



Man's Part in Salvation

(The Gospel Message – Steve Bray)

As Paul has stated, it is possible for Christians to begin sharing with Christ in the spiritual blessings He possesses within His own life in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 1:3) However, before we can receive the Pearl and begin to experience the Lord's heavenly Kingdom-life within our heart, it is necessary to turn aside from everything that is unholy to God.

For you are {created to be} the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them {as He did with the first Adam before the fall, and with the Second Adam in this fallen world}..." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. *Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you* {into the Kingdom-life of promise}..."

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. 6:16-7:1 Emphasis added)

God's called-out people in the Old Testament dispensation were required to prepare a temple that God could use as His dwelling place

here on earth. The Lord provided very specific instructions on how it was to be prepared. In effect, this lesson is a spiritual type for New Testament Christians who are to be the dwelling place of God in this age of fulfillment. "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them...'" (2 Cor. 6:16)

God could only reveal His glory within the temple after the people had prepared it according to His specifications. The same principle applies to us. We have access to the same glory that filled the mortal body of Jesus. He said to the Father, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:22, 26) But we must fulfill the covenant conditions before the temple of our body can be filled with God's glory—His life of perfect love {a love that is pure and undefiled by any "self-ness"}.

In another spiritual type, the "life of promise" was separated from Egypt and the ways of the world by a desert testing period. This dry and barren land was a place where God planned to strip away the idols that His people had learned to depend on in Egypt. *God requires His people to depend on Him alone for their spiritual life.* Everything that prevents the Lord from being "All in All" must be placed on the altar of sacrifice before it is possible to enter into His Kingdom-life of promise.

If anyone comes to Me {to seek out the Kingdom-life from heaven} and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. {Once we have fully submitted to God's will and have entered into the life of promise, where we receive our spiritual life from God alone, we will then be in a condition to love others with His unconditional, self-sacrificing love.} And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me {into the Kingdom-life of perfect love} cannot

be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has {from his self-originated form of life} cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26-27, 33)

When we live by the ways of the world, we have a natural tendency to rely on temporal things, including our relationships with others, for our spiritual sustenance. Those who live this way will find that their spiritual life tends to die each time their idols have failed to do what has been expected of them. In contrast, when God's children enter into His Kingdom-life of promise and receive their spiritual life directly from God, they begin to enjoy a continuous "river" of everlasting life. Because this eternal life of love—His living water—comes directly from God, it "never fails." (1 Cor. 13:8)

The desert testing period was depicted as a time of dryness. While God used wells of refreshment to periodically provide relief from this sense of spiritual dryness so that His people could be helped along in their journey, we should note that these periodic blessings were not the life of promise. After each time of refreshing, God would once again lead them through a deeper work of stripping away their worldly resources and hopes. He had to teach them to live wholly by faith in Him before they would be prepared to enter into the Promised Land.

It will be necessary to build Christians up in their faith so they will be prepared to go through the same kind of stripping process. *In contrast to what we often hear taught today, the Scriptures explain how it is necessary for believers to press through a difficult period of testing before it is possible to find the Kingdom-life of promise. Because these truths are seldom taught, close consideration should be given to what these Scriptures are saying.*

If anyone desires to come after Me {into the Kingdom-life}, let him deny himself {stop living for his own plans,

pleasures, and desires}, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For...whoever loses his life {his flesh-life} for My sake will find it {the eternal Kingdom-life}. (Matt. 16:24-25)

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven {the Kingdom-life} has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men {those who are willing to deny themselves and submit their flesh-life to the cross} lay hold of it. (Matt. 11:12)

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

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21-22)

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet {as you pass through this wilderness experience}, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed. Pursue peace with all people {by yielding to the Son's way of self-sacrificing love}, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord {His Kingdom-life from heaven}: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God...lest there be any...profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. (Heb. 12:12-16)

But you, man of God, flee from all this {temporal pursuits and gain}, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love,

endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession... (1 Tim. 6:11-12 NIV

Emphasis added)

The “birthright” that believers receive at their new birth provides them with a “right” to the life of promise {the “blessing”}. But like Esau, it is very easy to let our lusts {desires} for temporal things separate us from the blessing. There are many who have fallen short of the grace that establishes Christ’s heavenly Kingdom-life within the heart. In effect, even though it is not always conscious, they have ended up rejecting Christ’s way of the cross. They do not “find” the Lord’s eternal life of perfect love because they have not been willing to deny themselves and lose their old flesh-life. (Matt. 16:24-25) Like Esau, they effectively sell their birthright in order to feed their flesh-life on temporal things.

