church that is living on the natural plane, as the church once lost her understanding about justification in the dark ages, these truths have always been in the Bible.

The lack of vision and perspective in the church has occurred because we have overlooked God’s original purpose for creating man. Like infant children, we have had a tendency to selfishly focus on our own purposes. It has kept our thoughts on our personal justification, and this has blinded us to the deeper things of God. We have not realized that reconciliation is only a necessary prerequisite that permits God to go back to His original purpose.

We will need to recognize the meaning of redemption from God’s perspective if we are to enter into all truth. *Only as we see how redemption is related to bringing fallen man back into the spiritual image of the Son can we recognize the true goal of our faith.* We must remember that God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling...according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed {in a display of the true meaning of salvation through a mortal body} by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ...” (2 Tim. 1:9-10 Emphasis added)

The gospel message tells us about a conquering Savior who has come to provide a way of escape from the fallen nature. All of Adam’s fallen family may, by sharing with Christ in His risen life, escape from sin, self, the world, the devil and death. “He who overcomes {by dying to the Adam-life} shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Rev. 2:11) In other words, we need to enter into the spiritual realm in this world while it is still called “Today.”

After the Son lived as God had purposed for Adam, He {Christ}, as the Second Adam, received a right to communicate His overcoming life to His

followers. And as Paul has so clearly taught in the Scriptures, **the Son's risen life is much more powerful than the fallen life that everyone inherits from Adam at birth.** “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, *much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*” (Rom. 5:17 Emphasis added)

Let us believe God’s word! The abundantly full spiritual life that is now available from Jesus Christ is more powerful than the fallen life everyone receives from Adam. We are therefore expected to enter into His overcoming life in this world. In fact, according to the Scripture, those who do not enter into the Lord’s full redemption and begin walking as He did in divine love, cannot expect to stand before their Maker with “boldness” on the Day of Judgment. (1 John 4:17)

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, *let us go on to perfection*, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. (Heb. 6:1 Emphasis added)

Chapter Four:

GOD’S SPECIFIC CALLING

What is more tragic than to see individuals who are placed here by God to fulfill some unique and glorious destiny still wandering aimlessly without any desire to discover their divine purpose or calling? *Thousands who sit in church pews week after week are missing out on God’s eternal plan for their lives. This sense of divine destiny is the one thing alone that can give meaning, direction, and purpose to life.*

Man was designed as the masterpiece of creation. With God at the center of everything, human beings were to manifest the light from God’s heavenly life of love and fulfill His preordained plans. When we consider how we can only enter into God’s purposes when we die to our own plans and purposes, we can better understand Paul’s instruction to the Romans: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable

service...that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Rom. 12:1-2)

Most people never enter into the perfect will of God for their lives. Because they are unwilling to die to their own will, they do not have an opportunity to discover the good and pleasing plans that God has made for them. Their independent walk also keeps them separated from the abundantly full spiritual life of the Son {His Living Water}. This is why they never find true fulfillment. They end up going through life always looking for another means to help them find an enjoyable spiritual life.

God has created every object to fulfill some specific purpose. Each object was designed to fulfill a part of the plan He made for His universe, giving it shape and meaning and warmth. He designed His creation in a way that enables everything to be fulfilled according to its order. This also applies to the highest order of His creation – His children. Even though He gave human beings a free will, God did not intend for His children to be loose cannons causing chaos in His ordered world.

The Son has provided a visible representation of what the Father expects from His children. The Son, if He was to remain without sin, had to follow every leading of the Holy Spirit. He received all His instructions from the Father. His life therefore remained in harmony with the divine will. Because He was not living for His own will, but for the will of the Father, He listened for the still small voice of the Spirit and responded to His Father’s desires. (John 5:30) He could therefore say, “My food {or spiritual sustenance from heaven} is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:34)

Similarly, God has made specific plans for each of His children. “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) He expects each of His children to lay down their own personal wills so they may be led by His Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14)

Unfortunately, the world remains in darkness because most people are unwilling to wait on the Lord to receive His specific instructions for their lives. There is a natural tendency for even the “young men” of the Christian faith to walk by their own human wisdom. Even when they set out with a real commitment to serve the Lord, they generally end up serving Him in the

power of the flesh. They never quite reach the point where they are willing to die to self-will, so they may live fully under the control and power of the Holy Spirit.

These “young men” of the Christian faith are represented by Martha. (Luke 10:38-42) We are told that “Martha was distracted by much serving.” She was a child of God who was working very hard for the Lord in her own strength. Because Martha was still relying on her own human efforts to serve the Lord, she remained “worried and troubled about many things.” Obviously, everyone who is still living and working in their own strength will have many things to be worried and troubled about.

In contrast, Mary chose to wait on the Lord until she had received a clearer revelation of His life and will. We therefore find Jesus saying to Martha, “Mary has chosen that good part {Jesus’ presence}, which will not be taken away from her.” She had chosen what has also been translated as “the one thing needful.”