For many {within the church} walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly {like Esau}...*who set their mind on earthly things.* (Phil. 3:18-19 Emphasis added)

Christians need to begin examining themselves to see what they have been using to feed their spiritual life. If our mind remains focused on the things of this world, we have to assume we do not qualify as one of the children of faith who live as strangers to this world, on a pilgrim’s journey through it. *It is so easy to neglect the clear teachings of Scripture and begin building little kingdoms for ourselves so we can be comfortable in this world. We begin to set our mind on earthly things and end up stepping back onto the wide road that leads to destruction.* Let us therefore deny ourselves and die to the ways of the flesh so we will be in a

position to enter into the heavenly Kingdom-life that is now available from the Son of God.

These {the saints of old} all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out {worldliness}, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them...

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise {the Kingdom-life of perfect love}, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us {in this age of fulfillment}. (Heb. 11:13-16, 39-40)

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians provides an excellent example of how Christians are to "press" into the Kingdom-life of God. This body of Christians had become examples of a true faith in Jesus Christ. Their walk of faith was revealed through the laborious toil and unceasing hardship they were willing to go through as they followed their Lord's way of self-sacrificing love. They had denied themselves and taken Christ's way of the cross so they would be in a position to find His life from heaven. But still they had not yet become fully sanctified, so that the temple of their body could be filled with God's glory.

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy

Spirit...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven...

For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God... we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thess. 1:6, 9-10; 2:9, 11-12)

When we realize that God's work of salvation is designed to make us like Him in love, we can better understand why we must deny ourselves and follow Christ's way of the cross. Leon Morris, in the revised edition of his Tyndale commentary on Thessalonians says, "Once we see that God is like that, that God loves as part of his very nature, *that God loves in a way that means Calvary*, we must make a decision. Either we yield to the divine agape to be transformed by it, to be re-made in the divine image...or we do not. And if we do not, in that lies our condemnation." (p. 43 *Emphasis added*)

The Lord offers us His eternal life of perfect love. This is the one true salvation of the Lord. If we refuse to yield to His way of life, which implies turning from the self-seeking ways of the world so we may become like Him in love while living "in this world," (1 John 4:17) we are rejecting His offer of salvation. Those who continue in the path of self-seeking will therefore be confronted with true wrath when they come before God on the Day of Judgment. (Rom. 2:8 NKJV)

Paul acknowledged the Thessalonians as true believers because they had turned from a self-seeking way of life to "serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1:9-10) The word rendered *serve* basically means to "serve as a slave." Following

Paul's own example, who referred to himself as a "slave of Jesus Christ," they had entered into a way of life that was fully committed to the service of God. He knew that this is how all Christians are expected to live.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God {so that His life of love will be seen}...even as I try to please everybody in every way. *For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may {see the true light of life and} be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1 Emphasis added)

Jesus assures us that no one can serve two masters. (Matt. 6:24) If we still have a basic tendency to serve ourselves, then we cannot serve God as He requires. Any remains of the flesh-life will have a tendency to resist Christ's self-sacrificing way of love. There is a natural enmity between the ways of the Spirit and the ways of the flesh. *And so, even a slight living for ourselves will prevent the light of life from heaven from being seen in the world.*

Every called-out child of God will therefore need to make a choice of whom they are going to serve. Any form of "self-seeking" will result in "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." (Rom. 2:8-9) It inevitably leads to spiritual death. "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin {self-will and self-seeking}, which leads to death, or to obedience {the way of self denial and the cross}, which leads to righteousness... But now that you have been set free from sin {you have overcome the old self-serving way of life through the new birth} and have become slaves to God {with no right to live for yourselves}, the benefit you reap *leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*" (Rom. 6:16, 22 Emphasis added) The eternal Kingdom-life

will be fully established within the heart of everyone who perfects holiness in the fear of God.

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. 7:1)

Yes, the Thessalonians were showing clear signs of the new birth. But Paul knew there was still something lacking in their lives. They needed a more complete sanctification, and this work of God could only be received through a deeper work of yielded faith. He said to them: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." (1 Thess. 4:3) And since they still had a need for further instruction, he explains how Timothy was sent "to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith." (1 Thess. 3:2)

The Thessalonians were passing through a severe testing period. Their deep affliction was a part of the scourging process that God uses to break down the self-sufficient spirit and prepare His people to become "partakers of His holiness." (Heb. 12: 10) And yet, in the middle of this affliction, they were expected to become more and more sacrificial in their self-giving love. Because Paul knew they could only pass through this test by receiving more grace from God, he prayed, "may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all...*so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.*" (1 Thess. 3:12 Emphasis added)

We should note that they were commanded to both abound more and more in love and to look to God to enable them to display this increasing self-sacrifice. *God would not perfect them in love unless they first yielded to the Son's way of life by continuing to give themselves more fully to self-sacrificing love.* They would need to learn to live by the enabling grace that God supplies to His faithful children.

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you. And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time {to be perfected in the Kingdom-life of God}; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:1-2)

A part of preparing the temple for the display of God's glory includes sacrificing ourselves for the good of others. God expects this love to abound more and more as He increases the hardships that will lead to a complete death of the flesh-life. Jesus is our forerunner, and we know the kind of trials He passed through before reaching the cross. He arrived at Golgotha drained of human strength. And yet, He continued to show self-sacrificing love until He came to the point when He was completely surrendered in death. This is the path He had to take in order to become highly exalted by the power of the Spirit. Can we expect to be exalted into the Kingdom-life of heaven in any other way? "Is the disciple better than the Master?"

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who...taking the form of a bondservant {living in self-sacrificing love}...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross {a slow and painful death}. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him... (Phil. 2:5-9)

Paul understood what it means to be tested by God. From experience he could say, "we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel..." (1 Thess. 2:4) Morris, in his commentary on this verse says, "The verb *approved* means first "to test" and then to approve as the result of the test... Paul thinks of himself as having been tried out by God, and then trusted for service." (p. 53) He could therefore say, "It pleased

God...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles.” (Gal. 1:15-16) He first submitted to the way of self-denial and self-sacrificing love according to the instructions of Jesus Christ. Once he had been approved, the Lord used the temple of his body to display the glory of God. He too became a vessel of the Son’s eternal life of love.

God tests our hearts by the way we respond to His providences. While He will faithfully work with us in our failures, we cannot expect to be taken into the Kingdom-life of perfect love if we do not continue to deny ourselves and follow in His way of self-sacrificing love. A heart that has become self-seeking, complaining, unforgiving or unmerciful in any manner, regardless of the difficulty of the test, will be turned away.

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 {the eternal Kingdom-life of perfect love} which the Lord has promised to those who love Him {to those who obey Him}. (Jam. 1:12 [Emphasis added])

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God {by doing what He teaches}, that He may exalt you {lift you into His Kingdom-life} in due time... But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory {to be a vessel of His perfect love} by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while {in dying out to the flesh-life}, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in the life of promise} (1 Pet. 5:6, 10)

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, *for if you do these things you will never stumble; 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)

We can now better understand why Paul prays for the Thessalonians to “increase and abound in love to one another and to all...so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness.” (1 Thess. 3:12-13) Their love needed to continue to “increase more and more.” (1 Thess. 4:10) But even here it is necessary to depend on the enabling grace of God. He is the One who provides the necessary grace to His workers so they may properly prepare the temple. “We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.” (2 Cor. 6:1) You must use the grace that He has provided to respond to His tests.