God has special plans for each of His children. He has already made plans for our lives. (Eph. 2:10) And the only way we will ever know His good, pleasing and perfect will is by waiting on Him to reveal each of our steps in life.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on our own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Prov. 3:5)

“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 hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” (Jer. 29:11-12)

God has the power to communicate His plans to those who truly listen to Him. When we have turned from the path of the evildoer {self-seeker} by laying down our own will, God will take us into His garden of holiness and begin revealing His plans. We are to become like Jesus, who said, “I do nothing of Myself... The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” (John 8:28-29) “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (Jam. 1:4)

Because the Son lived only to do the Father's will, the Father continued to communicate His good and perfect will to the Son. And if we will live as the Father's children in this same way, we can expect Him to reveal His plans for our lives.

Jesus said, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life.*" (John 10:27-28 Emphasis added) Everyone who truly listens to His voice and lives according to the Father's preordained purposes, can also expect to share with Christ in His eternal life of love. In effect, we will find both the firstfruits of our Lord's heavenly life and a fulfilling work when we are responding to His voice and living according to God's purpose.

It is very easy to become caught up in pushing programs that are not in tune with God's ways. These works can be recognized by the way they exhaust our strength and do little to further the Lord's Kingdom-life of love – His eternal life – here on earth. These efforts have produced many frustrated Christians and have resulted in a few shipwrecks along the way.

Could we look back – many miles back – where the pathway is still crowded with "would-be-experts" and "hope-to-be-successes," we would find earnest Christians starting on the wrong path of Christian service. They have longed to reach a real measure of usefulness in their service to the Lord. But they were never willing to pay the price of dying to self so they could become vessels of Christ's life and work. This is why they have never found real rest for their souls.

Apart from gladly entering into God's specific purpose for our lives, there can be no real preparation for our high calling in Christ Jesus. The Spirit is the only One who can equip people for their unique service in God's Kingdom. And we cannot expect the Lord to equip us and send us forth with a true anointing from His Spirit until we have died to the worldly way of living by self-will and self-sufficiency.

This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths {of a Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered walk}, ask where the good way is {in order to learn God's purposes}, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your

souls. But you said {and many in the church are still saying it by their actions}, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jer. 6:16)

We can find the byways filled with people who are unwilling to treat the plans and skills they have developed through their own human effort “as loss” in order to enter into the Spirit-empowered service that God has planned for them to do. Because they desire to use their abilities to provide a reputation for themselves, they have been unwilling to become nothing in themselves as Jesus did. This is why God does not exalt them into a position where they can share with Christ in the power of His resurrection-life. (Phil. 3:7-10)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: Who, being in very nature God...*made Himself nothing* {of no reputation}, *taking the very nature of a servant* {to be led by Another}... He humbled himself and became obedient to death... Therefore God exalted Him... (Phil. 2:5-9 Emphasis added)

Here is the basic essential for entering into the full stature of Christ’s spiritual life. We must follow the pattern shown to us by godly examples like Paul and Jesus. It always begins with an utter {full and complete} dedication of ourselves to God so we can live for His purposes. Only by offering our bodies to the Lord as living sacrifices, whereby we submit to being vessels of His life and work, can we expect to discover and enjoy God’s heavenly will.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God... *For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many*, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1 Emphasis added)

Chapter Five:

THE CROSS – A PART OF GOD’S PURPOSE

It may come as a real surprise when we suggest that God has always planned for the “cross” to be an innate part of His children’s nature. The spiritual principle of the cross was not initiated because of the Fall. The principle of the cross has been eternally woven into the very nature of the Father.

The meaning of this principle of life was demonstrated by the Son when He lived in a mortal body. Jesus expressed the meaning of a cross-life when He said, “My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life... I lay it down of Myself.” (John 10:17-18)

The Son continually laid down His life {refusing to live for Himself} so He would be in a position to benefit others. In other words, He lived in a *cross-position*. He then said to everyone who plans to follow Him, “If anyone desires to come after Me {into this same Kingdom-life}, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Matt. 16:24)

The cross is far more than an act of history. It expresses a very unique quality and manner of life within the triune Godhead. It is a part of the self-sacrificing nature that has been displayed by God through His world and in His work of redemption. The cross-life lives for the good of others. His heavenly love, with its inwrought cross, has been displayed by God in all His dealings with man from the beginning.

If the members of Christ’s body are to become spiritual Christians – sharing with the Son in His life of sacrificial love – they will need to permit the cross to do its work in their lives. Only when God’s children are infused with the Son’s cross-life can they walk as Jesus did. “But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (1 Cor. 6:17)

Jesus told His disciples to follow Him. He established a very specific path for entering into resurrection life. By examining His life, we can find

that Jesus was not required to crucify Himself. The Father worked out every detail once He had fully surrendered to the cross. He will do the same for us. If we will deny ourselves and take up our cross, permitting it to be inwrought into our very nature *by a divine work of God*, He will then be able to resurrect us spiritually and establish the Son's Kingdom-life of perfect love within our hearts. (1 John 2:5-6)

Christians cannot enter into a close and intimate fellowship with God until they are willing to share with the Son in His self-sacrificing nature. And to do this, they will need to have His way of the cross as an innate part of their inner nature. Only then can they be "made perfect in one." (John 17:23) It is by entering into this participation with Christ in His divine nature, *which includes His inwrought cross*, that His life of love can begin welling up from within and be reflected in everything they do.