No temptation {test or trial} has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted {tested} beyond what you are able, but with the temptation {test} will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, *flee from idolatry* {all heart idols – the pursuits of the self-seeking nature}. (1 Cor. 10:13-14 *Emphasis added*)

The person who has not yet passed through the Red Sea and experienced the new birth will be puzzled by this verse. They are in the church, in a sense they believe in Jesus and they are trusting in His shed blood for the forgiveness of their sins. But yet they find themselves continually stumbling during temptation. The self-seeking ways of the world still have a strong hold on their heart. These “believers” will therefore need to present themselves to the Lord in a way that permits Him to give them the gift of His indwelling Spirit before they will ever find the power to bear up under all the temptations of the devil. Only then will they find it possible to overcome sin and the world through their faith. As Jesus has said, they must experience the new birth before they will ever

“see” the kingdom of God and become fully committed to seeking it out.
(John 3:3-8)

Many Christians have never been taught the goal of their faith even after experiencing the new birth. Consequently, instead of pressing forward in their faith, which will take them along the path of hardship and self-sacrificing love, they soon begin drifting back into the self-indulgent ways of the world. Rather than following Paul’s instructions to abound more and more in an agape type love, which would reveal itself in the way they expended themselves and their resources in service to others, they go back to living for their own pleasures. They “set their mind on earthly things.” (Phil. 3:19)

The church has become filled with people who are trying to support themselves spiritually by feeding on the things of this world. In effect, they have neglected to “flee from idolatry.” If you mention the necessity of self-denial and submitting to Christ’s way of self-sacrificing love, they will react in a way that proves how they have become “enemies of the cross.” (Phil. 3:17-19)

Again, God expects to be our “All in All.” Those who are willing to press forward in their faith until they have found the Kingdom-life of promise, will find their soul truly satisfied with a supernatural abundance. (Isa. 55:1-2; Ps. 63:1-5) Yes, the way through the dry and thirsty land is difficult. “Because...difficult is the way which leads to life.” (Matt. 7:14) This is why there are so few who have found the life of promise. But let us remember that *those who are willing to go through some suffering in order to be separated from the self-seeking ways of the world during this time of testing {of their faith}, will eventually find a heavenly Pearl that is well worth the price that must be paid.*

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great

price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46)

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom {which is an indwelling life of supernatural abundance}. Sell what you have {the things you have hoarded in order to live for your own pleasures} and give alms {to help those in need}; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail... (Luke 12:32-33)

Why do you spend money for what is not bread {the bread of life}, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. (Isa. 55:2)

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you {in the eternal Kingdom-life that does not fail}. (1 Pet. 5:10)

Our obedience to the Word of God is designed to separate us from the idolatrous ways that the people of this world use as a means for lifting themselves spiritually. In the sense that Jesus fasted from natural food in His desert testing period {as a spiritual type} and became very weak in Himself, we are to fast from the things we have been using in this world to sustain our spiritual life. There must be a real turning from the old way of living by the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eye and the pride of life.

Yes, this self-denial will lead to a real sense of spiritual weakness and emptiness. The way of the cross will result in suffering. *But we must remember that the child of God cannot be clothed with power from above and come out of the desert testing period as a vessel of God's glory until,*

like Jesus, he has rejected each of these ways that people of the world use to sustain themselves spiritually.

Because Jesus is our forerunner, we need to follow His example. He chose not to take this worldly course. He did not seek His own will, or seek after worldly kingdoms, or try to make Himself great in His own strength. It was this complete self-emptying and entrustment of everything to His Father that permitted Him to be strengthened from above and begin serving in the power of the Spirit. (Luke 4:13-14) *The children of God cannot look for their spiritual life from the things of this world and also expect to find the life and power that comes from heaven.*

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world {which is evidenced by seeking for temporal rewards}, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world {which you embrace simply by following its self-seeking ways} is enmity with God? *Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* (Jam. 4:4 Emphasis added)

You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it {through self-denial}. (Luke 16:15-16 NIV)

At this point we also need to distinguish between the holiness that comes from human efforts and the holiness that comes from God. There is a natural tendency to establish a form of holiness that lives by certain outward standards. As the Pharisees have demonstrated, these standards can usually be maintained while continuing to live in a self-indulgent form of life. We will therefore find that people who use certain outward standards as their measure of holiness seldom escape the self-seeking ways of the world for long. Because they never fully lose their self-indulgent way of life by taking Christ's way of the cross, they do not become clothed with the power that is needed to reveal the Lord's Kingdom-life of perfect love.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish {in order to look righteous and holy on the outside}, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (Matt. 23:25 NIV)

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:20)

Yes, God has provided standards that He expects His children to live by. But they are not given in the sense that we are to live by law and then think we have become holy by these efforts to conform to outward standards. We will, however, need to understand and submit to the underlying spiritual principles that God has used to establish His standards. Only those who follow the way of truth will ever pass the test and become filled with the glory of God.

God's standard of dress can be used as an example to show how God tests our heart by our response to Satan's temptations. First of all, we can learn from the Word of God that He wants His children to dress *modestly*. He does not want us following the pattern of the world. There

is a natural tendency for people in this world to develop their own special image because they think it will improve their spiritual life. They use their clothes {or cars, or houses, or jewels, or families, or careers, or education, et al} for the purpose of being noticed. Of course, when others do not like the image they have created for their own glory, they find themselves dying spiritually.

Simply stated, God cannot reveal the image of the Son through the temple of our body while we are attempting to develop our own image. God will not share His life with anyone who is seeking their own glory. *We are sadly mistaken if we think we are holy when we wear clothes that properly cover our body while the pride of life causes us to use the same clothes for the purpose of developing an image that others will notice and appreciate.*

Satan is the one who propagated the self-exalting form of life on the world. The people of the world have remained in darkness because they have continued to yield to his temptations. They naturally support themselves spiritually by yielding to “the pride of life.” This is one reason why Jesus said, “What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” (Luke 16:15) We should therefore never follow the self-exalting ways of the world.

Christians who have the Spirit of God “in” them will recognize the evil in any form of self-exaltation. It is diametrically opposed to the mind that was in Christ. (Phil. 2:5-8) He took the path of humility and “made Himself of no reputation.” (v. 7) He also said, “I do not seek My own glory.” (John 8:50) He then asks us, “How can you believe {in the meek, lowly, submissive Lamb of God}, who receive honor from one another...” (John 5:44)

We should begin to see why Satan has continued to work so hard to tempt people into following his way of pride. He does everything within

his power to lead us to seek a reputation and glory of our own. He knows that our yielding to this temptation will take us directly away from the Kingdom-life of Jesus Christ.

Again, God says, "Come out from among them... do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6:17) Because we have this promise of receiving the divine life of God from heaven, we will need to begin turning from every aspect of the old self-originated form of spiritual life. *God expects us to perfect a holiness that depends on Him alone for our spiritual sustenance.* "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. 7:1)

God is calling every believer into a kingdom where it is possible to begin sharing with Him in His life from heaven. But it will require a very deep faith in God before Christians will stop yielding to the self-seeking ways of this world. This is why we need pastors and teachers who are able to build Christians up in their "faith." (Eph. 4:11-13) Again, Paul said to the Thessalonians, "we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:11-12) *True faith will turn from what is seen, in order to receive a whole new form of life from the eternal world.*

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ {the way of self-denial, the cross and resurrection life} greater riches than the treasures in Egypt {a type of the world}; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt... (Heb. 11:24-27)

Let us {therefore} lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us {which includes looking to the comforts of this world for our spiritual sustenance}, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking {wholly} unto Jesus, the author and finisher {or perfecter} of our faith... (Heb. 12:1-2)

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is {*the one true source of spiritual life*}, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

But you man of God, flee from all this {the self-seeking ways of the world}, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession... (1 Tim. 6:11-12 NIV)

Can we begin to see why so few members of Christ's body are entering into Christ's Kingdom-life of perfect love? Instead of encouraging each other to press on in a faith that lays aside every unnecessary weight in order to buy the Pearl of Great Price, we have actually become a stumbling block to each other. Most of our conversations are about what we have been doing for ourselves in this world to build our own little kingdoms. Consequently, even when there are new converts who truly sense a need to follow hard after the Lord, it is only a matter of time before they are drawn back into the same self-indulgent way of life that much of the church is now displaying.