When God first presented His way of life to Adam, the purpose of God was clear. Man was expected to ratify God's purpose by making a daily choice for God's way of the cross in every decision of life. If he would sacrifice his own rights in order to live for the glory of God and the good of others, not choosing to live for his own pleasures, he would be provided with the eternal life from heaven. Through this continual laying down of his own life, and by trusting in God for everything {all his personal needs, including his spiritual life}, Adam would be enabled to abide in the life of God. "As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them.'" (2 Cor. 6:16)

The children of God would be permitted to eat from the Tree of Eternal Life while they walked with the cross-principle in their lives. If they would submit their will to God's will, and always listen carefully to what He said, their soul would remain perfectly satisfied. "Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance." (Isa. 55:2) The Spirit would keep them filled to overflowing with the Son's life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23)

Unfortunately, Adam decided to turn from the way of the cross. He chose instead to begin living for himself. After turning from the Tree of Life, he began to live for the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eye and the pride of life. His center for living turned from God to self. He thereby separated himself from the spiritual life of heaven.

After man became his own god, everything he did revolved around the little kingdom he began to make for himself. *This turning from God to self is what separated the race of Adam from the eternal life of God and left mankind with the emptiness of spiritual death.*

“My people have changed their Glory {the Son’s eternal life of love} for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate,” says the Lord. “For My people have committed two evils {which keeps them separated from the Kingdom-life of heaven}: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns – broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Isa. 2:11- 13)

Choosing his own way meant that Adam would feed on the tree of knowledge. He would develop a worldly wisdom to help sustain his own form of spiritual life. He would do this by asserting his own rights and pursuing his own private goals. “God made man upright {totally God-centered}, but they have sought out many schemes.” (Ecl. 7:29) This evil, which has become the self-seeking way of darkness, is the life that every man has inherited from Adam.

Everyone now enters into this world with an empty soul. It is missing the presence of God. And wherever the Living Water from the eternal life is not flowing, there you will find an emptiness that naturally results in a self-centered nature. This is the “sin nature” that everyone has inherited from Adam because of the Fall. It is a nature that continues to be centered on self because it is missing the indwelling presence of God.

The only way to fill this void within the soul, which naturally causes sin {self-will and self-seeking}, is to become filled with Christ’s spiritual life from heaven. The Son is now willing to give His heavenly life to everyone who will deny themselves {surrender their own kingdom} and follow Him along His narrow way of the cross. *It is not possible to find His fulfilling spiritual life from heaven without entering into this cross-principle.* “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25)

The life we are to find by following Jesus through the cross is the firstfruits of the eternal life of God. As Jesus has said, this eternal life is to begin welling up from within our inner being in this world. “Indeed, the

water I give him *will become in him* a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14 Emphasis added)

We need to stop deceiving ourselves into thinking we can share with Christ in His heavenly life without first passing through a real death to the old flesh-life at the cross. A death of the old Adam-life always proceeds resurrection life. “For *if* we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5 Emphasis added) This death to the self-life must take place before there can be an abundant entrance into Christ’s Kingdom-life within the heavenly realms.

As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them...” Therefore “Come out from among them {the self-seeking ways of the world} and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean {what is not holy to God}, and I will receive you.” (2 Cor. 6:16-17)

Death on a cross is usually a slow process. The independent and self-sufficient ways of the world do not die easily. The cross often needs some time to complete its full work on the old self-centered way of life. But everyone who perseveres in their faith will receive the promise. We therefore exhort every believer: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Tim. 6:12)

Although the eternal cross is everywhere written into the very fabric of the universe, self-centered man has been blinded to the cross-principle. This is why so few people, even in the church, are passing over into the Son’s eternal life of perfect love.

While we may marvel at the blindness of Adam and his fatal choice, Christians today need to be examining their own lives to determine if they are following in the same self-centered path. Everyone who continues to follow the way that Adam chose can expect to experience the same spiritual death.

How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot {by rejecting His way of the cross}, who has treated as an unholy

thing the blood of the covenant {after being called out to a God-centered way of life}, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace {by not responding to His voice}... It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:29, 31)

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the {one true Christian} faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you {with His cross-principle of life} – unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Cor. 13:5)

It was and still is the Father's intention to have a family of dearly loved children who willingly embrace the inwrought cross and thereby display the Son's eternal life of love in this world. Only those who lose their life for His sake will have an opportunity to find His life from above.

Chapter Six: CALLED TO AN IMPOSSIBLE LIFE

It is not hard to live the Christian life – it's impossible! Our heavenly Father's purpose can be realized only through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. *If we hope to receive the reality of the Son's spiritual life from heaven, we will need to live by His Spirit.*

Adam was confronted with this same choice in the Garden of Eden. There were two ways open before him as represented by two trees. Man would have to decide which tree he would use to sustain his spiritual life. He would either receive his spiritual life from the Spirit of God, or he would choose to develop a self-sustained spiritual life through a work of his own efforts {the flesh}. There was no neutral ground.