But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the

sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! (Matt. 18:6-7 NIV)

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin {by ignoring the convicting work of the Holy Spirit as He attempts to lead you out of a self-willed life that seeks its own desires, pursuits, pleasures, goals and gain, and into the "good, pleasing and perfect will of God."} (Heb. 3:12-13; Rom. 12:2 NIV)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,* not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, *but exhort one another* {to die out to the self-seeking ways of the world and allow the self-sacrificing love of Christ to be revealed through you by the power of the Holy Spirit}... (Heb. 10:23-25 Emphasis added)

God puts His Holy Spirit within Christians at their miraculous Red Sea crossing {representing the new birth} in order to prepare them to begin sacrificing themselves for the good of others with a willing and loving heart. As these obedient children submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, which includes responding to the providences of God in a scriptural manner, they are provided with many opportunities to sacrifice themselves so that others may be blessed. And they will need plenty of exhortation to stir up this self-sacrificing love and good works if they

hope to make it into the Kingdom-life of promise. This time in the desert testing period becomes a critical period in the Christian's life.

For if you live according to the flesh {if you keep on living for yourself according to your own desires} you will die {spiritually}; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body {if you surrender the selfish desires of the flesh to the cross and begin living for the good of others}, you will live. {You will be taken into the Kingdom-life of promise.}

(Rom. 8:13)

While we may not always express perfect love while we are preparing the way for the Lord to reveal His Kingdom-life within our heart, we can begin to display the fruit of self-sacrificing love. *This willingness to sacrifice ourselves for the good of the kingdom of God is the one true sign that we have turned to God and His ways.* We should not expect to be taken into His life of perfect love if we have not begun to show this sign of true repentance.

Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight...
Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance... {Begin to live for the good of others as Jesus did.} | {John the Baptist} indeed baptize you with water {as a sign of repentance}; but One mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire {to perfect the heart in love}. (Luke 3:4, 8, 16)

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God {to display His life of love}. (1 Cor. 10:31)

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen {the one true means to seek out the life of the Lord}: 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* {the light of life from heaven} *will break forth like the dawn, and your healing* {of the fallen nature} *will quickly appear*; then your righteousness {Christ's Kingdom-life} will go before you, and the glory of the Lord {His life of perfect love} will be your rear guard. (Jer. 58:6-8 Emphasis added)

I {the Son} will come to you. A little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me {as an indwelling life of perfect love}. Because I live {in the Kingdom-life from heaven}, you will live also {in the same life}... He who has My commandments and keeps them {during the time of testing}, it is he who loves Me...and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. (John 14:19-21)

There are many Christians who are still going through periods of real dryness because they have not yet entered into the “life of promise.” They still do not fully enjoy the “river” of living water that fully satisfies the soul. It is during these periods of dryness that they must carefully avoid turning back to the temporal things of this world to find a means for lifting themselves spiritually. {We must maintain our fast from all those things we do, or places we go, or thoughts we think in order to find some fulfillment when we are feeling a little down, or bored or lonely, or empty – basically, when we’re sensing spiritual dryness}

It is at this very low point in our walk of faith that Satan will come with His most severe attacks. But let us stick to our Lord's course. *If we will make a conscious choice to never again follow the worldly course of living by the lust {desires} of the flesh, the lust {desires} of the eye and the pride of life, we shall be clothed with power from on high and come out of*

our desert testing period in the power of God's kingdom-life. "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." (1 Cor. 4:20)

It is because there are so many Christians who end up turning away from God as their only hope of real fulfillment that we find so few truly displaying "the glory" of His Kingdom-life in this world. May God help you from taking this course.

But My people have changed their Glory {the Kingdom-life from heaven} for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid...," says the Lord. For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:11-13)

Whoever drinks this water {by depending on the temporal things of this world for their spiritual sustenance} will thirst again, *but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.* But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water {continually} springing up into everlasting life {into a display of the eternal Kingdom-life}. (John 4:13-14 *Emphasis added*)