Every human being is still required to make this same decision. Because of the critical nature of this choice, we need to keep in mind the clear teaching of Scripture: "For those who live according to the flesh {those who live by their own sufficiency for their own purposes} set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit {those who live under His control and power}, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded {self-centered and self-serving} is death, but to be spiritually minded is life {the Kingdom-life from heaven} and peace... So then, those

who are in the flesh {rejecting the way of the cross} cannot please God.” (Rom. 8:5-8)

Man will either feed upon the tree of knowledge in an attempt to develop his own spiritual life through self-centered pursuits, or he will yield to the Lord’s way of the cross and enter into the life and work planned for him by God. Everyone who receives their spiritual life by eating only from the Tree of Life – the life of the Son – will also gain access to God’s boundless resources for fulfilling His purposes.

If you abide in Me {the life of dying to self and living for God}, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)

The self-seeking ways of the flesh cannot be partially combined with the Son’s life of self-denying love. Again, “No one can serve two masters.” (Matt. 6:24) In other words, it does not do any good to serve God for self-centered purposes. As long as the activities are coming from the flesh, they will remain self-seeking in nature. The results are the same: “For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth {the way of the cross} and follow evil {self-will}, there will be wrath and anger.” (Rom. 2:8) This is why Scripture says, “Make every effort...to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14)

Some have tried to serve in the church while still living for themselves. But when we examine their lives we can see how their “fruit” is still coming from a carnal {self-serving} nature. Many of their actions are still in conflict with the Son’s life of sacrificial love.

The man who still has self at the center will periodically find himself involved in jealousies and quarrels. (Jam. 3:16; 4:1-2) “For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly. Are you not acting like mere men.” (1 Cor. 3:3) *The fruit from our Lord’s life of sacrificial love cannot be displayed on a tree that still has a root of pride and self-centeredness. People who are still living for themselves will quite naturally act like “mere men.”* “Thus by their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matt. 7:20 NIV)

It was God’s intention that Adam would live in unity with the eternal life of heaven. That is, the human spirit would live under the direction and

government of the Holy Spirit. Adam's soul-faculties – the mind, will and emotions – were to be controlled by the Spirit of God. As long as He lived by the Spirit, he would have a godly life that was free from carnal {self-centered and self-serving} actions.

However, when Adam chose to act independently of the Spirit, he was choosing to develop and expand his own soul-powers. He became inwardly focused, and the fruit of a carnal nature began to be manifest through his body. Watchman Nee says, thereafter “man was not only a living soul, but from henceforth man would *live by the soul*.” His life became self-centered. “Therefore, by their fruit you will know them.” (Matt. 7:20)

When Adam turned from a God-centered life to a man-centered life, his human spirit lost contact with the life of God. God had said, “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) While he did not physically die, self-will resulted in a loss of the Kingdom-life of God. *Instead of being vitally connected to God and living under His heavenly government, man's spirit was left lonely and self-centered. He began to experience spiritual death.*

The scientific definition for describing death provides an indication of what occurred when man died to the spiritual realm. Death occurs when something is unable to correspond with its environment. When Adam turned away from the way of the cross and began living for himself, he died spiritually. With his spirit separated from the heavenly realms, he lost his ability to correspond with the divine life and nature of God. There can be no real correspondence and harmony between the flesh-life and the Kingdom-life of God.

We can now better understand God's purpose for sending a Messiah. The kingdom of God needed to be re-established in this world. Men and women needed to have His Kingdom-life established within their hearts so they would be enabled to manifest God's eternal life of love and fulfill His heavenly purposes here on earth as it is done in heaven.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10)

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure...for so an entrance will be supplied to you

abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:10-11)

Chapter Seven:

PRESSING FORWARD IN THE TIME OF TESTING

The first eight chapters of Romans provides a description of the two different aspects of God's work of redemption: justification by the Blood of Christ and deliverance from the sinful nature by the Spirit of Christ. It is essential, if we are to fully understand the salvation of the Lord, to understand both parts. For, alas, many believers have wandered around in a wilderness of defeat for many years because they have depended on the Blood without permitting the Spirit to take control of them. Because they remain very much alive to, and submitted to the desires of their flesh, they often find themselves being overpowered by their sinful nature.

While it is important to know about Christ's finished work at Calvary, we also need to realize that it can only be applied to our lives as we are depending on God to take us into His life of promise. We are able to receive credited righteousness from the Son while we are both yielding to His ways and waiting on Him in faith to fulfill what He has promised to do. (Rom. 4:20-22) "According to your faith will it be done to you." (Matt. 9:29)

A real faith will show itself by yielding to the life it is intended to produce. "Wait on the Lord, *and keep His way*, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land." (Ps. 37:34 Emphases added) The "land" represents the life of promise. Our faithful God will reward everyone who responds to His ways while they are waiting on Him to establish His Kingdom-life within their heart. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him... *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*" (Heb. 11:6 Emphasis added)

We submit to God by surrendering to the Son's self-sacrificing way of life. Living for the glory of God and for the good of others is the only spiritual life that Jesus has to offer. We therefore cannot expect to enter into a participation with Him in His life and nature without first turning from the old self-centered ways of the world. Even when His Kingdom-life of love

has not yet been fully established within the heart, the believer is expected to consciously enter into a life of living for the good of others. This fruit is the sign of a real faith in God.

Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance... He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise. (Luke 3:8, 11)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead...

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (Jam. 2:14-26 NIV)

Christians are able to receive credited righteousness as they lay their lives down in service to others while they are waiting in faith for the Lord to establish His Kingdom-life of perfect love within their hearts. God tests the people He has called out from the ways of the world. He requires them to yield to His Son's sacrificial way of life before He grants the promise. "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him {to those who continue to obey Him in the time of testing}." (Jam. 1:12 NIV)

Jesus Christ expects His followers to begin serving Him by following the instructions He has provided in His Sermon on the Mount. Even though the old carnal nature {our "old man" – Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:9} will have a natural enmity against these teachings, and there will be a tendency to

resist God's ways, Christians are expected to resist sin. They will need to humbly confess when they do sin and keep pressing forward in their faith until Christ has manifested his Kingdom-life within their hearts.

Because narrow is the gate and *difficult is the way which leads to life* {the Kingdom-life}, and there are few who find it.” (Matt. 7:14 Emphasis added)

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will love Him and manifest Myself to him {in due time, after he has been approved} (John 14:21)

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while {in dying to your-“self”}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in His heavenly Kingdom-life}. (1 Pet. 5:6, 10)

Only God knows what must be done and how long it will take to turn us from a self-sufficient life to a life of pure faith. While the process is difficult, we will eventually come to a state of helplessness where there is nothing we can do but wait on the Lord in submissive faith. *But we should not expect to receive the blessing if we have not already begun to live for the good of others.*

You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself?... Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice...? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? *Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear* {the Kingdom-life will be established within the heart}, and your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. (Isa. 58:5-8 Emphasis added NIV)

The Lord has the necessary power to heal our fallen nature and fully establish His Kingdom-life within our hearts. And even though this life must be received by faith, the temple of our bodies will need to be properly

prepared before the fire can fall and God's glory can be manifest in and through our lives. Most Christians will therefore find that the life of promise is not as easy to receive as many have taught. Because the way is "difficult" (Matt. 7:14), Christ instructs His disciples to make an earnest effort to enter in. "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (Luke 13:24)

Christ's teachings about the difficulty of entering into "life" does not refer to the reconciliation and regeneration that takes place when the new believer trusts in His shed blood. There is nothing the sinner can do to prepare himself to be justified other than to make a conscious decision to turn from known sin to the ways of God and to depend on the Lord's shed blood to cover His sins. *But the Lord can require His disciples to submit to His teachings.* He gives them His Spirit so they can become Spirit-led sons of God. (Rom. 8:14) *And these justified children need to respond to the leading of the Spirit if they ever hope to be led into the Kingdom-life of promise.*

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (Heb. 3:18-4:1)

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son {through the Son's shed blood}, much more, *having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His* {indwelling} *life.* (Rom. 5:10 Emphasis added)

It is possible to fall away during the desert testing period. This is why we are to "assemble" with other Christians and to "exhort one another daily." (Heb. 3:13) The Lord did not intend for His church to be a mere social gathering where people help each other feed their flesh-life, but rather, we are to be encouraging each other to die to the ways of the flesh so we may be lifted into our Lord's Kingdom-life of perfect love. Because of the difficulty of this dying process, we need to be supporting each other as we press forward in the way of submissive faith.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. (Heb. 2:1)

Do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promise. (Heb. 6:12)

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear. (Isa. 58:8)

The word “renew” in Isaiah 40:31 has the meaning of “exchange.” The text could correctly read, “But those who wait on the Lord shall exchange their strength.” Reconciled Christians need to be waiting for a whole new form of life from heaven. They are to use the Spirit’s enabling to turn from their old manner of trying to create a spiritual life by the strength of the flesh, exchanging it for the spiritual life they can now receive from Christ through faith. *God’s power will be perfected within their hearts as they die to self-sufficiency, and learn to rely on God for all things.* (2 Cor. 12:9)

When a child of God has learned to wait on the Lord, he begins to acknowledge his own weakness. Only then will he be able to truly rely on God’s power. It is this state of childlike dependence, where pure faith begins to come forth, that God’s mighty hand can be put to work. *In contrast, a person who is still strong in his own sufficiency will have a very difficult time waiting on God for anything.*

Let us therefore learn this lesson well. Everyone who learns to wait on God can expect to be clothed with power from on high and enter into the life of promise in due time.

Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord! (Ps. 27:14)

Truly my soul silently waits for God; From Him comes my salvation... My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him... In God is my salvation and my glory... (Ps. 62:1, 5, 7)

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him... (Ps. 37:5-7 Emphasis added)

And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited

for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation {His Kingdom-life}.” (Isa. 25:9)

But those who wait on the Lord shall renew {change the source of} their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary... (Isa. 40:31)

Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me. (Isa. 49:23)

Here is where faith in God truly proves itself. Real faith knows that only God has the power to provide a never-ending river of divine spiritual life. The true believer will therefore submit to God and His ways while waiting for the Lord to establish the Kingdom-life of perfect love within his heart. “Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land.” (Ps. 37:34)

We often hear Christians asking God to strengthen them. Even though they remain full of themselves and are still living for their own pleasures, they want God to supply strength to their fleshly lives. It is amazing how these people can go to their devotional services and act as if they are fully surrendered to God. But God is the One who examines the heart. He can recognize hypocrisy when He sees it. And He will not use His power to establish the Son’s Kingdom-life within the heart of anyone who has not yet denied themselves and taken up their cross.

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chron. 16:9)

A. W. Tozer said, “I suppose it is proper to say that God makes His people strong, but we must understand this to mean that they become strong in exact proportion to their weakness; the weakness being their own and the strength being God’s. ‘When I am weak then I am strong’ is the way Paul said it... What has happened is that he {Paul, and all others who will follow Christ in His way of the cross} has switched from his little human battery to the infinite power of God.”

We should see how shrinking from the way of the cross arises from an ignorance of the blessedness to which the pathway leads. The most joyous

moment in the life of the bride ought to be the moment when she loses her own name and independence at the marriage-altar. Taking her husband's name instead of her own, she loses her life in his.

Similarly, the most blissful moment in our life will come when we have totally renounced self, which includes all right to an independent life, and have placed ourselves without reservation into the hands of our Lord. This is how we enter into God's ultimate purpose for our lives and begin discovering His good, pleasing and perfect will. John Gregory Mantle has provided some lines to help us understand this path and see its glorious results:

Thus in Thine arms of love, O God, I lie,
Lost, and forever lost to all but Thee.
My happy soul, since it hath learned to die,
Hath found new life in Thine Infinity.

Go then, and learn this lesson of the Cross,
And tread the way that saints and prophets trod:
Who, counting life and self and all things loss,
Have found in inward death the life of God.

Chapter Eight: **WHAT THE CROSS REALIZES FOR GOD**

To provide some insight into why we must receive a whole new form of life from another realm, we will look at how God deals with the human race through two representative men – Adam and Christ. We have a choice of being connected to either Adam's family tree or Christ's family tree. *If our source of life is to change, we must make a conscious decision to trade families.*

Many people wonder how they can change their lineage after being born into Adam's family. They think it is necessary to remain under bondage to the sinful nature they have inherited from Adam until they physically die. But, glory be to God, the Gospel tells of a Messiah who has come as the Last Adam to deliver His followers from this bondage. His salvation has made it

possible for His followers to exchange their old Adam-life for His Kingdom-life.

Because they have never been taught, most Christians have been unable to grasp with the hand of faith this Gospel promise. They do not realize that in this age of fulfillment {the New Testament age}, Christ has provided every “believer” with an access to both His death and His risen life. We will therefore attempt to bring these teachings into a clearer light. Let us begin by quoting some simple statements of truth:

I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave {to sin} has no permanent place in the family {of God}, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free {from the sinful nature inherited from Adam’s family}, you will be free indeed. (John 8:34-36)

For we know that our old self {the old man who lived by the desires of the flesh} 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 the self-life} has been freed from sin. (Rom. 6:6-7)

Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross and laid in the tomb as the “Last Adam.” All that was in the first Adam was gathered up and put to death in Christ. And so, if we submit to this death with Christ on the cross, the old life that is dominated by the desires of the flesh can also be put to death.

In the same way that Christ is able to manifest His spiritual life through us, He is also able to manifest His death to the flesh-life through our inner being. He is not required to wait until we physically die to do this work. “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death {while we remain in this world}, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5)

As children of faith, we are therefore expected to begin reckoning ourselves dead to the old Adam-life. God will be testing our faith in Him and in His word by the earnestness of our reckoning. “According to your faith will it be done to you.” (Matt. 9:29)

This walk of faith is more than something we merely hold as a belief in our head while we continue to live by the desires of the flesh. There can be a real death to the flesh-life worked into our very being if we will begin denying ourselves. We are required to take up our cross and become joined with Christ at the place of death to self, through a yielded faith. There is no other way to find His Kingdom-life. (Matt. 16:24-25)

While the first man {Adam} is of the earth and carnal, the Second Man {Jesus Christ} is from heaven and spiritual. By this one master stroke {Christ's death at the cross}, God has worked out a death for the Adam-life in everyone who believes in Him. It is through this small gate of uniting with Christ at the cross that we are enabled to pass over into His Kingdom-life from heaven. "For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:11)

We sometimes hear people say, "We have tried to make this identification with Christ in both His death and resurrection real in our lives. Yet in spite of all our knowing, reckoning and yielding, we have not received the victory and the blessing we have desired."

By listening carefully to the way these people speak, it is easy to recognize their problem. Their words reveal it. These people are showing far more concern for themselves than they are for God's purposes and glory. They are far more alive to what they want God to do in their personal lives than they are interested in entering into God's plan for their lives.

If they could, most people would use Jesus Christ and His work on the cross to further their own Christian goals and increase the enjoyment they can have from this world. The cross, however, is not a threshold to selfish attainment. It is a place to end all selfishness. While most Christians are still looking to improve their own lives, God is waiting for them to come to Him, to be used wholly by Him, for His purposes.

Of course, the Lord will wonderfully improve the spiritual lives of His disciples when they are participating with Him in His divine nature. But they will be entirely transformed in the way they live because the Kingdom-life results in an entire devotement to God and His glory. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Rom. 11:36 NIV)

Even among those who continually attend deeper life conferences and retreats, there are many falling into this same trap of the devil. After spending years acquiring more knowledge about the deeper life, they still tend to think about themselves. Their minds are still filled with their own plans. This veneer needs to be shattered and everything that keeps their thoughts focused on self uncovered. The cross is a place to die! We need to begin our reckoning right here!

Let us therefore remove our eyes from this old self-life and begin looking at God's divine intention. *The fire cannot come down from heaven to consume the remains of our flesh-life until we have provided an unblemished offering of ourselves to God.*

Chapter Nine:

TO LIVE BY THE LIFE OF ANOTHER

There are some Christians who can look back to some long ago crisis and say, "I was filled with the power of the Spirit twenty years ago." But unfortunately, because they have gone back to living by their own human efforts and for their own personal goals, they have lost the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Those who wait {continuously} on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary... (Isa. 40:28-31)

We need to emphasize the importance of continually abiding in Christ's risen life. While we walk in this world doing the work of our Master, our hearts must always be in the heavenly realms with Him. Our strength can only be renewed while we remain crucified to the old self-life and are living through the life of Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) If we are not willing to continue in the path of dying daily, we cannot expect to continue sharing with Him in the power of His resurrection.

*There is another glorious aspect of Christ's risen life that we must not overlook. **When the flesh-life has died, our spirit actually crosses over***

into the heavenly realms where we are enabled to share with Him in the power of His throne. (Eph. 1:3) We are “raised up together *and made to sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:6 Emphasis added) In other words, Christ’s fully sanctified disciples are enabled to sit together with Him so they may share with Him in the power of His throne.

When the believer is living through Christ’s Kingdom-life, he will also have the opportunity to begin sharing with the Lord in His authority over the principalities and powers of darkness. A few verses earlier in this same Epistle we read that God “raised Him {Christ} from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand...far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion... and hath put all things under His feet...” (Eph. 1:20-22 KJV) Therefore, *those who are willing to share with Him in His death to the flesh-life, will also be raised into a position where they are enabled to share with Him in His dominion over the powers of darkness.*

God originally intended for man to have dominion over the world in which he had been placed. Fallen man gave up this right when he was separated from the life and will of God. But once a Christian has become wholly sanctified to God, their spirit is raised above the darkness that now covers the earth. Entering into the heavenly realms, they are enabled to share with Christ in the power of His throne.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)

Not only will these fully sanctified {set apart} Christians live in continual spiritual victory, they will also be provided with sufficient power to accomplish the work that God has planned to do through their lives. Being granted a real dominion in their appointed sphere of work, they will be enabled to aggressively attack the powers of darkness and gain many victories for the Kingdom of God.

We are largely playing at Christian work these days. We go in and out of services and meetings. We are content to offer some of our money and perform some useful services. *But we never really discover what God has planned for us to do through the power of His Spirit.*

As our Sovereign God, He is the One who must decide all things. It is an ordered life – a God-planned life. We are therefore expected to walk under

the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) *Of course, if we are unwilling to walk as the Son did, we cannot expect the Spirit to work with divine power through our lives as He did with Jesus.*

Listen again: “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, Emphasis added) From the beginning, God has specifically marked the niche that each of His children were to fill in His Kingdom. *When we enter into the work He has planned to accomplish through our lives, He also supplies divine power to complete the work.*

What has God planned for you to do in His Kingdom? How will He manifest His life through you if you do not submit to His plans? If you do not seek out His will, it is tantamount {equivalent} to a rejection of the Potter’s right to use the clay as He pleases. Can there be anything but a severe judgment for those who devise their own plans according to their own will?

God made man upright {holy to the divine will}, but they have sought out many {self-willed} schemes. (Ecl. 7:29)

“Therefore hear, O nations; observe, O witnesses, what will happen to them... I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words...” (Jer. 6:18-19 NIV)

Chapter Ten:

LIVING BY THE CROSS

Many of God’s children approach the way of the cross with bewilderment and hesitancy. Not understanding what was in God’s plan for man before the Fall, nor realizing what can be possessed in the heavenly realms through a union with Christ’s risen life, they shudder at the thought of a constant working of death into their self-life. We can hear them say, “I’m not ready for that pathway, I want abundant life and joy – not death.”

Multitudes of believers remain captive to a worldly system of temporal security and rewards. And while they work hard to create a spiritual life for themselves using this system, they remain worried and upset about many things. There can be no deep peace for those who live by the flesh. *The spiritual life they have developed for themselves, no matter what they may have accomplished, keeps dying.* “For to be carnally minded is death.” (Rom. 8:6) Christ’s Living Water does not well up from within them to eternal life because they have been unwilling to lose their self-life.

Paul said, “I die daily.” The Lord’s inwrought cross had become a part of his very nature. Because Paul was sharing with Christ in His death to self, the self-life was never permitted to rise up. And out of this death to self, there was a continual working of life from heaven. The Lord was able to show Himself through Paul “in the power of an endless life.” (Heb. 7:16) He was therefore able to say, “To this end I labor, struggling with all *his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*” (Col. 1:29 NIV, Emphasis added)

Some people have passed over into the new risen life during some crisis experience in their past. But they have neglected to take up their cross daily in a continual sacrifice of themselves for the good of others. Gradually, over time, they permitted the self-life to reassert itself. And, as a result, they have lost the power that once worked through them.

“I die daily.” The apostle Paul realized that fruitfulness in his ministry came from his willingness to continually die to himself. It was this life of sacrificing himself for the good of others that permitted Christ to reveal His life of perfect love through him. He had learned the secret to being fruitful. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain...” (John 12:24) Because he died to self daily, the Father honored him with the mighty working of His Spirit. (v. 26)

Conformity to death on the resurrection side of the cross means a deepening weakness in ourselves, not an increasing sense of strength in ourselves! Our natural desire is to feel strong in ourselves {self-sufficiency} so we can do this or that great work. *But to be strong in ourselves is to live as the world does in spiritual death. In the Kingdom-life of God, we perfect the power of God in our lives through a weakness that continually depends on the Lord for everything.* “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:10 NIV)

Paul said, “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” (1 Cor. 2:3-5 NIV) While he felt weak in himself, he knew the power of God was working in the words he spoke. It was only in this sense of weakness in himself, in a real dying to the self-sufficient ways of the flesh, that he could truly penetrate the hearts of hardened sinners and give hope to carnal Christians. *It also helped his hearers understand that they too must turn to a life of relying on the power of God.*

It will be helpful to quote the testimony of Mrs. Jesse Penn-Lewis. She tells of a crisis that brought her to the point where God was able to use her for His glory. It should be noted that the power to effectively reach the hearts of her hearers came well after she had entered a ministry of service to the Lord. She said:

As I read the book, I clearly saw the way of the cross and all that it would mean. At first I flung the book away, and said, “No, I will not go that path. I shall lose all my glory experience.” But the next day I picked it up again, and the Lord whispered so gently, “if you want deep life, and unbroken communion with God, this is the way.” I thought, “Shall I? No!” And again I put the book away. The third day I again picked it up. Once more the Lord spoke, “If you want fruit, this is the path...” And then, by His grace I said, “I choose the path for fruitfulness,” and every bit of conscious experience closed. I walked for a time in such complete darkness – the darkness of faith, that it seemed almost as if God did not exist. And again, by His grace, I said, “Yes, I have only got what I agreed to,” and on I went to some meetings, and then I saw the fruit. From that hour I understood, and knew intelligently, that it was dying, not doing, that produced spiritual fruit. The secret of a fruitful life is – in brief – to pour out to others and want nothing for yourself: to leave yourself utterly in the hands of God and not care what happens to you.

Everyone who wants to become fruitful in furthering God’s Kingdom-life of love here on earth must take the awful and awesome path of the cross. We can expect to be taken through a real trial of faith after surrendering to the

cross in our own Garden of Gethsemane. God takes us through a period of real darkness where everything from the old way of life begins to pass away.

During this dark night of the soul, it will be necessary to be reminded that God is faithful to His promises. It will be necessary to hold to our faith. God never forsakes those who are earnestly seeking Him. And He does have the power to raise the dead.

Paul said, “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.” (2 Cor. 1:9) Before we will begin to truly rely on the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, there will need to be a real death to our old independent and self-sufficient way of life. As Mrs. Jesse Penn-Lewis had to learn, the joy and personal glory that comes from using temporal means to work for God in the early stages of our Christian walk, will need to die. The Father can only honor those who have been willing to become a seed that is buried in the ground and then waits on Him for resurrection-life and power. “Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me.” (Isa. 49:23)

These teachings will sound very foolish to the wise and learned. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing {in spiritual blindness}, but to us who are being saved {from the sinful nature} it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:17) We therefore need to trust God and begin responding to the Lord’s way of the cross. *This place of dying to self daily to live for the good of others will release the power of God within the church.* A light from heaven will begin to shine in this world of darkness through the sanctified followers of Jesus Christ – a light that is able to touch the hearts of even the staunchest {strongest} resisters of truth.

Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles {unbelievers} shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy... (Isa. 60:1-5)